



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

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

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

Box
78

Folder
6

Lead communities project. Milwaukee. Congregation Beth Israel.
Reports, 1995 May – 1996 December.

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

CBI INTERIM REPORT: ANALYSIS December 1996

This brief report is designed to accompany the more blow-by-blow descriptive account of the Congregation Beth Israel Pilot-Project. The report is being written at a stage at which the project seems to have gathered considerable momentum; there seems to be a lot of excitement about it on the part of the rabbi and his Steering Committee. Moreover, the Steering Committee is - finally! - made up of a group that is exceptionally strong both in respect of its seriousness and its credibility within the Congregation. It includes the rabbi, the educational director, the president, and a number of critical lay leaders representing varied constituencies in the Congregation. Their meetings have been consistently productive and energizing, and, to date, they continue to seem eager to move ahead. But the picture is not entirely positive, and even if it were, there would be serious questions concerning how to build on and spread the developing sense of momentum. This report is being written both to summarize the process to date, to elicit feedback concerning what has been done, and to get help in thinking through the project's further elaboration. It is organized around the following themes: Selection of Congregation Beth Israel; Purposes; Approach to change; Challenges and questions.

Selection of Congregation Beth Israel. Congregation Beth Israel was identified as a site for a CIJE Pilot-Project based on a number of desirable characteristics. First, its professional leaders (the rabbi and the educational director) seemed extremely serious, competent, and interested in the project; and by the time we started working together they already knew something about the Goals Project's assumptions through participation in a sequence of three hour Goals Seminars held in Milwaukee. Second, unlike our other principal institutional pilot-project (a community Day School), it was a Conservative Congregation that includes a Congregational School. Since the bulk of Jewish children continue to get most of their Jewish education through such institutions, attention to what may be done to improve them is essential. Third, and not unimportant, it is in Milwaukee, an hour and a half away from my home in Madison. Fourth, I already had a long-standing relationship of trust with the Congregation's rabbi. There was, it is true, some concern in my mind about whether there would be much lay support for the project, but I decided to go ahead in spite of this. As it turned out, this problem has not, to date, been a serious one, while others that had not been anticipated have proved much more troublesome. More on this later.

Congregation Beth Israel and CIJE entered into the Pilot Project agreement only after a period of "feeling each other out". For my part, I wanted to be more confident concerning the seriousness of CBI's critical stake holders in undertaking a serious process of self-development. For his part, CBI's rabbi wanted an assurance that CIJE would not back-out of the project mid-stream and the project would be

conceptualized in such a way that it would have a determinate end and would result in discernible changes in Synagogue life. It was only six months or so after our initial conversations that we agreed to go ahead together.

Purposes. CIJE and CBI entered into this arrangement for overlapping but different purposes. CBI's rabbi was interested in CBI's participation because he had just taken over as the new Senior rabbi and saw this as a good opportunity to chart the congregation's direction under his leadership. While somewhat nervous about being perceived as trying to change things too fast, he was also eager to work towards a clearer definition of what the congregation would be under his leadership. That the project would draw on the resources of CIJE and might also give CBI some visibility nationally were also relevant circumstances. From CIJE's side, this was a chance to test out and develop a cluster of ideas relating to the development of vision-driven educating institutions, an approach that emphasizes a) the desirability of getting clearer concerning fundamental purposes and b) the desirability of incorporating serious Jewish content into this process of clarification. An additional CIJE hope was that, if successful, this intervention could be used as an example to other institutions of what might be accomplished in a change-process that treats questions of educational purpose seriously.

As the process moved along, these overarching purposes were translated into more narrow terms. Thus, the ideal of becoming more vision-driven was replaced by the aim of deepening the Congregation's approach to Shabbat through a process of clarifying its understanding of Shabbat and the relationship of this understanding to practice in different congregational domains. And a variety of new aims -- some of them exclusively my own -- also emerged out of the process, e.g., reconstructing the relationship between the rabbi and the educational director, helping the educational director take initiative for the development of the school's curriculum, helping the rabbi deal more adequately with the gaps between his own view of what the Congregation should be and where most of the membership is; these new aims might be defined as "instrumental aims", in the sense that their achievement may well be necessary to meaningful progress on the project's larger purposes. Deeper than all these aims, perhaps, was the aim of creating a culture, at least among the Congregation's leadership, that emphasized the desirability, and even the excitement, of thinking systematically about hard questions concerning the why's and wherefore's of Congregational practice and a willingness to reshape practice to better accomplish thoughtfully determined Congregational priorities.

Approach to change. Several assumptions have informed my approach to work with CBI. These include:

1. The need to actively engage critical stake holders in the process. In the case of CBI, this has meant, at a minimum, the rabbi, the educational director, and the Congregation's President. In addition, there may well be critical others not identified by formal titles, e.g. Louise Stein. Failure

adequately to engage these stake holders so that they feel they are serious partners in the effort can undermine one's work; so can communication-breakdowns.

2. The power of conversation that is informed by data to surface problems and catalyze action. In the case of CBI, these data have included interviews with teachers, the results of focus-groups, and reports to the committee based on inquiries into the school's curriculum and into other congregational domains. Note that it is not just the data that are powerful, but also the conversation itself: as thoughtful people discuss the data in the context of their own aspirations and concerns, issues surface that stimulate one another's thinking in powerful ways.

3. The need to connect discussion with the stake holders' own deep concerns and to encourage reflection designed to elicit their own insights and anxieties. In the context of CBI, this is exemplified by the exercise designed to elicit from the Steering Committee its views concerning what Shabbat at its best is like for them and the conditions that made possible this experience; the results of this exercise were then used as a lens with which to scrutinize the menu of activities and customs that typify congregational life at CBI.

4. The power of powerful content: powerful Jewish ideas about the nature of existence and Jewish life may serve to radically re-frame and enrich participants' understandings of what Judaism is about, thus catalyzing energetic and focused action designed to make these understandings come alive in day-to-day life, both personal and institutional. In the CBI case, this means introducing content that will transform the way participants understand the significance of Shabbat and how it might fit into their own lives; that is, coming to see Shabbat in new and transforming ways through the encounter with powerful ideas at work in the institution and practice of Shabbat.

5. While the immediate object of change is defined by the problem or set of problems identified by the critical stake holders, the process of change tends in the direction of a cultural change; it tends towards a culture that is at home with inquiring into the values or purposes that are to be secured by customs and practices, that is willing to re-think practice based on whether or not these practices, in their current form, are succeeding in actually achieving these purposes, and that looks to Jewish tradition to better understand what is at stake in considering these matters.

6. While it is assumed that critical conversation among critical stake

holders, informed by assumptions 1 - 4, is essential, it is also essential to engage other, more rank-and-file, constituencies in this conversation if change is to occur.

7. It is critical that the conversation among critical stake holders not become detached from practical concerns; it is critical that, at significant points, they attempt to consider the implications of their conversation for the world of practice.

8. A fanning-out principle. The process begins with those identifiable individuals already recognized to be critical; with their help, the problem at hand is tentatively formulated and other individuals - also critical - are identified; this group in turn further interprets (or reinterprets) the problem at hand and identifies other critical constituencies that need to be engaged, and so forth.

9. Trust - the kind of trust that may cross-over into friendship - needs to be an essential feature of the relationship between the outside consultant (in this case, me) and the critical stake holders he/she is working with. In its absence, thoughtful candor and receptivity are difficult to achieve, if not impossible.

Challenges and questions. Many challenges and questions have surfaced in the course of the work with CBI. Here I try to raise some among them that I am particularly interested in exploring. They include: **"Key stake-holder" challenges; Maintaining momentum; Deepening the content-dimension.**

"Key stake holder" challenges. The relationship between the rabbi and the educational director at CBI is complex, and it is problematic to the point of possibly undercutting the process. While these individuals seem to like and respect one another a lot, each of them also finds the other seriously problematic, and they are capable of being very critical of one another. As might be expected, the complexity of their relationship reflects differences between them in temperament, style, and outlook; but it also captures a problem that is serious and common within the Conservative movement.

Raised in a very traditional Jewish family, as a young woman, Pamela Lager made Aliya and had been part of the larger secular Israeli community. After meeting her husband in Israel, they returned to the United States, and she has worked in a number of Jewish educational settings quite effectively. She is bright, serious, strong Hebraically and Jewishly literate, and she is currently in an MA program in education in a local institution of higher learning. She is, by the rabbi's standards, relatively non-observant and does not live in a predominantly Jewish area.

This is Ms. Lager's third year as principal of the school. In this capacity, Ms.

Lager has been reluctant to take much responsibility for the school's curriculum; asked about curriculum, she is like to point to a curriculum-document she admires that was developed by her predecessor; it is doubtful that this curriculum seriously guides much that goes on at CBI. Ms. Lager's strengths as an administrator are in her personality and her inter-personal skills. These skills are at their best in her dealings with the teachers and the children. She is exceptionally respectful of her teachers and they have become very loyal to her. Similarly, the kids seem to see her as someone who might be "No nonsense" but is their ally. Her relationship with the synagogue's office staff is more complex. She feels like, as a woman, she is not treated by them as seriously as her male predecessor had been. She also feels that they are resentful that she expects to be treated as a professional rather than in the more familiar or familial way that has defined relationships in the CBI office.

If Ms. Lager's insistence on being treated as a serious professional has created tension between her and some of the administrative staff, her being non-observant (by the rabbi's standards) has created a measure of tension with the rabbi. Before focusing on this, a few words on the rabbi.

Rabbi Buckman only recently assumed his position as senior rabbi of CBI. He is a very bright, very serious individual, generally egalitarian in his outlook but overall on the Right Wing side of Conservative Judaism. He is concerned about consolidating his position (he comes up for contract renewal within a year or two) but also wants to give the congregation a direction that is more coherent with his (more conservative) outlook. Rabbi Buckman is sometimes perceived as cold and a bit distant (a point perhaps obliquely referred to in our Steering Committee meeting when a few people commented on 'the coldness' of CBI). Rabbi Buckman is very respectful of Ms. Lager's virtues as a principal, but, as she reports it, he is deeply troubled by her being non-observant and periodically makes comments to her (or offers body-language) that conveys this discomfort. He has, for example, pointedly expressed disapproval when she mentioned in a group-setting that she was going out to dinner "in a few minutes" (which happened to be before the end of Shabbat); and more recently, he resisted the idea of her walking prospective Bar Mitzvah-aged students through the ceremony in the main sanctuary. In Ms. Lager's opinion, this had to do with his uncomfortableness with her non-observance.

As noted in the other section of this interim report, the relationship between Rabbi Buckman and Ms. Lager, already complicated, took a serious turn for the worse when, according to her, he failed to support her in her salary-discussions with the Board. She expressed her unhappiness in very strong terms which included a kind of character-assault; so, at least, she reports it. They have managed to patch things up somewhat over the last several months, but the tensions between them continue to surface periodically.

There is a sense in which the observance-gap between the rabbi and Ms. Lager parallels the gap between the rabbi and much of his Congregation. As reported by Ms.

Lager in any case, his vision of Conservative Judaism and of what this congregation should become is deeply out of touch with much of his community; she also feels that he is very tied to his vision and unwilling to let it be molded by congregational realities. The extent to which this analysis is accurate is not entirely clear at this point. What is clear is that she perceives him this way.

The Shabbat-focus for the pilot-project surfaced some of the tensions between the two of them. The rabbi was, in fact, pretty wedded to this theme, a theme which Ms. Lager was reluctant to embrace. In her view, the rabbi's underlying purpose was to make the congregation more observant, i.e., more in consonance with his vision. In point of fact, while the rabbi would clearly be happy with such an outcome, in the process to date, it is far from clear that he is unable or unwilling to view things in a more open-ended way. He was, for example, very comfortable with the substitution of "deepen appreciation of Shabbat" for "becoming more observant" language; and he seems interested in any activities that would engage his community in Shabbat observance.

In any event, my own sense is that neither Ms. Lager nor the rabbi is entirely unproblematic this situation, and the dynamic between them could prove a serious impediment to the future of the project. Help in illuminating this problem and how to approach it would be appreciated.

Another "key stake holder" challenge pertains to the Congregation's president, Ms. Rakita. Although Ms. Rakita initially seemed suspicious of our project, she seems increasingly interested in it. Most recently, her level of confidence in the group and in me as a consultant was expressed in her request that we devote some of our meeting time to a problem which she regards as very serious at CBI: namely, the splintering of the congregation into a Day School and a non-Day School community somewhat in tension with each other. The issue never did make it on to our agenda, and my sense is that I have done too little to engage Ms. Rakita in serious conversation.

The content-challenge. To date, the process has been at its richest at those junctures when we have elicited from participants their own views and underlying assumptions concerning e.g. what is central to the Shabbat experience. I feel that we have yet to find an adequate, non-artificial vehicle for bringing powerful "outside-content" into the process to enrich and deepen the thinking of participants.

1. Brief study-sessions at the beginning of our meetings is not resisted; but it's not clear that what is studied than infuses our deliberations. We have spoken about trying to deepen these sessions, but I am not sure what their potential is; and I know the rabbi is concerned that members of the Steering Committee may resist a lot of time devoted to study.
2. I have given thought to the possibility of creating 3 Shabbat-vignettes, each embodying a different understanding of what Shabbat is about as a

way of enriching the process, but this has not yet been done.

3. I have also talked with the rabbi about bringing in a guest (like Art Green) who could take Congregants through a process of learning, partly experiential, that might enrich their conversations.
4. It is conceivable that if the group agrees to come up with a position-statement about "Shabbat at CBI", this challenge would give rise to a spontaneous effort to look at alternative conceptions of Shabbat and ways of thinking about the Shabbat experience.
5. In the end, it may be that the best and most important thing I can do is to find, in the midst of on-going discussions of whatever we happen to be discussing pertinent ways of drawing on content to illuminate the issue at hand. This means that I need to have a map in my own head of how content-issues bear on and can illuminate the varied issues we discuss. (See in this connection, Dewey's *THE CHILD AND THE CURRICULUM*).

In any event, your thoughts on this issue would be valued.

The Momentum-challenge. My impression is that the CBI Steering Committee has generated quite a lot of momentum. The process of writing this up has led me to think that this assumption needs to be checked. But if the assumption turns out to be correct, there is still a question of how to proceed so as fruitfully to build on the momentum that's been generated. Right now the group has discussed reports based on CBI's history with Shabbat, on the teacher-interviews, and so forth, and it is now waiting to hear back from various focus-groups. These discussions have been extremely thought-provoking and have given rise to a number of rich suggestions for reform, e.g. developing a Shabbat tool-kit for use in homes; expanding the empty-nester Shabbat dinners program (the Shabbat Connection) to other constituencies and using them as an outreach tool; rebuilding the Congregation's Friday night program; making efforts to reach populations that may be "turned off" by existing Shabbat programming. Interesting questions have also surfaced -- for example, why it is that many people do not participate in the Shabbat-life of the Congregation. The question is, where do we go from here? I am concerned that members of the group not come to feel that this group is "all talk"; I am also concerned that the process be infused in a meaningful way with more outside-content. I am also concerned about developing a too insular process among Steering Committee members and wonder about the advisability of beginning to engage other constituencies more actively (including, for example, those we've worked with already in a preliminary way, e.g. teachers, participants in focus-groups).

One possibility is to work towards a position-statement on Shabbat and to use that as occasion to deepen and broaden participants' thinking about shabbat. Once constructed, perhaps the group could be broken down into sub-committees connected to

From: Daniel Pekarsky at 608-233-4044
To: Chava Werber at 95322646

12-23-96 11:47 pm
009 of 009

different congregational domains. Led by members of the Steering Committee and guided by the position-statement, the sub-committees would engage others in the process of thinking about the Shabbat experience in their particular domain. This would serve to make the tie to practice and to expand the number of participants. The results of these efforts could then be brought back to the full Steering Committee for discussion.

I am, however, unsure about the best way to proceed, and would welcome input.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL PILOT PROJECT INTERIM REPORT:
DESCRIPTION--Dec. 1996

In the spring of 1995, a set of seminars on the subject of vision-driven education was held in Milwaukee. Among the attendees was Rabbi Lee Buckman, who had just assumed the leadership of a local Conservative Congregation in which he had heretofore functioned as an Assistant Rabbi. Congregation Beth Israel is a suburban congregation of about 700 families. It is located in a building that is perhaps 25 years old, and it is in many respects very typical of Conservative Congregations. In particular, the congregation houses great diversity, with a membership that includes Right Wing conservative Jews (close to Orthodoxy, except on the issue of women in Judaism) and Jews who are very non-observant. As is typical of many such Congregations, the rabbi embodies a traditional way of life that is at sharp variance with much of the membership, many of whom do not go to Shul regularly, do not keep kosher, etc. There is, that is, a terrific gap between the Synagogue's official ideology, genuinely well-embodied by the rabbi, and the congregation's rank and file! Nowhere is the range of outlook better discerned than in the staff of the Congregation's school; the educational director, who is many ways extraordinarily competent, is relatively non-observant, as are many teachers; but the school also includes a number of teachers who are most at home in the Orthodox community (see below).

Rabbi Buckman initially attended the spring 1995 CIJE seminars with reluctance; it is conceivable that he had been pressured to attend by one of his powerful lay leaders. Nonetheless, once he began attending he became increasingly excited about the ideas he was encountering and by the end of the seminar he seemed eager to enter into discussions about his congregation, (Congregation Beth Israel, or CBI) becoming a CIJE pilot-project, a project from which, it was hoped, CIJE would learn and CBI would profit. Rabbi Buckman was particularly taken with the notion of CBI becoming a more vision-driven institution.

This idea was explored in a preliminary conversation that included myself, Rabbi Buckman, his educational director Pamela Lager, and Ruth Cohen, a member of CBI who is also the professional director of the Lead Community project. In response to CIJE's request, the rabbi brought to this meeting a statement developed by him and a team of congregants in which an attempt was made to identify their view of the challenge facing the congregation.

Essentially, as the rabbi saw it, the challenge was this: to communicate the rabbi's vision of what the congregation should be about to the various constituencies and sectors that make up the Congregation, with an eye towards then embedding the vision in

all dimensions of congregational life. Because the team he had been working with was not made up of the most powerful members of his congregation, the rabbi felt that the best way to approach this challenge was to begin by educating his board concerning the beliefs of Conservative Judaism. Once this had been accomplished, he felt, it would be possible to communicate the vision -- as it were, from Central Command -- to the rest of the Congregation.

A number of concerns relating to this approach were surfaced at our meeting. Was it wise to devote the whole first year exclusively to the Board-process he'd envisioned? Should the process be thought of as one of communicating his pre-determined vision to the Board and from them to other constituencies? Was it all that simple? While continuing to hold on to the idea of board-seminars,¹ by the end of the meeting, we were discussing the possibility of engaging broader constituencies in thinking through Conservative ideology; and it was also agreed that I would spend some time trying to better understand the Congregation and its school. No commitments towards a pilot-project were made by either side at this time; it was to be a period of getting to know each other better.

Though troubled by the rabbi's avowed lack of lay support for the kind of process we were considering, I left the meeting guardedly optimistic. This optimism was, however, dampened somewhat when I discovered that the school's educational director, Pamela Lager, had left the May meeting quite upset, feeling that the rabbi had committed the congregation and the school to some involvement with me without adequately consulting her and getting her agreement. The rabbi apologized to her for this, and encouraged me to speak with her.

In my over-breakfast conversation with her, she indicated great interest in the project -- but only so long as her teachers were actively involved in the process and were not in a position simply to be dictated to. I was impressed by Ms. Lager's intelligence, seriousness, thoughtfulness and insight; I felt that this was someone I might be able to work with in a productive way. We agreed that later this academic year I should

¹ In fact, the rabbi did launch these study-sessions at Board meetings, and this initially caused difficulties for two sub-groups -- those who felt that this was not what they had agreed to come to Board meetings for, and those who felt threatened and marginalized by the rabbi's articulation of Conservative ideology, an ideology that was far removed from their own outlook and way of life. The rabbi subsequently made adjustments designed to lower the threat-level; but I now realize that I have yet to inquire in any depth into the character and impact of these study-sessions.

try to get to know the school.

In the months to come, I observed several classes; I interviewed several teachers; and I led a teacher's meeting devoted to questions of goals. My intention was to get as good a feel as I could for what the school was like, for the way the teachers taught, and for the way they thought about what they did. A number of things struck me as I went through this process: first, as indicated above, the diversity of outlook and way of life represented at the school. Teaching in this school were generally secular Jews, strongly Orthodox Jews, deeply spiritual but non-Halachic Jews, and more garden-variety Conservative Jews. Religious differences were matched by "teacherly differences". The ranks of the teachers included stereotypically disengaged, mechanical teachers, but also some extraordinarily dedicated and talented teachers; it is, though, noteworthy that there was as much diversity among the dedicated/talented teachers as among the total population of teachers. It was clear from conversations with the teachers that there was no overall coherence to the school's educational program; and it was also clear that the principal, while deeply respectful and supportive of her staff and able to generate great loyalty, did not have a handle on the school's curriculum. In theory, a curriculum developed by her predecessor and of which she was very respectful was in place; in practice, she knew that it was not seriously used as a guide to practice, and she herself seemed reluctant to take responsibility for putting her own mark on the school's curriculum.

Following my discussions with Pamela Lager and my developing acquaintanceship with the school, I began to feel more confident about the possibility of a serious pilot-project with this institution. Though I had yet to see much lay-support, I was impressed by Rabbi Buckman's and Ms. Lager's seriousness and interest in the project, and I felt that this might be an interesting setting to work with. In February 1996, at a meeting attended by Rabbi Buckman, Pamela Lager, Ruth Cohen, and myself, we entered into more formal discussion concerning a pilot-project.

At the February 1996 meeting, I reported to the group what I had been learning through my meetings with the school's teachers, and we then moved on to discuss the development of a pilot-project. At this time, the rabbi made some important expectations clear: first, CBI had some negative experiences with projects that had been abandoned mid-stream, and the rabbi wanted to be assured that CIJE would prove reliable; second, he was concerned that the project not go on forever, that it be developed so that there would be tangible outcomes in a determinate period of time. Also stressed at this meeting was that the scope of the project was not to be the school but the congregation as a whole. Near the end of this meeting, we agreed

that the next steps would include my trying to develop a better understanding of the institution and an effort to develop a Steering Committee that could help guide the project's development. The meeting concluded with my turning to the assembled group for confirmation that we were, indeed, entering into this project together. The rabbi pointedly turned to Pamela Lager and asked her if she felt ready to proceed, almost as though the whole decision rested in her hands. She looked a little uncomfortable being put in this situation, but said she was very interested in the project. I was a bit confused by the rabbi's behavior and have continued pondering its significance.

In the months that followed, Pamela Lager became the "point-person" for the pilot-project, and our energies focused on generating a Steering Committee. My assumption was that she and the rabbi were in regular communication about this, but this impression turned out to be mistaken. In fact, the spring brought significant problems to the relationship between Ms. Lager and the Rabbi and the Congregation. Ms. Lager's request for a raise precipitated some uncomfortable interactions with the Congregation's Board. Equally important, Ms. Lager felt that the rabbi had been unwilling to defend her or support her during this difficult period. The rabbi's uncomfortableness with her lower level of observance was prominent during this period; also prominent was the tension between Ms. Lager and the synagogue's administrative staff. Ms. Lager resented the unwillingness of the office staff to treat her with due respect for her professional status and role, and she felt that they resented her for demanding to be treated like a professional. She also felt that there was a sexist element to this. In this area as well, she felt she received little support from the rabbi. Ms. Lager came close to being fired and/or to resigning during this period, but in the end she stayed on the job. The experience did, however, take a serious toll on her relationship to the rabbi and the Congregation. The bonds of friendship and trust have been deeply strained.

One result of these tensions (of which I knew little at the time) is that there was very little communication between the rabbi and Ms. Lager about the project during this period. While in theory the Steering Committee put together at this time reflected the views of both the rabbi and Ms. Lager, in fact it turned out to be based almost exclusively on Ms. Lager's intuitions and efforts. This group, which included the rabbi and the Congregation's new president, was called together for a meeting in June of 1996.

The June meeting was designed to acquaint participants with the project we were embarking on and to elicit their views concerning the Congregation's strengths, weaknesses, and pressing needs. It was a spirited conversation in many ways. Unfortunately, it suffered from some serious weaknesses. The

first is that the invitees, while thoughtful and informative, turned out not to be comprised of critical stake holders in the Congregation or even to represent significant constituencies; there was no clear logic to their selection. The second problem was that the President of the Congregation, who showed up late for the meeting, had apparently not been at all informed about the pilot-project by either the rabbi or Ms. Lager; I felt in her bearing a measure of suspicion and reserve -- anything but buy-in. I was very surprised that she knew so little about this enterprise. The other serious problem is that the rabbi never showed up at the meeting, and we were informed in the middle of the meeting that "something had come up."

Deeply disturbed by these matters, the next day Ruth Cohen and I spoke with the rabbi, and I indicated that I was unsure whether the project could proceed in the absence of a more serious commitment to it on his part. The rabbi was clearly disturbed by this and expressed his strong interest in seeing the project go forward. While acknowledging his lack of involvement over the preceding period, he also observed that little effort had been made to keep him actively involved in the process. In this he was entirely correct; as noted above, Pamela Lager had become the "point-person" for the project (and there had been precious little communication between them during this period). In effect, we agreed to make a new beginning and to work towards a more successful launch of the project over the summer.

This new launching began with an August meeting convened by the rabbi to which were invited myself, Ruth Cohen, Pamela Lager, the Congregation's President Gayle Rakita, and Louise Stein, a prominent lay leader (Co-Chair of Milwaukee's Lead Community Project). All but Ms. Rakita were able to attend. The agenda for this meeting was to sketch out a tentative direction for the unfolding of the project, so that an idea could be placed before the re-constituted Steering Committee for deliberation. The second principal item on the agenda was to identify appropriate individuals for the Steering Committee.

I decided to "prime the pump" by bringing to this meeting some concrete suggestions for the way the project might unfold. One of these involved engaging critical constituencies in the Congregation in what I described as "the Big Conversation" -- in using a number of powerful but different conceptions of the why's and wherefore's of Jewish existence (for example, figures like Buber, Rosenzweig, Heschel, Soloveitchik) as a vehicle of getting these constituencies to reflect on their own Jewishness and on the character and direction of the Congregation.

A second idea was to take particular theme that is central to the Congregation - for example, "Israel," "Hebrew", "Prayer", "Text Study", or "Shabbat" -- and to examine it systematically by doing the following: 1) inquiring into the way the theme was

expressed in the day-to-day life of the Congregation across different contexts; 2) eliciting the views of critical constituencies concerning this theme; 3) encouraging these constituencies to develop a deeper understanding of the theme by bringing them into contact with powerful Jewish ideas that address the theme; 4) using the understanding developed through this process to clarify what the Congregation hopes to stand for and to encourage in relation to this theme and to find ways to express this in the life of the Congregation. As part of this conception, it was suggested that the Steering Committee would do some of the critical work, e.g. interviewing Congregants concerning their own views and then analyzing the data in order to understand "where people are".

There was significant enthusiasm for the second idea, and the conversation moved quickly to the identification of an appropriate theme around which to organize the effort. The rabbi quickly expressed a strong preference for "Shabbat" as a theme, his reasons being that Shabbat is at the heart of, and cuts across Synagogue life, and also that it had already been earmarked for special attention in the Congregation this year. Louise Stein and Ruth Cohen seemed comfortable with the idea; Pamela Lager was much less so. In part, this might have reflected her own distance from Shabbat observance; in part, it may also have reflected her sense that there were many in the Congregation who, like her, might feel threatened by a focus on Shabbat.

Underlying Ms. Lager's uncomfortableness was the assumption that a project focused on Shabbat would ultimately be aimed at making the members more observant; and in fact such an assumption may initially have been shared by some of the participants in our meeting. It therefore seemed important to make this assumption explicit and to call it into question -- which I proceeded to do. Indicating that rhetoric encouraging people "to become more observant" would likely alienate many people, I suggested that we might do better with language that encourages "deepening the members' appreciation and enjoyment of Shabbat". Participants in the meeting, including the rabbi, appeared comfortable with this reformulation, and it seemed to render Pamela Lager somewhat more comfortable. She probably continued to wonder whether the change in language also signalled a change in intention!

In any event, it was agreed that the "Shabbat-idea" be put on the table for consideration by the re-constituted Steering Committee, and the last part of the meeting focused on identifying appropriate members. Those at our meeting seemed very thoughtful about this, and they generated what seemed like a strong list. At the end of the meeting, the rabbi announced his willingness to contact all of the potential invitees and to convene the first meeting. It was also agreed that he would chair the meeting and that I would participate as an ex officio

member, that is, as a CIJE consultant. The rabbi's announcement that he would do these things signalled what to my mind was the most important development expressed in this meeting -- namely, his acceptance of responsibility for and leadership of the project.

Using a proposal I had drafted that was in effect a summary of our August meeting, in the weeks that followed, the rabbi contacted the proposed invitees. He also talked with me in depth a number of times about the agenda and the pedagogy for our first meeting with the Steering committee. He succeeded in recruiting a very strong group of constituents for this meeting, which was scheduled for right after the holidays in the fall of 1996.

The rabbi was thoroughly in charge of the October meeting. He spoke of the project as an opportunity to deepen the Congregation's understanding of its core-values and aspirations and to find ways of embedding this understanding in the fabric of synagogue life -- in the school, in family educational settings, and in other contexts. He then suggested that we would be wise to start this process by focusing not on the Synagogue as a whole but on a particular dimension of congregational life, and he proposed Shabbat. The object of the Shabbat project would be to enable the membership of CBI to grow in their appreciation and enjoyment of Shabbat; this would happen through a process that includes reflecting on what, at its best, is special about Shabbat, and then using the results of this thinking as a basis for figuring out how to enrich congregants' encounters with Shabbat, be it in the school, in the main sanctuary, or in other settings. He expressed his hope that by the summer of 1997, we would be in a place to agree on recommendations for implementation.

Against this background, Rabbi Buckman engaged the participants at the meeting in an exercise organized around the following questions:

1. When Shabbat really clicks for you, what's special about it?
2. What were the contributing circumstances? What was present or absent that made it possible for Shabbat to click in this way?
3. Based on this, are there things Beth Israel could be doing, but isn't, to make Shabbat click more regularly for you and others?

The discussion growing out of this exercise occupied the bulk of the meeting and was extraordinarily rich and engaging. In addition to generating important ideas, the exercise got the participants into the subject in a way that would have otherwise

been impossible.

Following the Shabbat discussion, participants briefly considered alternatives to Shabbat as an organizing theme, but the group seemed to find the Shabbat theme very congenial. By the end of the meeting, there was agreement that the process should now proceed along two simultaneous tracks:

1) focus groups, some of them organized around the questions the group had just wrestled with, and designed to elicit information concerning the outlook, expectations, and hopes of the CBI constituency. There was in this connection a good discussion of the kinds of constituencies that should be focused on and of the kinds of questions that are likely to elicit useful data without making the interviewees' feel defensive or inadequate.

2) an attempt to gather information concerning the way Shabbat had been, and is, embedded in the Congregation's life. A long-standing member of the Congregation volunteered to develop a longitudinal perspective that contrasted present Shabbat-customs in the congregation with its predecessors; others took responsibility for looking at the way Shabbat figured into the congregation's family education program and into the school. Looking at the school would involve scanning the curricula and interviews with teachers designed to learn more about what really goes on.

It was agreed that the results of these inquiries would be brought back to the group's next meeting, in November.

I was genuinely excited at the end of this meeting and felt that many of the other participants, including the rabbi, were as well. Between this meeting and the November meeting, Pamela Lager, with my help, developed a set of questions to be used in interviewing teachers. She also sent me the school-wide curriculum drafted by her predecessor - a document that does not see much use.

Scanning this document, one finds little that would offer any guidance concerning the meaning and approach to Shabbat; at best, there tend to be references to other curricula that might be appropriate, e.g. Melton materials. I came away from my scan of these and other curricular materials and from my discussion of this subject with Ms. Lager with the distinct impression that teachers did pretty much what they wanted in the area of Shabbat and that she herself was unclear what in fact they did do.

During this same period, I continued to be in touch with Rabbi Buckman, both to plan the next meeting and to get a sense

of whether the members of the group had carried through with what they agreed to do. The rabbi assured me that they had, and this provided the agenda for the next meeting.

Attendance at the November meeting was excellent! Interviews with the teachers had not yet taken place by the time of this meeting, with the result that the meeting focused on reports from individuals assigned to see what was going on in different congregational domains. These reports were generally well done, and they generated very fruitful conversation. Stimulated by Bunny Dolnick's account of historical changes in the celebration of Shabbat at CBI, there was a thoughtful discussion of "the old days", which featured a lively, well-attended Friday night service that was family-friendly and seasoned with a lot of singing. The disappearance of this service, it turned out, reflected the preceding rabbi's belief that Friday night should be a family-at-home experience, and our own discussion at least called into question the wisdom of his decision (given a world in which both parents typically work and get home late even on Fridays).

There followed a presentation by the Rabbi and the President of the congregation that highlighted the way Shabbat is currently marked in the Congregation -- a presentation that took the group through Shabbat and emphasized the Congregation's regular services and a range of other programs associated with Shabbat. On hearing the relatively lengthy list of things going on, a number of participants expressed surprise that so much was happening on a regular basis; and they wondered whether there might be others, especially newcomers, who are unaware of how much is happening. At the same time, someone else noted that although a lot is going on during Shabbat, only a small percentage of the congregation is involved in these Shabbat experiences. This in turn led to a brief preliminary discussion of the way the Shabbat experience at CBI could be strengthened. Rabbi Buckman indicated that he was keeping a list of the suggestions that were made.

Briefer discussions followed of the way Shabbat figures into family education programs and into the life of the school. In view of the little concerning Shabbat that is reflected in the school's formal curriculum, the importance of hearing from the teachers what they in fact do was underscored, and two members of the group agreed to be responsible for speaking with them.

Towards the end of this conversation concerning the place of Shabbat at Beth Israel, the group indicated an interest in knowing more about the following: 1) what is it that draws people who do participate in the Shul on Shabbat? 2) Why do a lot of people stay away -- and is there perhaps a sub-group among them who would eagerly participate, if the content and/or tone and/or structure of Shabbat activities were differently configured?

These seemed to be important questions to be considered in the focus groups, and the last part of the meeting focused on their composition, i.e. what constituencies would be worth looking into. Following discussion, it was agreed that a trial-run focus-group would be held with what were described as "the empty nesters", and Sandy Thau, a congregant trained in facilitating focus groups, agreed to develop the questions and to lead the session.

Like the October meeting, this one had a good feel to it; while I am not sure that the feeling was universally shared, people generally seemed "pretty high".

Between the November and December meetings, Sandy Thau developed a carefully framed set of focus-group questions aimed at "the empty nesters", another individual interviewed about 8 teachers and recorded the results of these interviews, and the rabbi and I gave thought to the agenda for the next meeting. I encouraged him to introduce some study of Jewish sources that speak to the meaning(s) of Shabbat as a way of adding an important input to our conversation.

Attendance at the December meeting was again very strong; it may be that everyone was there! The session began with a period of study, led by the Rabbi, focused on two different biblical discussions of Shabbat (one of them enjoining us to "observe" the Sabbath, and the other "to remember" it). While the effort to get participants to compare these texts was promising, the discussion was truncated and did not really add ideas to the group's developing conversation. This was unfortunate and left me still wondering how best to infuse the process with content that would not feel artificially appended to an otherwise organic process.

Most of this meeting was organized around the information gathered through the teacher-interviews. After scanning the data, participants offered a variety of responses. They were struck by the extent to which, though not found in the formal curriculum, Shabbat is represented in what teachers do. They also noted that there seemed to be no coherent set of objectives informing what teachers did in this domain -- an observation that led one member of the group to wonder aloud, "**What are the Congregation's goals in this area?**" Scanning the interview-data, it seemed that teachers were deeply frustrated by what they took to be parental disengagement from the school's efforts; and they were most animated and excited when discussing occasions when they had brought students to their homes for a Shabbat-experience. This, they felt, was rewarding for them and powerful for the children.

The observation concerning children going to their teachers' homes to celebrate Shabbat elicited an interesting discussion

concerning the desirability of this practice. A concern was expressed about whether this practice took the children away from their families on Shabbat -- to which someone else responded that for many of the children the alternative to Shabbat at the teacher's home was no Shabbat at all! In this context, the idea of reintroducing a family-oriented Shabbat service in the Synagogue was re-introduced.

A second discussion stimulated by this discussion focused on why it is that non-celebrating families don't celebrate Shabbat. One hypothesis focused on "lack of knowledge" as an obstacle, a hypothesis which led to a suggestion that a user-friendly "tool-kit" or manual needs to be developed. While there was enthusiasm for this proposal, others cautioned against hastily concluding that lack of knowledge is the reason for non-observance; for many, the issue is more lack of interest or motivation!

Against this background, the suggestion was advanced that perhaps CBI should begin thinking of the family rather than individual children as the client for its Shabbat education initiative. Perhaps, as one person put it, the challenge should be to empower families to experience Shabbat and to incorporate it into their lives.

Before concluding the discussion triggered by the teacher-interviews, one of the participants, herself a teacher, noted that much more might be going in the school's Shabbat programming than was elicited by the interviews. It was agreed that we should bring those interviewed together for a focus-group that builds on the individual interviews that had been conducted.

The last part of the meeting was occupied with reactions to a report detailing the Congregation's new "Shabbat Connection" program, which brings "empty-nesters" together for Shabbat dinners in the homes of participants on a regular basis. After it was determined that the Congregation does nothing to contribute to the content of these dinners other than arrange the logistics, the group discussed a proposal to create and distribute a "Shabbat in the home" tool-kit that could be used by host-families. It was also suggested that the Shabbat Connection model, which brings individuals together in private homes for festive Shabbat dinners, might prove an excellent out-reach tool to other populations.

The meeting concluded with an agreement to meet two weeks later to discuss the results of the first focus-group. This meeting, like its predecessors, had seemed very exciting; the rabbi, especially, seemed very high.

As it turned out, there was insufficient time to process the results of the first focus-group, and our meeting was postponed until January 1997. In lieu of the meeting, I had a

lengthy conversation with the rabbi concerning three matters. The first of these was his idea of doing a kind of "Best Practices" study that focuses on congregations that have a vibrant "Shabbat Observant" community. Using the internet, he had already identified some possible sites, and he had recruited two members of the Congregation who were willing to travel to the site to see what could be learned.

The second subject of our conversation was the possibility of the group's developing, based on its work together, a vision-statement that articulated its considered views on the larger ideas and aspirations around which Shabbat programming at CBI should be organized. Once developed, this vision-statement could be put in the hands of sub-committees attached to different congregational domains, each one of them charged with sketching out the practical implications of this statement for its domain, e.g. the school, the Congregation's shabbat programming.

Our third subject concerned Jewish content. The rabbi agreed that a process of deepening the members' understanding of Shabbat would be a useful ingredient in this effort to develop a vision-statement, and we spoke at some length of possible strategies for introducing the content-discussion. One of them was to focus more extensive study time on the different biblical passages relating to Shabbat that we had studied at the preceding meeting. A second was to develop three vignettes, each representing a different portrait of Synagogue-based Shabbat-celebration (like 3 different conceptions of what one's new house might look like!), and to use these as a vehicle of stimulating discussion concerning the Congregation's choices. We agreed to give this matter more thought.

A few days following my conversation with the rabbi, I received a call, out of the blue, from Pamela Lager who asked, "Where do you think all this is heading?" I was not (and am not yet now) entirely sure about what was behind the question. At first, I thought she might be feeling that "we weren't going anywhere" (too much talk, no action), but as we talked it emerged that her central concern was that the rabbi might resist any congregational initiative in the area of Shabbat that did not reflect his own conservative approach to Jewish life -- an approach she felt to be out-of-touch with the Congregation's center of gravity. This was an important issue to raise; also important -- and a possibly serious impediment - is the continuing tension between her and the rabbi and her own uncomfortableness with the Shabbat focus. I came away from the conversation sensing that our overall progress may require their making progress in their working relationship and her developing the confidence; it may also require her developing the confidence to take more initiative in shaping the School's curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

"There are no beggars, no givers - only webs of exchange."

Among the participants in CIJE's Summer Goals Seminar in Jerusalem were a number of representatives of the Milwaukee Jewish community. These included the executive director of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation (Rick Meyer), the executive director of the Jewish Community Center (Jay Roth), the director of the Lead Community Project (Ruth Cohen), and the lay co-chairs of the Lead Community Project (Jane Gellman and Louise Stein). These co-chairs were accompanied by their spouses, each of whom was also in a significant position in the Jewish communal structure; Jerry Stein, for example, was about to become President of the local Federation (and it may well have been as a result of his insistence that the Federation's executive director participated in this seminar).

To date, there have been three significant direct results of this seminar for Milwaukee. First, deeply affected by the ideas he encountered, the executive director of the local JCC was inspired to make issues of Jewish content and goals central to his own agenda. This has been reflected in efforts to re-think the mission of his own agency and especially of its over-night summer camp; it has also been reflected in his successful effort to put issues of Jewish content on the agenda of the national JCC camping movement.

Second, the language of "goals" and "vision-driven institutions" has entered into the lexicon of the leadership, both lay and professional, of the Lead Community Project. In their analyses of what's wrong and of what needs to be done, these themes crop up repeatedly.

Third, the Summer Goals Seminar gave rise to a request on the part of the Milwaukee leadership that a seminar similar to the one held in Jerusalem be organized in Milwaukee. The seminar was conceptualized with the following major purposes: first, to initiate critical stake holders in Milwaukee's Jewish institutions into the issues and insights that define the Goals Project in the hopes of sparking an interest in goals-sensitive efforts at self-improvement; second, to identify one or two promising institutions that might serve as CIJE Pilot-projects.¹

¹ "Pilot projects" are efforts to make a contribution that are also designed to focus, test out, and develop our ideas about how best to understand and approach goals-sensitive efforts at educational improvement.. Thus, a pilot-project is designed to make a contribution to practice but also to deepen our understanding of how to improve practice. Beyond this, if successful and written-up effectively, the pilot-project will offer others in the field a living example of what might be involved in taking on a goals-sensitive process of educational

With these purposes in mind, it was stipulated that a condition of institutional participation in the seminar was a willingness of the institution's professional and lay leadership to attend. In the case of a Day School or a JCC, this would mean the Executive Director/Principal and representatives of the Board. In the case of a congregation, it was expected that the rabbi, the Board President, and the educational director attend. Through a process of advertising and recruiting, a cluster of participant-institutions was generated that included the JCC, four Day Schools (three Orthodox, one non-Denominational), and two congregations, one Reform and the other Conservative. More on the Conservative Congregation - Congregation Beth Israel - below (since it turned out to be the principal Milwaukee pilot-project.).

The seminar took shape as four three-hour sessions held over a four months period. The first three brought the whole group together for a span of time that included work as institutional teams; the last session was individualized, with the seminar leader (DP) meeting individually with representatives of each participating institution. The seminar included opportunities to better understand the instrumental power of a clear and compelling vision; to examine the institution's current goals (avowed and actual) and their relationship to practice; to encounter and wrestle with powerful conceptions of the aims of Jewish education; to work towards clarifying participants' own visions of the ideal outcomes of a Jewish education; to analyze gaps between aspiration and achievement with an eye towards identifying strategies that would close them. The seminar also included an opportunity to identify pressing institutional problems that might fruitfully be the subject of more systematic attention.

At the end of the seminar, representatives of four of the institutions expressed an interest in working further with CIJE on a goals-sensitive agenda: the JCC, the Milwaukee Jewish Day School, Sinai Congregation, and Congregation Beth Israel. In one form or another, work continued with all of these except the Day School. In this context, the focus will be exclusively on Congregation Beth Israel, which is the principal subject of this report.

INTRODUCING CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

Congregation Beth Israel is a Conservative Congregation, located in the suburbs of Milwaukee, with a membership of . Built in , the building is relatively new and is split into two principal sections, in one of which can be found the school and in the other Rabbi's office, other administrative offices, and the main sanctuary. At the time of the 4-session Milwaukee seminar described above, a major change was taking place at CBI.

improvement and of the benefits of doing so.

Rabbi Lee Buckman, who had served as the Assistant Rabbi over several years, had just become the congregation's new Senior Rabbi, replacing Rabbi Panitch who had been there for .

Rabbi Buckman was initially ambivalent about participating in the seminar. On the one hand, as he entered into his new position, he looked forward to an opportunity to think systematically about the institution he was to lead would be about; on the other hand, he was nervous about the amount of time the seminar would require, and also about launching into any kind of reform-agenda before he had stabilized his new position. The fact that one of the lay leaders of the Lead Community Project, Louise Stein, and its professional leaders, Ruth Cohen, were both advocates for the seminar may have influenced Rabbi Buckman's initial decision to participate. He did, however, have difficulty recruiting a full leadership team to accompany him on a regular basis: while his educational director, Pamela Lager, participated, his lay leadership did not participate. Our interest in having Rabbi Buckman participate led us to relax participation requirements so that he could be involved.

Rabbi Buckman seemed very excited by the ideas discussed at the seminar, and by its conclusion, in the late spring of 1995, he and I discussed the possibility of CBI serving as a pilot-project. From his side, this interest reflected his desire to establish a direction for himself and his congregation now that he had assumed leadership; for me, the interest sprang from the sense that he was very sympathetic to the ideas informing the Goals Project and was himself a very serious, thoughtful person. It is relevant to note that he and I had known each other long before this project began: trust, respect, comfortableness with each other marked our relationship. While I was concerned about whether there would be deep support for our work within the leadership of his congregation and indicated to Rabbi Buckman that this could prove a decisive obstacle, we decide to move ahead.

In May of 1995, a meeting was held in a restaurant at the Milwaukee Jewish Federation building attended by Rabbi Buckman, Pamela Lager, the Congregation's educational director, Ruth Cohen (of the Lead Community Project), and myself. The subject of this meeting was whether it made sense to think of Beth Israel as the site for a pilot-project. In preparation for this meeting, CBI's team was asked to prepare - and did prepare - a written document articulating what CBI needed to be working on and how it imagined itself proceeding; attached to this document was the rabbi's own first stab at formulating a vision for the Congregation. (See Appendix 1.)

This document (actually, a letter from the rabbi to me) defined the problem as one of creating a vision that is shared by the congregants and then seeing whether it is embedded in the different wings of the synagogue, e.g. adult education, Sisterhood, religious school, etc. But the document also

identified a second problem -- namely, that the team of individuals with whom he had been discussing the problem of vision was not composed of board members with any real clout; and the rabbi judged it essential to work towards a shared vision with those individuals.

To address this problem, the document proposed a process that began with a one-year study session on Conservative Judaism and Halacha, each session tied to a regular Board meeting. In the rabbi's words,

This protracted study opportunity would help make my vision a shared vision. At the end of the first year, and during the second year, we would then set up a mechanism for the various organizations within the synagogue to examine whether or not their goals are consistent with the vision and what we can do to help them actualize a vision.

At the May 1995 meeting various questions were raised concerning the formulations and proposals found in this document. To quote from my letter to Rabbi Buckman summarizing the meeting (See appendix 2):

The discussion that built on this document raised questions and invited clarification concerning a number of matters, including the following: 1) was the goal of the proposed program of study to develop understanding and commitment to a pre-determined vision, or was the vision to be developed - in part or in toto - through the interaction with the participants? 2) Was the goal of the program of study to develop an understanding of the congregation's vision, or also enthusiastic identification with it? If the latter, what implications might this have for the organization of the program of study? 3) Since members of the existing Board have not been expected to engage in the kind of study being proposed and may not be naturally disposed in this direction, might this cause problems in getting the program of study successfully off the ground? 4) Might there be important congregants that are not on the Board whom it would be useful to engage in the proposed process of education? 5) Might there be fruitful ways to begin a process of reflecting on the state of goals and vision in the school even prior to completion of the study-process that has been proposed?

By the end of the May meeting, we had agreed that the, in addition to the kind of study the rabbi had proposed for his board, it might be valuable to engage other segments of the congregation in reflection concerning "who we are as Jews, what does it mean to be a Conservative Jew, etc.", as well as to begin a process of looking more systematically at educational realities within the Congregation, with special attention to the way goals

do and don't fit in. The possibility of CIJE help with this effort was indicated, but I was careful to indicate that "the nature of CIJE's involvement with your effort beyond the development of the plan will be determined based on the nature of the plan and the seriousness and energy with which key stake holders in your congregation are approaching this important matter."

As the preceding comment suggests, at the end of this meeting I was still concerned about how deep the support was for the project we were considering embarking on; at the same time, I felt quite good about the meeting we had just had -- particularly by the Rabbi's enthusiasm and willingness to be proactive in thinking about how to proceed. But this sense of satisfaction was cut short by a call from the rabbi informing me that the educational director, Pamela Lager, had left the meeting quite upset.

The reason for her upsetness is that she felt that the rabbi had committed the congregation, including the school, to a major project without adequately soliciting her input and support. When she called the rabbi with this concern, he quickly acknowledged that he had been in error to proceed without more careful attention to her concerns and reactions. He agreed to be more careful about this in the future, and it was also agreed that I would speak with her alone.

Pamela and I scheduled a breakfast meeting in Milwaukee during the summer of 1995 at which we began to develop a working relationship and at which she articulated a concern relating to the project. This concern was that any effort to think through what education at Beth Israel should look like needs to be respectful of the teachers and needs to include in the process. That is, the teachers need to be active participants in the process of wrestling with what they should be teaching towards and how they should do it. I indicated my sympathy for her perspective and offered heart-felt thanks for this important contribution to the effort. In this meeting we also talked about the advisability of beginning our look at the school by focusing on one particular area, e.g. Israel, Hebrew, Text Study, etc. She was very re-assured by this meeting and followed it up with a letter indicating that she "would love to be part of the project...it interests me and it is in the best interest of our shul." She concluded her letter by indicating that she would begin thinking about what dimension of the school to explore.

I came away from this set of interactions with a very positive impression of Pamela. She is bright, deeply respectful of and dedicated to her teachers, with the capacity to convey this to them and to create in them genuine loyalty to her and respect for her. Pamela has had experience as a teacher and is studying in a graduate education program at a local university. She brings considerable sophistication and a sense of professionalism to her work. Because this is an institution that

operates in a more familial way sometimes, there are times when her insistence on treating others and being treated her self "professionally" creates friction between her and the institution. Another source of friction derives from her sense that as a woman, she is not treated as seriously by the Congregation's staff as her position would warrant. Yet another source of uncomfortableness in Pamela's relationship to the congregation is that she herself is not observant along the lines of Conservative Judaism. This seems to be a source of some uneasiness, especially in her relationship with the rabbi, who would clearly be happier if his educational director modelled the way of life the congregation supposedly stands for. At the same time, though, the rabbi is very appreciative of Pamela's overall competence and of her contribution to positive school morale, and this in many ways seems to counterbalance the misgivings he feels concerning her non-observance.

THE RABBI'S BOARD STUDY SESSIONS

In the fall of 1995, following the Chaggim, two principal things happened. The first is that, as he had planned, the rabbi introduced periods of study about Conservative Judaism into his Board meetings. He did so using an article entitled "The Sacred Cluster" by Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary; this article identified the central values that define Conservative Judaism as chancellor Schorsch understands it. This project proved problematic at the outset on two grounds: first, some members of the Board resented the use of Board time for this kind of an activity -- this was not, they felt, what they had bargained for when they joined the board. Second, some members of the board felt threatened by these study-sessions: these sessions identified Conservative Judaism with beliefs and practices considerably different from those which typified some members of the Board, and they felt negatively judged, marginalized, by all of this. They expressed themselves strongly to the rabbi about this between the first sessions, and he made an effort to re-frame these sessions in ways that would be sensitive to them.

GETTING TO KNOW THE SCHOOL'S TEACHERS

The second thing that happened in the fall of 1995 was an effort on my part to develop a closer relationship to Pamela and the school. During this period, Pamela and I were engaged in conversations that followed-up on our August meeting. Having decided that a useful first-step might be to get to know realities "on the ground" in the school, we agreed that I would begin a process of familiarizing myself with the school and its teachers. Three parallel processes were agreed on: 1. Observing some of the teachers at work; 2. Interviewing selected teachers; and 3. A session with all of the school's teachers, designed to get to know how they think about what they're doing and to begin developing a relationship with me. These activities went on in December 1995 and January 1996 and

culminated in the meeting with the teachers at a group. A few comments follow concerning this meeting, followed by some rough generalizations concerning the teachers.

The teachers meeting. Some sixteen or so teachers gathered with Pamela and myself over lunch for a meeting that was to last from 12:00 to 2. Since class was not over til 12 and since they needed time to get their lunches, our effective working time was 12:30 to 2. I viewed this meeting as a chance to start a conversation with them concerning their goals as educators, to get a sense of how they viewed what they were about. As a result of how she introduced me, I had the sense that Pamela viewed it somewhat differently -- as a chance for the teachers to air their concerns about the school.

I began with a general introduction concerning the importance of goals that began with the Commission's decision not to tackle the problem of goals and led them through the Jerusalem and Milwaukee seminars, up to conversations with Lee and Pamela. People seemed to me interested, but Pamela, perhaps sensing something I wasn't or concerned about her own agenda, seemed a bit impatient.

I then gave the group an exercise to spend a few minutes on. The first question invited them to articulate their vision of an ideal graduate -- 1) what his/her attitudes, beliefs, skills, behaviors, etc. would be? 2) How this person would finish the sentence "Being Jewish is important to me because...."? 3) List several purposes that the teaching of Bible could be used to accomplish and identify the one or two that you view as most important; 4) What do you view as the school/congregation's major educational problems? What concerns need to be addressed?

As I summarize these now, it's immediately apparent to me that there were way too many questions here. In reality, we dealt primarily with #s 1 and 4, with occasional references to #2. What struck me as I listened to them was how difficult it was for them to think about their aims in any kind of a systematic way. "Being Jewish is important to me because it's important for the Jewish people to continue." [But why is it important for the Jewish people to continue?] Or: "The ideal graduate will understand the basic message of Judaism and will transmit it to others." [But what is the basic message of Judaism?] Or, "The ideal graduate will be proud of being Jewish." [But by virtue of what will he she be proud. Why should being a Jew make one proud?]

Other kinds of aims were also expressed, including: a) a desire to continue the process of learning; b) initiation into a conversation concerning the meaning of Jewish life and an informed interest in making one's own choices from among the possibilities apprehended; c) "being a light unto the nations" [in what sense? what is it that we have to offer the other nations?]

It was only late into the session that one of the teachers, clearly deeply traditional [with connections, I later discovered to the local Yeshiva Elementary School], said that her goals included cultivating children for whom T'filla would be central.

What particularly struck me about this response is how little anybody else had to say about it -- or about many of the other tenets associated with Conservative Judaism. There was, for example, practically nothing about God and one's relationship to God, or about Halacha, or about classical texts, or about Israel.

As for major problems that needed to be addressed, my recollection is that the following themes were mentioned:

1. Education seems to be geared towards the ceremonies associated with becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah -- rather than towards goals that go beyond this. There was, however, a concern expressed that there were not significant educational opportunities for children beyond the Bar Mitzvah stage.

2. A number of comments concerned the family: a) the unfairness of having expectations of the kids that are not had of their parents -- and the feeling on the part of some that much more needs to be asked of the parents; b) on the other hand, the sense expressed by one person that one can't let family-level or involvement limit the schools's agenda for the children. The challenge may be for the school to lead the children beyond the family 's horizon -- and perhaps the children can be used as a vehicle for change in the family. c) some expressed the view that the families are less involved with their children's education than they used to be, and others seemed to agree.

3. There were references to problems of discipline that teachers needed help with as well.

General impressions of the teachers. My overall impression of the teachers was how varied a group they are in virtually every respect -- as people, as Jews, and as teachers. There were examples of inspired pedagogy here and there, but also stereotypical examples of rote teaching and disengagement on the part of both teacher and students. Jewishly, they included individuals who identified themselves as Conservative Jews but also Orthodox and non-Observant Jews. And while some of the teachers seemed like suburban housewives picking up some money on the side teaching, there were also teachers in this school who bring to their work deep Jewish concerns and commitments. What was interesting is that among these more serious teachers there was as much diversity as there was between them and the others.

Here are a few images.

Mrs. B. -- easily in her 60s, thin, short, and tired, Mrs. B. gave the impression of having taught at this school or others like it for a long, long time. She is teaching Hebrew words to a group of some 7 or 8 children through a kind of basketball game activity; but there is absolutely no energy in this activity, either from her side or that of the children. Mrs. B. is wholly mechanical in what she does. Mutual disengagement is the norm. Nothing is happening here!

Mrs. C: A woman probably in her late 50s, Mrs. is a forceful, energetic woman with strong intelligence and convictions. For years she had run the community's overnight camp and had succeeded, at a time when most such camps were only symbolically Jewish, in suffusing this camp with rich Jewish content. She views herself as a kind of elder statesman who, by virtue of this, can make demands that others cannot: she can and does, for example, insist on strong family involvement in the classes that she teaches. She strikes one as an educational liberal, demanding, on the one hand, but a great friend to ideals of critical thinking and respect for children as full persons. She has the air of a person who is teaching only because she wants to -- not because of need. She is fiercely outspoken in virtually all contexts and is for this reason both respected and sometimes disliked.

Mrs. W. Probably the most inspired teacher I have thus far seen at this institution (See appendix for description of her at work). Mrs. W. is young, attractive, and energetic and brings a warm and directive interpersonal style to her work with the children. She also brings with her very exciting curricular ideas, and the children in her class are enthusiastically and productively engaged in work that is at once very serious and rewarding. Most striking is how spiritual a person she is: she has had life-transforming religious experiences and is utterly comfortable organizing classroom experience around the children's relationships with God. Outside of the synagogue, Mrs. W. has written a book on spirituality and has organized adult study groups to deal with spiritual matters: this is a person who exudes enthusiasm, dedication, and enjoyment of the children. Her comfortableness with very personal kinds of "God"-talk is unparalleled by anything else I saw in the school. Mrs. W. organized a morning service for the youngest kids in the school that is more deeply spiritual and religiously personal than virtually any religious service one would normally encounter in typical Conservative congregations.

While Mrs. W. is deeply spiritual, there is a Buberian quality to her spirituality in the following sense: there is nothing in her approach to suggest that one needs Halacha in order to facilitate one's religious life and experience. Asked about how Halacha fits into her religious outlook, Mrs. W. acknowledged that she is not really sure, and that this is a

matter that troubles her.

Mrs. D. Mrs. D. is a young woman of perhaps 24. She is a Chozeret bi'tshuvah and is married to a member of the Orthodox community. She wears a Sheit'l and brings with her a very traditional outlook. She is here for a mix of motives: to earn money, but also because introducing children to Judaism in a serious way is important to her. But the overall experience of working in this school is frustrating to her. Not only are there hints that she is disapproving of the kind of Jewish life the children's families represent, she is sometimes uncomfortable, for religious reasons, with the demands placed on her by the school; she is, for example, very uncomfortable participating in the weekly Service organized by Mrs. W.

Mrs. S. Mrs. S. is a friendly suburban woman, herself probably a graduate of a school like this. She likes and is comfortable with young children. But she brings with her very little Jewish content or pedagogical sophistication. Her classroom is a pleasant environment, though one has the sense that not much is learned here.

Mrs. R. Married to the Cantor, Mrs. R. is utterly at home in the Synagogue and with the young children she works with, with whom she is very maternal. She is not at all reflective or articulate about what she does with the children and why, but she has intimate familiarity with Jewish customs, Bible stories, and the like. Sort of shlumpy in appearance and in her approach to what she does in the school, she is probably, judged by criteria of reliability and child-satisfaction, pretty effective.

What is striking about these people to an observer is how different they are from one another -- as people, as Jews, as teachers. Though they may well share loyalty to the educational director, one has little sense that they are united by any kind of a shared sense of what it means to be a Jewish human being or of what should be the Congregation's primary educational aims.

BECOMING PARTNERS

Up to this point, I had been proceeding to get to know CBI without any agreement that it would become the site for a pilot-project. On my part, there was uncertainty concerning the congregation's suitability due to the lack of serious lay involvement in the process. On their part, there were hesitations of other kinds (alluded to below). In the wake of visits to the school and meetings with the teachers, I felt ready to move ahead. Though continuing to be troubled by the lack of lay involvement, I was impressed by the rabbi's and the educational director's interest in the project -- and I was left with a positive impression of the teachers, based on my meetings with them.

The February, 1996 meeting. It was against this background

that Rabbi Buckman, Pamela Lager, Ruth Cohen, and I gathered to discuss the future of the project.² I viewed this as a critical meeting, and one not to be deferred. For this reason, at some personal inconvenience, I took a bus to Milwaukee on a weekday so as to meet with Lee and Pamela. Ruth Cohen asked to participate in the meeting as a lead community representative and so as to suggest ways in which this project might be integrated into others going on; and the suggestion was warmly received by Lee.

I viewed this meeting as an attempt to decide if it made sense for B.I. to become a Pilot Project. I intended to lay out reasons for thinking the fit a good one and basic pre-conditions to which both sides would agree. I wanted to begin with impressions I had formed of the school, based on my observations to date.

My initial presentation emphasized the seriousness of some of the key players -- especially Lee and Pamela; it was not just their commitment to Jewish education that impressed me, or only their willingness to be self-critical, but also their refusal to give up on the congregation as an educational vehicle at a time when many have begun dismissing it as a serious vehicle of education. I noted that from my point of view the fact that B.I. is a congregational setting is a significant plus, since this continues to be the setting for the bulk of Jewish education that goes on in the U.S. An effort in such a setting complements our work in a Day School setting very well.

I also conveyed the high impression I had formed of two teachers (Leeza and Ateret). I took note of the seriousness exhibited by many other teachers, and the good attendance, at the recent Teachers Meeting that I had led; and I also noted that I had seen some superb teaching (on the part of Leeza, who was willing to tackle "God-talk" in a serious way). I also took note of the respect that Pamela seems to have engendered in her staff

² A word here about Ruth Cohen. Ruth is the professional who heads the Lead Community Project. She is also a member of the Congregation Beth Israel. She is a very bright person, capable of important insights; she also has a tendency at times to be somewhat negativistic. Her position in the Lead Community Project is for various reasons not an easy one, and her work has garnered mixed reviews. She has felt somewhat insecure in her position, a circumstance that has led her, as a way of establishing her importance and credibility, to insinuate herself and her views into various situations in ways that are sometimes inappropriate; in spite of this situationally wrought weakness, she makes many valuable substantive contributions and is eager to be helpful. In relation to the CBI project, there has been a measure of ambiguity concerning the nature of Ruth's involvement: is she there as a member of the Lead Community team or as a member of the Congregation? I am not sure that this has been very clearly resolved.

and the caring community she has established. The kids seemed very engaged in the settings I had observed them (classrooms, tfillot, and music), but I noted that while important, this was not totally surprising at the earliest stages of Jewish education.

I also took note of the great diversity among the teachers in respect of outlook and pedagogy. While such diversity can be a blessing, it can also lead to incoherence and to a failure for different elements of the overall program to build on one another. I suggested that this might well be a problem, e.g., with Leeza's God-focussed curriculum. Also in a somewhat more negative vein, I expressed my concern that there did not appear to be much lay-support for the projected work on goals.

My introductory comments also tried to summarize what I felt I had learned during the recent meeting with the teachers. I was, for example, struck in their discussion of goals and aims by the vagueness of their aspirations: graduates should "live Jewishly," "learn and transmit the Jewish message", be "proud to be a Jew," be "committed Jews", be "a light unto the nations". In each case, it was unclear (to me and, I fear, also to a number of them) what substantive beliefs and convictions were implicit in these slogans.

I was also struck by the fact that for many of them the core of what they had to say about goals and aims had little, if anything to do with Conservative ideology. Kashrut/observance/Tfilla were only mentioned by a few, and a number offered views indicating that their aim was for the young to make their own choices concerning how to define themselves Jewishly.

I also tried to summarize major issues/concerns voiced by the teachers at the teachers meeting. These tended to fall into the following categories:

discontinuities: between Conservative ideology and what is actually taught; between what teachers teach and how they live; between what school teaches and the home-life of the students.

Bar Mitzvah orientation: a concern was expressed that the school's efforts were too heavily organized around the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. There was a sensed need to more broadly understand the educational process and to imagine it as something that goes beyond the Bar Mitzvah stage..

parental disengagement: not just lack of continuity between home and school, but a felt lack of parental support for the

school's efforts and of involvement in the life of the school.

the problem of relevance: really another form of discontinuity -- the sense that there was a chasm between what the school was teaching and the students' world and lives outside the school context. There is a need for the school's curriculum to more meaningfully speak to the children's real and living concerns and outlook..

Miscellaneous: comments were made about the need to prevent inter-faith marriage , as well as about the need for the Shabbat, Kashrut, and Torah curriculum to become more substantial.

Against this background, I spoke about some of the reasons for thinking of BI as promising, as well as about whatever concerns I had. I said that CIJE would provide my time for the project, as well as my transportation and lodging costs, but that the Congregation would need to make available the time of the educational leaders, of lay leaders, and of teachers. Without such involvement, the project would not get very far.

If we went ahead with the project, I imagined the remainder of this academic year having two dimensions: a) an opportunity for me to get to know the institution well (by means of observations, interviews with different kinds of stake holders, perhaps a Shabbat visit, study of mission-statements, curricula, etc.; and b) a planning process that would involve calling into being an appropriate committee that would be actively involved in the process -- perhaps "a Steering Committee." Since the theme of curriculum revitalization is on their minds as an institution, I indicated that it might be of interest to identify a particular curriculum-area and to investigate it systematically next year -- looking at, say, Hebrew, or Bible, or Tfilla, and investigating "official" goals, curricula, what happens in classrooms, outcomes, attitudes of key stake holders towards the area, etc. The area could be investigated both longitudinally and, as it were, cross-sectionally (across different areas of congregational life at a given moment in time). This could be an interesting - and doable - starting-point.

Responding to my presentation, Lee and Pamela were very enthusiastic both about the idea of becoming a pilot-project site and about my ideas concerning how to proceed. It is noteworthy that Lee seemed to me generally upbeat about the prospects of generating some lay-involvement in this project, and seemed

responsive to the suggestion that cultivating lay-champions for Jewish education needed to be an important priority.

Along the way, a number of important issues were raised and discussed:

Is this a school project or a congregational project?

In response to my comments about "the school," Ruth Cohen rightly reminded all of us that we needed to be thinking about the congregation as a whole as an educating institution and as the object of our efforts. Implicit in the discussion that ensued was the issue of whose project this is: Lee's? Pamela's? both of them? At times I sensed a measure of resistance to the idea of this being a congregation-wide effort, but by the end of the meeting I felt that everyone was comfortable with this notion -- though we seemed to assume that a theme or curriculum-area that is central to the life of the school would be the springboard to the larger effort.

Follow-through: Lee expressed the concern that more than one project had been launched at Beth Israel but that those in charge have not been dependable; he wanted assurance that CIJE would "stick it out".

Determinate goals/time-limit: How long would this project last? Lee felt that we should identify some clear goals and a reasonable time-limit by which to achieve them, rather than simply going on indefinitely.

Drawing people into the process: Much of our discussion dealt with the need to engage educators and lay people in our efforts. In part, this may be a matter of generating money that could be used to buy the time of teachers and administrators for this project; and we spoke about the possibility of turning to the Lead Community Project for such resources. But in part this was also a matter of formulating the project in terms that would be exciting to the constituencies we hoped to engage.

At the end of the meeting, Lee seemed to resist stating his interest in going ahead with the project and turned to Pamela for her view. She turned it back to him, but he batted the issue back to her. She finally said that, yes, she was interested in going ahead with this, and he then added his interest in the project. [I was perplexed and a mite worried by Lee's hesitation and did not know whether to interpret it as ambivalence. My suspicion, though, was that he wanted to make sure not to preempt Pamela's role in making the decision. Based on a more recent conversation with Ruth, this suspicion seems confirmed --

and my concern alleviated.] I indicated that I needed final clearance from CIJE to go ahead with this, but that I felt we were "Go."

It was agreed that on Lee's return from Israel we would hold another meeting aimed at identifying individuals to serve on a planning committee and at other dimensions of launching the project. It was noted that strong involvement in this effort, not just on the part of professional leadership and educators but also on the part of significant lay constituencies and leaders, was essential. Such matters need to be kept in mind in generating a Planning/Steering Committee.

PROBLEMATICS OF SPRING

For reasons that I am not entirely clear on at this point, most of my interactions over the spring period were with Pamela Lager; she was becoming the "point-person" for the project, helping to identify possible individuals for the Steering Committee, communicating messages back to Lee, keeping me informed, etc. Perhaps this was due to the enthusiasm she had been showing (as compared with Lee's more reserved posture); but I'm not sure. What I am clear about - with the benefit of hindsight -- is that this was a serious mistake (See below).

All in all, however, the project was fairly dormant during the spring. Though at the time I felt that this had to do with my own busy-ness at the University, later I discovered that this was also a period of great turmoil in the Congregation, especially in the relationship between Lee and Pamela. What happened is that salary-negotiations between Pamela and the Board turned serious acrimonious, and that, much to Pamela's chagrin, the Rabbi did not offer her the kind of support she would have hoped for. She was deeply hurt by this and emotionally withdrew from the rabbi, a person for whom she feels a lot of respect. She was also hurt by criticisms of the way she related to the Synagogue's administrative staff; they found her, she reported, too cold and business-like. In her opinion, she was just being "professional" and felt that they had no right to expect more of her! The situation was complicated by the fact that Pamela is less observant than the rabbi would hope his principal would be, a feature of the situation that deepened the uneasiness in their relationship. Pamela came very close to leaving in the late spring; and although she remained, the situation left in its wake some negativity in Pamela's relationship to the rabbi and the congregation. When I learned of this (exclusively, by the way, from Pamela), I had grave doubts that our pilot-project could go anywhere, but having entered into the situation, I decided to plow ahead.

THE FAILED MEETING

My conversations in the late spring with Pamela around the

development of a Steering Committee for the project gave rise to a committee largely selected by her, with little input or involvement on the part of the rabbi. While the rabbi, along with the President of the Congregation, agreed to come to the meeting, when the actual meeting came about, he did not show up, and we got a message to the effect that "something had come up."

The meeting itself was lively and interesting, but seriously problematic. First, as noted, the rabbi wasn't there. Second, in the middle, the President of the Congregation (Gail) shows up and announces that she herself has an education-agenda for the Congregation; and it was clear from the way she said this that there had, up to then, been no conversations between her, Lee, and Pamela concerning this project and its relationship to her own agenda. Third, it was far from clear that the people showing up at the meeting represented the kind of group that would be able to move the Congregation along with this project.

While not unhappy with the course of the meeting, I was very upset at its conclusion about Lee's absence. Together with Ruth Cohen, I called him the next day to let him know our displeasure and to indicate that I was not prepared to continue with the project without much deeper involvement on his part. He responded that he did want to be more deeply involved and did not want CIJE to pull out of the project. He felt, he said, that very little had been done over the preceding several months to keep him in the loop, the implication being that responsibility for his lack of involvement did not lie with him alone.³ I owned up to my contribution to this problem on the spot, and we agreed to go ahead with a second meeting, this time making sure to be more systematic about whom to invite. We agreed to begin with a small planning meeting in August.

THE PLANNING MEETING

The planning meeting held in August felt like a new beginning to the entire project. It was designed to frame the aims and direction of the project and to identify appropriate individuals for a Steering Committee. Invited to the meeting were Lee, Pamela, Ruth, Gayle (the President), and Louise Stein;

³ In my judgment, he was entirely correct about this. Not having recognized the rift that had developed between him and Pamela, I had assumed much thicker communication between them than was actually going on -- whereas in fact he was increasingly less involved. Quite apart from this, though, it was probably a serious mistake to make Pamela the "point-person" in the project. In the first place, this tended to give the project a school-focus; and in the second place it did not lodge control of the enterprise in that individual with the most power to shape the course of events.

all but Gayle were able to attend.

This meeting had three major outcomes: first, members of the group articulated important concerns that they felt needed attending to if the project was to proceed effectively; second, there was a discussion of strategies for moving the process along; third there was a discussion of appropriate individuals for a Steering Committee.

Concerns and provisos. A number of concerns were voiced about how we should understand the project:

1. We need to be careful to make sure that the efforts we are undertaking are integrated with - neither repeat nor conflict with - other efforts being undertaken (e.g. Lee's work with the Board, Gail's efforts as President, etc.). It was noted that even if the programs are not in conflict we need to be careful not to load too much into the life of the congregation at one time.

2. Louise expressed the thought that this project could become a part of, or a prelude, to a congregation-side Strategic plan.

3. It was stressed that it would be very important to give participants in the process a clear sense of where the process was heading -- of the ways in which it would feed back into the life of the congregation and the school.

Strategic discussion. To facilitate our discussion of how to proceed, I sought to prime the pump by putting some possibilities on the table.

1. Introducing "the great conversation" into BI

The intuitive idea is that BI would identify critical constituencies and would create contexts in which they could engage in serious reflection on the whys and wherefores of Jewish existence. I imagined thinkers like Buber, Greenberg, Brinker, Soloveichik, etc., who represent different takes on the nature of Jewish existence. The challenge would be to understand their views, to use them as a vehicle of clarifying their own views, and to consider the educational implications of these thinkers' views (and of their own, as they emerge).

There was, in this connection, some conversation concerning people's anxiety talking about "the big questions" in the context of a congregation -- the fear that they might say something beyond the pale or else of coming to feel marginalized as the group crystallizes a clearer vision. We spoke about the need for a halfway house between silence on the one hand and imposing a

vision on the other hand. The idea of creating a culture in which learning and discussion could go on was very appealing to those around the table -- including Lee (who sometimes seems a little too inclined to impose a vision).

2. Pick a theme -- e.g. shabbat, text-study, Israel, Hebrew, God and explore it systematically in relation to competing Jewish perspectives; to its place in the congregation's modus operandi in school and beyond; to the views of critical constituencies. This process could involve:

a. "content-analysis"; b. Interviews with critical or representative individuals; c) focus groups; d) outcome-studies; e) opps. to study.

b. work towards clarifying a congregational position on the theme in question.

c. an effort to strengthen practice with attention to the clarified congregational position.

3. A "taking-stock" starting-point that would involve:

A. taking a look at:

what we say we're teaching/communicating;
what we're actually teaching/communicating;
outcomes;

B. RE: E.G. Shabbat, Israel, Hebrew, Study, Prayer, religious observance, God, the Jewish People, the Meaning of Jewish history, etc.

C. Via: 1. investigations/content analysis; 2) interviews; 3) focus groups.

D. BY: a steering committee that will meet to process the data and formulate questions, issues and findings, and will then use them as a basis for stimulating serious discussion amongst critical constituencies like Teachers, the Board, Parents, the Education committee, etc.

The spirit behind this proposal and #2 is that it would raise the level of discourse in the congregation -- not just among the Steering Committee, but also among those identified for focus groups and interviews. While "values clarification" was a part of the effort (in that an attempt would be made to elicit their views) it was stressed that it is only an element. For one thing, the Steering Committee would be doing study as a basis for focus groups/interviews; second, interviews and focus-groups would be designed not just to elicit views in order to challenge

and enrich the conversation.

Below I summarize the major reactions to these suggestions:

1. There was a lot of excitement about using the Steering Committee in this way to guide the process along.
2. The sense of the group is that #2 (the one that involved selecting a particular theme) would allow an opportunity to do #1 and #3 as well. Essentially, the thought was that it would be most fruitful to do #3, but with a more limited (single-theme) content.
3. There was some discussion of appropriate theme. One person (Pam) felt that Shabbat would be uninteresting to some folks, whereas "God" would be of universal interest. The rabbi disagreed, urging that we do Shabbat on the grounds that it coheres with other initiatives being undertaken.
4. It was agreed that if we do Shabbat, it needs to be approached very delicately so as not to marginalize people. Identifying our aim as "deepening members' appreciation of Shabbat" is, for example, preferable to "encouraging people to become more observant." Remember in this connection Ruth's example of her son enjoying singing on Friday night, and Lee's sympathy for the need to find multiple ways of enriching appreciation for Shabbat.
5. The importance of making clear to participants what the larger picture looks like -- how interviews, focus groups, etc. will translate into, or will be brought to translate into, educational changes, was stressed. People need to know what the end-point is.
6. It was suggested that what should be brought to the Steering Committee is not a carefully worked out plan, but a rough framework which it can then further shape.

Identification of a Steering Committee. Attention focused on appropriate individuals from prominent committees and from target-populations/constituencies. There was a shared sense that the individuals selected would need to be thoughtful and willing to invest energy in the project. Below is the list of names identified at this meeting:

Roberta London, Bob Hirschman, Debbie Mazius, Judy Werlin, Michael Coltin, Gail Rakita, Liz Wiemer, Ateret Cohen???, Ed Rettig, Bonnie Dolnick, Pamela Lager, Roth Cohen, Louise Stein.

Most importantly, Lee agreed to convene and chair the committee as well as to invite participation of the potential members we had identified. Also clarified was my own role: I would function as an ex officio member of the Committee in my

capacity as CIJE consultant. This definition of Lee's role and my own marked a decisive turning-point in the overall process!

At the conclusion of the meeting We agreed on a tentative meeting for the to-be-formed Steering Committee group right after the Chaggim. Finally, and not unimportantly, the group made provision for dealing with individuals who had come to our June meeting (described above as "the failed meeting") in the expectation that they would be the Steering Committee.

There seemed to be a lot of excitement in the air by the end of the meeting. Lee's interest in chairing it and in involving some "big guns" was encouraging; so was Louise's participation. My sense was that her presence might have made a significant difference; she seemed able, at critical moments, to move us along. It would, I felt as I left the meeting, be important to bring Gayle up to speed with what we had accomplished. Overall, I felt quite optimistic following this meeting. My main source of concern was my sense that all was not well in Lee's relationship to Pamela and that she, because of her issues around observance and her relationship to the rabbi, was uncomfortable with what felt to her like the rabbi's insistence that Shabbat be the focus.

THE PROPOSAL

Following the August meeting, I drafted, at the request of the group that had met in August, a proposal that would serve as a guide to the project and as a tool for recruiting participation in the project. Most of that proposal is summarized beginning on the next page.

BETH ISRAEL CONGREGATION GOALS PROJECT
Results of August 1996 Planning Meeting

INTRODUCTION

In August, 1996 a planning team gathered to formulate the next steps in the Beth Israel Goals Project undertaken in conjunction with the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education. Participants included Rabbi Lee Buckman, Pamela Lager, Educational Director, Louise Stein, Ruth Cohen of the Lead Communities Project, and Daniel Pekarsky of CIJE. Invited but not able to be present at the meeting was Gail Rakita, President of the Congregation. The meeting began with a summary of the origins and development of the Beth Israel Goals Project, leading up to a discussion of two central matters: 1) the nature and scope of the project to be undertaken, and 2) composition of the project's steering committee. The sense of the group was that we are embarked on a project that has the promise of greatly enriching the quality of congregational life at Beth Israel.

THE PROPOSED PROJECT

In line with previous conversations, it was noted that the focus of the project should not be the school but the congregation in its entirety; and that the object of the project was to enhance the quality of Beth Israel's educational program by 1) achieving greater clarity concerning its most fundamental goals; and 2) achieving greater overall coherence between these goals, on the one hand, and both practice and outcomes, on the other hand.

Because the Congregation is already committed to a process of looking at the place of Shabbat in the life of Beth Israel, the Committee determined that the Shabbat focus would be very appropriate to the goals-process we had envisioned. Intuitively, the challenge would be to clarify and deepen the place of Shabbat in the life of Beth Israel and its supporting community through a range of activities that include:

- a) clarifying how Shabbat currently fits into the practices of the Congregation, including but not limited to its explicitly educational efforts;
- b) clarifying how Shabbat fits into the outlook and lives of key constituencies (including the professional and lay leaders, teachers, parents and children). This would involve interviews, as well as focus groups.
- c) having opportunities (not necessarily in isolation from a. and b.) to examine and explore different understandings of what Shabbat is and how it fits into a Jewish life, and to use these opportunities as occasions to deepen the views of participants and of the Congregation in the process. Such opportunities to learn might be introduced in a variety of ways. As

examples: they might be embedded in the interviews and focus groups discussed in b.; they might be introduced as part of routine parts of congregational life (sermons, teachers meetings, family education programs, etc.); they might be introduced through a series of lectures, classes, etc.

d) structured opportunities, clearly and visibly built into the process at the outset, to translate the findings arrived at through the reflection stimulated in the course of a. - c. into implementable policy and program-recommendations that will affect the conduct of congregational life, in and beyond the school.

Our discussion took it as an assumption that inquiries relating to members' understanding and practice of Shabbat could be matters of great delicacy; handled crudely, they could give rise to feelings of anxiety, uncomfortableness, and defensiveness. It is therefore essential that a culture of inquiry be established which encourages non-judgmental, reflective, and self-reflective discourse. People need to feel that nobody is passing judgment on them or trying to change them.

Our discussion also stressed that the Steering Committee, under the guidance of Rabbi Buckman, would play a critical role in this process. It would be involved in gathering data (by taking a lead-role with interviews and focus-groups); in interpreting the data; and in deliberating over the policy-implications of what is learned. It is assumed that this process will prove a rich educational experience for members of the Steering Committee.

For membership in the Steering Committee, our group felt it important to look for individuals who represent critical constituencies and/or play critical roles in the Congregation; who would approach the project with enthusiasm and thoughtfulness; and who would be willing to give it the time it needed. It was, we felt, important for the Steering Committee to be made up of individuals who, as a group, carry a lot of credibility in the life of the Congregation.

We are aiming for an Oct. 7 meeting, from 7:45 to 10 pm. We agreed that the Steering Committee should be presented with no more than a loose framework that it would then shape into a more concrete plan of action that expressed its outlook.

THE OCTOBER MEETING

Between the August meeting and the end of the Holidays, the rabbi proved successful in lining up a strong group of participants for our first Steering Committee. They included Ed Retig, Louise Stein, Gayle Rakita, Judy Werlin, Bob Hirschman, Alice , Bunny Dolnick, and Pamela Lager, and Leeza Wiemer (one of the teachers I had observed). Though not all of them could attend our first meeting, the meeting itself went very well.

It is noteworthy that prior to this meeting (and subsequent meetings), Lee Buckman and I had several lengthy conversations concerning the aims, the structure, and the pedagogy of the event. It has remained very clear that I am there solely in the role of consultant.

At the conclusion of the August meeting, I wrote up a summary which went to all of the participants. Here it is:

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL COMMITTEE MEETING October 7, 1996 Brief Summary

After introductions, Rabbi Buckman discussed the genesis of the project we had embarked on. He spoke of CIJE's invitation to Congregation Beth Israel to engage in a process of deepening the Congregation's understanding of its core values and aspirations and of finding ways to embed this deepened understanding in the fabric of synagogue life -- in the school, in family education settings, and in other contexts of Synagogue life. The challenge is threefold: to clarify the Congregation's core-values and convictions; to communicate them effectively; and to embed them in synagogue life. He suggested that we would be wise to begin this process by looking not at the totality of Synagogue life (which could be overwhelming) but at one particular dimension, and he proposed "Shabbat" as an appropriate theme: it is already a subject of attention, it is central to synagogue life, it is important, and it is as a focus narrow enough to allow for progress in a relatively short period of time.

The object of the Shabbat-project would be to enable the membership of CBI to grow in their appreciation and enjoyment of Shabbat; and this would happen through a process that includes reflecting on what, at its best, is special about Shabbat, and then using the results of this thinking as a basis for figuring out how to enrich congregants' encounters with Shabbat, be it in the school, or in the main sanctuary, or in other settings. Rabbi Buckman felt that the first phrase of the project would culminate in recommendations for implementation; and that this phase could be completed by next summer.

Against this background, Rabbi Buckman asked those present to spend a few minutes jotting down their notes concerning three questions: 1. When shabbat really clicks for you, what's special

about it? 2. What were the contributing circumstances? What was present or going on that made it possible for Shabbat to click in this way? 3. Based on this, are there things Beth Israel could be doing, but isn't, to make Shabbat click more regularly for you and others?

After a few minutes writing, we went around the room and listened to one another's responses to this question. A variety of ideas were expressed in this very thoughtful and engaging discussion. Here are just a few of the ideas that were expressed:

What's special about Shabbat, when it clicks? There were references to valuable family-time of a kind impossible to many of us during the middle of the week; to rest, to joy occasioned by being together and singing together, to entering a different zone and experiencing the world in a very different way than on other days, to a warm sense of being together with others as part of a community, to being free of the demands of work, to communion with nature.

Facilitating conditions: These included: being in nature; enveloping environments that are completely suffused with Shabbat -- for example, shabbatonim, Jerusalem, Skokie; the presence of others engaged in the celebration with us; music; pre-Shabbat preparation that makes it possible to spend the whole of Shabbat in enjoyment rather than preparation; rituals that welcome and usher out Shabbat; refusal to do work-a-day things at all.

Improving Beth Israel: As for Beth Israel, there were references to the need to overcome coldness and to create a sense of community, to reach out to empty nesters and single parents, to more Shabbatonim. Implications for what could be done differently or better also flow from what some people felt were impediments to the enjoyment of Shabbat; these include ignorance concerning what Shabbat is about and why we do certain things was stressed as an impediment for many people; another impediment was a wish not to look stupid by "doing things wrong" or not knowing how to do certain things.

In reflecting on what had surfaced through the exercise, one person observed that some of the "special experiences" that had been described might be incomprehensible to someone who hadn't experienced Shabbat first-hand -- and this led in two directions: 1) to a discussion of what could be done to give people "a taste" of shabbat; 2) to the life-circumstances that enabled some of us to have a taste of it and to allow it to enter our lives.

Following this discussion, the group had a chance to react to the project's proposed Shabbat focus. After hearing what alternatives there might be, e.g. Tfillah, Conservative Judaism, the sense of the group was that Shabbat worked well as a focus. In different ways, it could be related to by everyone, and it cut across Congregational life.

We then developed a two-track approach to the first stage of the project:

1) focus-groups organized around the questions we had wrestled with (appropriately modified for different sub-groups). In addition to offering us valuable information concerning congregants' perceptions and felt-needs, the chance to wrestle with the questions we had struggled with would itself be educational.

In thinking about the focus groups, two questions were discussed:

a) the composition of the focus-groups, e.g. shabbat-engaged, Shabbat-disengaged, empty nesters/singles, Day School families, etc.;

b) the formulation of questions that would not call forth defensiveness or a sense of inadequacy. One person suggested: the orientation should be -- what are your needs and how can we help you meet them (though it was noted that it may also be important to give them a taste of something as yet unexperienced which would prove the basis for new needs!); another suggested that beginning with questions concerning the quality of the experience you want to achieve and what are the things that are necessary if it's to be achieved might be more fruitful than questions designed to elicit "what you do and don't do on Shabbat" or how observant one is.

2) information-gathering -- an attempt to better understand how Shabbat currently fits into the life of the congregation -- how it's woven into the fabric of institutional life.

By the end of the meeting, Rabbi Buckman and Gayle Weber Rakita took responsibility for data-collection concerning the synagogue writ large; Bunny Dolnick agreed to offer a longitudinal perspective -- how had it changed; Pamela Lager and Dan agreed to look at family education and the School. Looking at the school would involve a) scanning curricula and b) interviews with teachers concerning what really goes on.

At our next meeting, tentatively scheduled for Nov. 4, we agreed to firm up questions for focus groups and the composition of the groups, and to bring data back to the meeting from out of our inquiries.

PRE-NOVEMBER MEETING

In mid-October, Pamela Lager sent me a school-wide curriculum (drafted by her predecessor) for inspection. While she is deeply impressed by its quality as a written document, it

is clear that it does not see much use. There was little in this curriculum which offers guidance concerning Shabbat, although it refers to other materials which should be used for Shabbat programming, e.g. Melton materials.

Prior to the November meeting, I met briefly with Pam to review other curriculum materials that might address the Shabbat theme; but it seemed clear that whether any of them got used, and if so how, was entirely up to teachers who pretty much did what they wanted in the area of Shabbat -- and Pamela was unsure what it was they did. She and I agreed that interviewing them would be a good idea, and we concocted the rudiments of an interview-guide (which she then wrote up more systematically).

Also prior to the meeting, I called Lee Buckman to find out whether participants in the October meeting had been doing their homework and to plan the agenda for the November meeting. We discussed the possibility of doing some study but agreed that since we were limited to an hour and a half and had a big agenda, we would be wise to defer this activity. He told me that he was discovering enthusiasm in unexpected quarters (e.g. Werlin) for the Shabbat-focused inquiry we were engaged in.

The November meeting also proved very exciting. Attendance was strong, and the conversation enlivened. A number of members had done some serious work in between sessions -- especially Bunny Dolnick -- and the material they put on the table prompted some good discussion. Below is the summary I wrote up of that meeting.

SUMMARY OF CBI PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING November 1996

Attending this meeting were Bob, Gail, Ruth, Alice, Bunny, Sandy, Roberta, Leeza, Pamela, Rabbi Lee Buckman, and myself. Our task was to review what people had found in their efforts at data collection and to determine appropriate focus groups and focus group questions.

The meeting began with reports from individuals assigned to do data collection. Bunny read a carefully developed report focusing on differences between the way Shabbat used to be celebrated at CBI and the way it now is; her principal focus was on the place of women in the congregation. She described a period (late seventies or early eighties) in which women did not feel that they were full participants in the religious life of the Congregation and responded by developing a significant Shabbat Women's Minyan, a minyan that continued until women were incorporated on an equal basis in the congregation's main service. [It would be important to ask Bunny to type up her paper for the record; it's a rich document.]

Other changes surfaced during our conversation. Prominent among them was the abandonment of what had apparently been a very

strong Friday night service at CBI, a major reason being the conviction of the then-Rabbi that families should be together at home on Friday nights. Participants recalled that Friday night services had been well-attended, lively, and seasoned with a lot of singing, singing that was encouraged by the regular presence of a choir. In this and other respects (for example, it lasted only an hour and a half or so), it was a very family-friendly service. There was in this connection considerable discussion concerning the wisdom of this change -- particularly in view of the fact that in many of CBI's families, both parents work and get home late on Friday afternoons.

Following this initial discussion, Gail summarized the work she and Rabbi Buckman had done to formulate what Shabbat now looks like at CBI. Her comments included (but were not limited to) the following elements:

FRIDAY NIGHTS: a regular, short Friday night service; periodic family night dinners, sometimes in conjunction with a Scholar-in-Residence.

THE DAY OF SHABBAT: a regular Shabbat morning service, along with a once-monthly alternative service that is more family-oriented; a Junior Congregation (Grades 3 through 6), and a new Tot Shabbat program; periodic luncheons after services; a regular late afternoon program that includes Mincha, two study groups, Shalshuddes, Ma'ariv and Havadala (for about twenty adults and twenty kids weekly).

OTHER SHABBAT ACTIVITIES/FEATURES: two or three Shabbatonim per year; Scholar-in-Residence five times per year; a new Shabbat Connection program for "Empty Nesters".

The summary of Shabbat activities stimulated two kinds of reactions:

1) As the many things that go on Shabbat were summarized, many participants in our committee found themselves surprised to discover how much is already going on; it's not that they necessarily were unaware of all these things, but that they hadn't stopped to "put it all together". They wondered whether there might be other people -- particularly newcomers to the Shul -- who would profit from hearing about the range of possible activities going on around Shabbat in the Congregation; and there was, in this connection, some discussion of how this might be effectively communicated. Before leaving this matter, one participant reminded us that although a lot is going on Shabbat, only a small percentage of the congregation is involved with it, and that this poses an important challenge.

2) The second reaction consisted in a variety of thoughts and short discussions concerning how the orchestration of the Shabbat

experience at CBI could be strengthened. Rabbi Buckman kept a record of suggestions that were made, but because we were in the data-gathering stage on this occasion, the discussion of suggestions was not systematically developed. It was agreed that we need to devote separate sessions to their development.

Alice and Pamela led us in a brief discussion of the Family Education programming organized around Shabbat this year; it includes specially developed programs (each one of which includes a special value, prayer, and song) and dinners that have attracted 100 or so participants. In addition, based on some work done by Daniel and Pamela, the data-gathering piece of our meeting also included a preliminary discussion of Shabbat in the life of the school. It was noted 1) that the formal curriculum of the school emphasizes the cognitive and behavioral, but not the affective/personal dimensions of Shabbat; 2) that in practice teachers are relatively free to do what they want in the area of Shabbat; 3) that it would be of great value to find out what they actually do in order to see how much and the quality of what is being done, whether different efforts are coherent with one another or at cross-purposes, etc. Pamela and Daniel indicated their interest in arranging for interviews of teachers to get these kinds of data. They had framed some preliminary questions designed to elicit from teachers how they approach Shabbat, and by the end of the evening Leeza and Alice had agreed to take significant responsibility for doing the interviews (once Pamela, with Daniel's help, formulates the interview-guide). (It should be noted that there was also some discussion concerning whether the teachers of those kids who attend Day Schools should also be interviewed. Whether they should or not depends on why we want to interview teachers in the first place! Someone also mentioned that it might be pertinent to think about how children experience Shabbat in camp-settings.)

Before leaving this part of the discussion, Daniel asked if there were insights and questions that had emerged from what we had been hearing. Though there wasn't enough time for this discussion (given the rest of our agenda), a few comments were briefly made. The need to think about marketing and about the quality (as distinct from the quantity) of Shabbat experiences was noted, and new questions were suggested: 1) what draws the people who do participate in Shabbat activities? 2) why do other people stay away -- and is there among those who stay away a subgroup that might, were the content or structure of Shabbat activities differently configured, eagerly participate? Such questions might be pertinent to the focus-groups.

The last part of the meeting focused on the focus-groups. After discussion, it was agreed that we should try to do the first of several focus groups in preparation for our next meeting, and after discussion we agreed that we should start with "empty nesters" [is this right?]. It was agreed that Sandy, Daniel, and Rabbi Buckman would work on the formulation of questions.

We scheduled our next meeting for Dec. 2 at 4 pm, with an agenda of reviewing what we had learned in the interim through the interviews and, if it has taken place, the focus group meeting.

In the aftermath of the Nov. meeting, I indicated to Lee that I felt that it would be desirable to do a short period of study at our next meeting, ideally using a text the discussion of which might enrich our conversation concerning Shabbat at CBI. He seemed sympathetic to this idea. Behind this suggestion was my sense that while the group was being wonderfully reflective concerning their own experience of Shabbat and that of other congregants, the conversation might well be enriched by a serious encounter with powerful ideas about the nature of Shabbat.

I also came away from the Nov. meeting with the desire to know more about the celebration of Shabbat at CBI. Here were some of the questions I felt I wanted to explore: what kinds of chavurot are there at CBI? Do services have a spiritual and/or communitarian dimension? How much singing? Are they participatory? Are there regular Shabbat activities other than services? Who are the Shabbatonim for?

CBI STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, DEC. 2, 1996

INTRODUCTORY

Between our last meeting and the Dec. 2 meeting, Alice had succeeded in interviewing a number of teachers concerning the way Shabbat did - and did not - fit into their work with the children (whether or not it was represented in the "official curriculum"); Sandy Thau developed, after consulting with Rabbi Buckman and myself, a guide for the focus groups; the rabbi succeeded, though with considerable difficulty, in identifying about 6 couples for the "empty nester" focus group; the rabbi conceptualized and worked towards implementing a "best practices" project concerned with Shabbat.

Prior to the meeting, the rabbi and I agreed that it should be organized around these matters, but that we should begin with a period of study about Shabbat. The meeting was very well-attended; everyone who had participated in previous meetings (except Bunny) was present, and two new persons (Judy Werlin and Ed Retig) joined the group. The meeting was lively and engaging, though insufficient for its full agenda. Below is a summary.

STUDY

Rabbi Buckman led the group in studying two Biblical passages in which we are commanded to celebrate Shabbat. One of them commands us "to remember" the Sabbath, and the other "to keep" the Sabbath; one of them links Shabbat to the Creation of

the World, and the other to God's taking the Jewish People out of the land of Egypt. Our discussion tried to identify significant differences between the two passages and offered participants an opportunity to explain why they felt that one of them (more commonly the historical rather than the cosmic account of the Sabbath) resonated for them more powerfully. Because of our lengthy agenda, discussion was cut off before we were able to fully explore the significance of the differences between these accounts for the way we understand Shabbat (or teach it!).

TEACHER-INTERVIEWS

Thanks to Alice's hard work in interviewing many teachers and recording for us on paper what they had to say, the committee had before it a summary of comments made by teachers concerning the place of Shabbat in their work at Beth Israel (See attachment). The interviews roughly followed a series of questions drafted by Pamela Lager against the background of our last meeting (See attachment). The group spent several minutes quietly reviewing Alice's summary of the interviews, after which there was a chance for all of us to react to what was said there.

Below can be found a range of reactions expressed at the meeting; comments are organized thematically, rather than in the order they appeared in the meeting.

Presence of Shabbat. The interview data suggest that Shabbat is represented in what teachers do in a multitude of ways not represented in the school's official curriculum.

Objectives. Scanning what teachers had to say about what they did in the area of Shabbat, one person observed that there did not appear to be any coherent set of objectives informing what people did in the area of Shabbat. Some teachers seemed to be after facilitating "Shabbat-experiences", others seemed more interested in teaching kids about Shabbat in more traditional ways - but there wasn't a sense of what the over-riding aims of the Shabbat curriculum actually are. This prompted another person to ask, "What are the Congregation's goals in the area of Shabbat-education?" [This is clearly a matter that will bear more discussion.]

Highlights and frustrations. Scanning the data, it appeared to some that the most frustrating thing for teachers was the disengagement of the children's parents -- the lack of support for and follow-up to what the school might do in the area of Shabbat; one person expressed the view that little could be accomplished so long as there is a great gap between what the school/congregation says is important and what is conveyed to the child in the family context.

On a more positive note, teachers were particularly excited

by opportunities to bring kids to their homes to celebrate Shabbat. Not only did they personally derive great satisfaction from this activity, they felt that it was very powerful for the students, offering them a kind of experiential "in their guts" knowledge of Shabbat that is invaluable. This comment led to a fascinating discussion concerning shabbat programming and the family.

Shabbat programming and CBI families. In response to the aforementioned observation concerning the power and desirability of teachers inviting children home for Shabbat, a countervailing concern was expressed: might not the effect of this be to take kids away from their own families on Shabbat, thereby eroding the Shul's commitment to make Shabbat a family-experience? In response to this concern, someone suggested that for many kids the choice was not between having Shabbat at the teacher's home or having Shabbat at home; for many it would be a choice between celebrating and not celebrating Shabbat.

In this context, one person suggested that in its efforts to both keep families together on Shabbat and encourage rich experiential Shabbat learning, perhaps it was time for the Congregation to consider returning in a serious way to Friday night programming (that would include a powerful family-oriented service and a family-friendly dinner)? Or perhaps it would be possible to nurture groups-of-families dinners (on the model of what is being done with the empty-nesters).

In the context of this discussion, questions were raised concerning why it is that families don't celebrate Shabbat. An hypothesis that was proposed is that in the case of some families it is lack of knowledge and know-how that stands in the way of their trying to celebrate Shabbat, and it was suggested in this connection that perhaps a user-friendly manual "a tool-kit" (with stories, instructions, prayers, suggestions,, ideas about what they might do, etc.) might be of value. There was a lot of enthusiasm for this suggestion; at the same time, at least one person cautioned against hastily concluding that lack of knowledge is the principal reason non-observing parents don't celebrate Shabbat. This person reminded us that the ranks of those not celebrating shabbat in an active way include families whose adult members have a lot of knowledge and know-how from out of their own childhoods. Something more or other than know-how was missing in these individuals -- a kind of personal, "in your guts" soul-knowledge of Shabbat as lived experience. In other words, along with the lack of technical or informational knowledge problem, we must recognize that there is a problem of motivation, of lack of interest. (This point was made using the Hebrew distinction between two forms of knowledge (Y'dee-ah and Hakarah.)

The family as the client. This multi-faceted discussion of the family in relation to Jewish education and Shabbat led someone to suggest that perhaps the family -- not the child! -

should be thought of as the proper object of the Congregation's efforts in the area of Shabbat education. As this person put it, perhaps the goal should be to empower families to experience Shabbat and to incorporate it into their lives. If taken seriously, this overarching objective would carry implications not just for the school but for many other facets of the Congregation's programming. We were in this connection cautioned by one participant that the challenge of working with adults, with children, and with whole families is a difficult one, requiring fundamentally different approaches.

How comprehensive is the information elicited by the interviews? After reading the interview-data, one person wondered whether interviews of this kind are sufficient to elicit from teachers what it is they do and are trying to accomplish when they teach about Shabbat. This person (who happens to be a teacher in the school) suggested that much more in the way of shabbat-education might be going on than was articulated in the interview process.

The desirability of a teacher-focus-group. The foregoing considerations led to the suggestion that it would be useful to organize a focus group for teachers that builds on the interviews that had been done. The focus group would give the teachers a chance to react to the impressions conveyed by the interview data - to affirm what was said, to correct it, to add to it or deepen it, etc. The give-and-take of the conversation might serve not only to produce more information but to deepen teachers' own awareness of what they are or should be doing in the area of Shabbat.

SHABBAT CONNECTION

In the last part of this meeting, we had a chance to hear about the relatively new "Shabbat Connection" program that is aimed at "Empty Nesters" (typically between 45 and 55 or somewhat older). We were given a description of the efforts that had been made to support the efforts of these couples and individuals to cluster in small groups for period Shabbat dinners. While the response to the new program was not initially as strong as its developers had expected, the program seems to be growing in popularity. It was speculated that one of the reasons why some people might be reluctant to join the program and especially to volunteer to host a dinner has to do with Kashrut issues, and we spoke some about whether there might be ways to lower the level of anxiety around this issue.

Someone asked whether any effort has been made to enrich what happens at a typical Friday night dinner. The answer was that at this point it's left very open-ended; essentially, whatever the host-family wants to do is what is done. It was in this connection suggested that perhaps the host-family could be provided with a "Shabbat in the home" tool-kit, rich with ideas

about the kinds of things that might meaningfully be done in the context of hosting a shabbat dinner.

Excited by the account of these home-based Shabbat dinners, one person suggested that such dinners (aimed perhaps at a broader constituency than Empty Nesters) might prove an excellent Congregational out-reach tool.

THE SHABBAT BEST PRACTICES PROPOSAL

There was no time for the last item on our agenda, which was to discuss the Rabbi's proposal that CBI undertake a kind of "Best Practices" project focusing on Congregation-based Shabbat programming.

END OF MEETING

Towards the end of the meeting the group had a chance to review the list of questions prepared by Sandy Thau which are to be used to stimulate and guide the upcoming focus group discussion. Members of the group made a couple of suggestions but were generally very happy with the interview-guide.

At the end of our meeting we agreed that the next steps would be to organize a focus group for teachers and to hold the first focus group (for Empty Nesters). The results of this first focus group would be considered at our next meeting on Dec. 16.

MID-DECEMBER UPDATE

A few days before the planned meeting for December 16, Lee Buckman called to let me know that Sunday Thau, who had conducted the first focus-group, had not yet been able to analyze the data. He suggested we postpone the Dec. 16 meeting until January 13. I suggested that this might be a nice occasion to do some of the studying we had judged important, but he felt, perhaps correctly, that to spring this on them when they expected a different kind of meeting would be a mistake. We agreed to use the Dec. 16 time for a conversation between ourselves concerning the further development of the project.

Conversation with Rabbi Buckman. In this conversation, the rabbi and I agreed that the project had gathered considerable momentum, and I was impressed by his own engagement with it. He is particularly interested in the sub-project that involves looking at congregations which have succeeded in generating and sustaining a strong "Shomer Shabbat" community.

Lee and I both felt that it might in the near future make sense to break down into sub-groups representing different dimensions of congregation-life and to see how ideas emanating from our of the Steering Committee might enter into these

different sectors. As a guide to this, he was intrigued by the idea of our developing a kind of position- or vision-statement that identifies CBI's understanding and approach to Shabbat, including the kinds of Shabbat-experiences it would hope to nurture in the membership.

We also discussed the kinds of educational experiences that might be useful in fashioning this kind of a position-statement. It might be of interest to bring in someone like Art Green; to more deeply explore the different implications of some of the texts he had pointed us to at our last meeting; or perhaps we could stimulating some interesting thinking by putting before the committee three different vignettes representing three powerful but very different ways of patterning the Shabbat experience of a community. This matter was left up in the air, though after the meeting I received a note from Lee indicating that he had continued to give this matter some thought.

Conversation with Pamela Lager. A mid-December phone call from Pamela Lager reminded me not to be sanguine about how things were going. Beginning by asking me where I felt all of this was going, I wasn't sure whether she was suggesting that she didn't feel it was going anywhere. But as we proceeded, it appears that she is more concerned that the rabbi will want to push the process in an overly-conservative direction that is, in her opinion, out of touch with her own life and that of many congregants. It also turns out that there is continuing tension between them, typically expressed harshly but indirectly, concerning her not being sufficiently observant (by Lee's standards for his educational director). I have, in the wake of this, a serious question concerning the progress that can be made given a) the tension between them, and b) her uncomfortableness with the Shabbat focus. There is also in my mind a question about her unwillingness "to own" the curriculum, to leave her own mark on it. These may be matters worth addressing.

APPENDICES

- P. 1 - Rabbi Buckman's letter articulating his initial approach to the pilot project and his preliminary vision.
- P. 3 -- DP's letter to Rabbi Buckman reacting to our initial meeting.
- P. 6 -- Exercise used to stimulate discussion at meeting with the CBI teachers.
- P. 7 -- The CBI School's formal curriculum
- P. 21 -- The Memo inviting the Steering Committee's participation in the pilot-project..
- P. 22 -- Some ideas concerning ways of understanding Shabbat
- P. 23 -- The interview-guide for the preliminary teacher-interviews.
- P.25 -- Teacher-responses to the interview questions.
- P. 33 -- Discussion-guide for Focus-groups.

Institutional Change Study Group Mtng

Amy's Presence as occasion to reconvene

→ "Catch up" "Feedback" "Keep learning"

⇒ "Study Group"

Today's focus: Work-in-progress

A) CBI - DP

B) Alvan: 1) Describe 2) But Sick

C) Amy's paper

Participants: Comment on Nessa/Karen

What we've been up to

DP on CBI

A Convergence of agendas in Spring of '95

DP -- Pilot-Project \uparrow VDI

Lee -- Serious, New, "Gap", "Friend"

Route: ~~GP~~ ~~CBI~~ ~~Lee~~

\hookrightarrow Jerusalem \rightarrow Sem (Local) \rightarrow CBI.

CBI - "Conservative", 700 fam., Suburban

\hookrightarrow The "Conservative" Dilemma

Initial Conversation

A) Lee's Vision & Strategy

B) Qs Re: Board Expect -- Narrowness -- Approach to ^{Ambiguous}

C) "Get to Know" Upbeat \sim "Invested" ^{Search}

Pam's Anger & Resolution: "Pam" ^{Secular} Prof. ^{Woman} ^{attractive}

Getting to know School (+ \uparrow Consciousness)

Deep Variety

Incoherence

Little Reflection

Feb '96 Meeting: Lee, Panda, Ruth, DP

→ Yes + "Form Committee" + Awkward End

Tumultuous Spring

Pam as Point-Person Re: Committee

Behind Scenes: Anger, ↓ Trust

⇒ No rabbinic Engagement, Input

June Mtng - Interesting But "Participants"

"Rakita's Suspicion" Lee's Absence

Re-dedication Meeting

↓ Strategy Mtng: D/L/P/Louise -- No R

"Priming Pump" - "Great Conversation"

↳ Explore one theme in life of Cong

Reality -- Perspectives -- Ideas ⇒

"Shabbat" - Yes!?

"Observe" "Appreciate"

Committee Deliberation

Between 1 & 2: DP/Lee + Notes

Meeting #2: Review data

Longitudinal Study: "Women" "Friday Evening"

"Shabbat at CBI" - "Services" vs "Qualities"
Ideas

Plentiful -- Low Involvement

Curricular Silence

Meeting #3

Study -- "Yes" & No

Teacher - interviews: - Re-confirm
- Frustration w/ Fam

Power of "Family-Shabbat"

→ ① Undercutting Families? Yes/No

② Why families don't Observe: Ignorance → Manual

Disinterest

Family-Focus:

Shabbat-Connection Expand

Analysis

Momentum

Content

Lee/Pamela

↓
Impose

Resist

Qs

- Identify an aim.

- Strategy (implicit)

"Success" - criteria for

Lessons:

1) Keep critical figures involved.

Post-Meeting 3

A) Lee's Engagement: "Best Practices"

B) How ↑ Content

C) "Vision-statement" → Arachno

Pamela - Call

3 Weeks - Focus-group

DP's Issues

A) Lee/Pamela

- ① Pamela: - Relatively non-observant
- Very competent
- ② Lee - Uncomfortable w/ her non-observance → judgmental

Do I intervene at all?? How?

B) Keep momentum going
Plus tie to practice

C) "Content" - how?

Critical Assumptions

- a) Critical stakeholders + Fanning out
- b) Power of Conversation, enriched by Data, Ideas, Personal Exp
- c) Narrow -- Broaden Aims ("Culture")
- d) Don't lose connection to practice!
- e) "Trust"

Danny

I met with our team today. We reviewed the four questions that we need to ask ourselves in order to proceed:

- 1) What kind of person are we trying to nurture? What's our vision?
- 2) What are we doing to actualize this vision? Do our goals match this vision?
- 3) What do we need to do to be more effective in achieving our goals and in actualizing our vision?
- 4) Now that we have identified what needs to be done, what do we need to do to implement these recommendations?

We felt that the seminars helped to clarify what our task is. We need to create a vision that is shared by our congregants and determine whether or not the various wings of the synagogue (e.g. adult ed, religious school, family programming committee, Sisterhood, etc) share this vision and have established goals that will help make this vision a reality.

Our team is not composed of board members with any real clout. The team members were chosen based on the following criteria:

- 1) these were people with whom I could be honest and bare my soul
- 2) they know the vocabulary (e.g. know what Conservative means, what halacha means)
- 3) I respect their opinions
- 4) they are committed to the religious life of the synagogue; they represent, to a greater or lesser extent, my vision of the "ideal" Conservative Jew. My first attempt at a vision is attached.

We concluded that the best way for me to develop a vision with the people who do, indeed, have clout, i.e. the board members, would be to undertake a one-year study session on Conservative Judaism and halacha. This idea is based on something that Rabbi Allen Silverstein, President of the Rabbinical Assembly, did with his board. He began every board meeting with a shiyur so that by the end of the year the board knew what "product they were selling."

This protracted study opportunity would help make my vision a shared vision. At the end of the first year, and during the second year, we would then set up a mechanism for the various organizations within the synagogue to examine whether or not their goals are consistent with the vision and what we can do to help them actualize the vision.

First draft of Personal Vision

The type of individual we are trying to cultivate at CBI.

This individual would have an understanding of the Conservative Movement, i.e. that it is a movement that considers halacha binding but which distinguishes torah law from rabbinic law and that appreciates the sociological and historical context in which Jewish law developed.

I would like the members that share this vision to possess halachic consciousness, to ask themselves "what does halacha say about the things that I do in my life." In this way, decisions will be informed by a sense of holiness and a sense that God cares about what we do in our lives. Ideally, halachic consciousness would be the first step to halachic observance. Halacha, of course, is not an "end" in itself but a means to a greater "end," namely, a sense of closeness to God. My primary task as rabbi to help people, as I help myself, to feel this sense of closeness.

I would like people who share this vision to see themselves on a never-ending spiritual odyssey. This metaphor of journey means that we are constantly growing in our commitment to God, constantly expanding our concern for each other, a constantly deepening our understanding of torah. This odyssey takes place within community. Participation in CBI's core religious activities is central. Community is built when we pray together, study our sacred texts together, celebrate shabbat and holidays together on a regular basis. Community is also solidified through the mitzvah of kashrut which enables us to jointly raise the act of eating to a level of holiness.

The type of person we would like to cultivate would also view loyalty to the State of Israel as a vital part of their self-identity. Visiting Israel would be seen as a mode of religious fulfillment. Supporting Israel financially and politically would be further demonstrate a strong commitment to Israel. Aliyah would be seen as an ideal, even if not realistic for most of us.

vision. goal

From: Daniel Pekarsky at 608-233-4044
To: Daniel Pekarsky at 5322646

12-23-96 10:08 am
002 of 005

3

June 12, 1995

Rabbi Lee Buckman
Congregation Beth Israel
6880 N. Green Bay Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53209

Dear Lee:

I found our recent meeting very productive, and I was very impressed by the degree of thoughtfulness and interest shown by those present. As we have discussed in the past, there remains some uncertainty in my mind concerning how deep and widely shared at Beth Israel is the interest in serious reflection on goals and guiding visions; this matter that will be pertinent in deciding how best to proceed. As I think about the future, it occurs to me that an important ingredient in the overall picture is whether the Congregation's president is, or can be brought, on-board with this project. Below I try to summarize the major direction of our discussion and where we arrived.

The starting-point of the discussion was the thoughtfully developed draft of a plan that you and your team had prepared in anticipation of this meeting. The plan emphasized the need to develop among key stake holders, especially members of your Board, a sense of shared vision; and the assumption seemed to be that, once developed, this shared vision could be communicated and embedded across different synagogue settings, especially the school. You indicated that a kind of curriculum for the program of study you proposed for your Board had already been developed by one of your colleagues and had been implemented successfully. You also appended to the plan a draft of a vision for the congregation.

The discussion that built on this document raised questions and invited clarification concerning a number of matters, including the following: 1) was the goal of the proposed program of study to develop understanding and commitment to a pre-determined vision, or was the vision to be developed - in part or in toto - through the interaction with the participants? 2) Was the goal of the program of study to develop an understanding of the congregation's vision, or also enthusiastic identification with it? If the latter, what implications might this have for the organization of the program of study? 3) Since members of the existing Board have not been expected to engage in the kind

of study being proposed and may not be naturally disposed in this direction, might this cause problems in getting the program of study successfully off the ground? 4) Might there be important congregants that are not on the Board whom it would be useful to engage in the proposed process of education? 5) Might there be fruitful ways to begin a process of reflecting on the state of goals and vision in the school even prior to completion of the study-process that has been proposed?

Discussion of these varied matters was very rich. Not surprisingly, given the difficulty of the issues and the amount of time available to us, we did not achieve closure on all of them. Nonetheless, we did, as I understand it, move towards the following tentative conclusions:

1) As background to a forthcoming conversation between you and myself designed to further clarify a plan of action, you will be sending me a copy of the curriculum you have thought to use with your Board.

2) Perhaps the theme of Vision - "Who are we as Jews, what does it mean to be a Conservative Jew, etc.?" -- could be interpreted not as a theme for the Board alone, but for the Congregation as a whole in the coming year. This would mean that a number of simultaneous efforts would go on with varied constituencies to encourage serious reflection concerning questions of guiding Jewish vision and purpose.

3) Simultaneous with the exploration of these broad questions of Jewish purpose and meaning, it might be valuable to begin a process of better understanding present educational realities within the Congregation. A process of "taking-stock" might go on, an attempt to gather data that would illuminate the way goals do and don't fit into existing educational efforts, and with what impact. With respect to this matter, we began a discussion of the kinds of data that might be of interest, as well as the possibility that some of the data could be collected by educational personnel and/or members of the Congregation. In addition, you indicated that you would welcome CIJE help in gathering certain kinds of data. I indicated that certain kinds of CIJE help, especially from me, might be forthcoming, but this would have to be judged based on a comprehensive plan of action.

These ideas are, of course, all subject to re-examination, and certainly they need to be developed. But they represent a good start! My own assumption is that the first step is to develop a thoughtful and do-able plan of action, and I will be happy to offer help with the development of such a plan in the weeks ahead. The nature of CIJE's involvement with your effort

From: Daniel Pekarsky at 608-233-4044
To: Daniel Pekarsky at 5322646

12-23-96 10:09 am
004 of 005

beyond the development of the plan will be determined based on the nature of the plan and the seriousness and energy with which key stake holders in your Congregation are approaching this important matter.

Let me close by commenting on how impressed I am by the seriousness with which you personally have approached the seminars and the larger and very important question of articulating a compelling set of goals that can guide your educational program. I am hopeful that you will find or be able to generate support for this effort in your Congregation. I look forward to working with you on such matters, beginning with our upcoming conversation.

All the best,

Daniel Pekarsky, Consultant
CIJE

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL
INTRODUCTORY GOALS WORKSHOP
January 1996

EXERCISE

1. Suppose that your educational efforts are successful beyond your wildest dreams:

a. What would the graduates be like? What beliefs, attitudes, commitments, and behaviors would characterize these individuals?

b. How would a typical graduate finish the sentence "Being a member of the Jewish People is important to me because....."?

2. A school's Bible curriculum could be used as a vehicle of accomplishing an array of possible educational purposes. On the back of this page:

a. List as many of these purposes as you can.

b. Identify the two purposes you regard as most important.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

I. OVERVIEW

- A. In all due modesty, the School of Jewish Studies curriculum is an excellent one, reflecting much hard work, effort, dedication, and thinking. Dr. Joshua Chorowsky, the former Executive Director of MAJE, noted that it was exceptional for a congregational school, both in quality as well as quantity. Any qualified reader of the curriculum who had took the time to go through it would agree.
- B. Like any curriculum, the following points must be made about this curriculum:
 - 1. It is not "finalized" - every curriculum must constantly be evaluated, revised, and reevaluated.
 - 2. It is only as good as the teacher who teaches it.
 - 3. In areas that are lacking, a good part of the reason is because of the paucity of teaching time and/or books and resources.
 - 4. It represents the educational philosophy of the writer - others with different educational goals may disagree with its priorities and emphases.
- C. The following 50 pages contain most of the written school curriculum, outlined for the teachers.
- D. Following this section - after a blue page, are found indepth outlines for the Tanach classes in the upper (Dalet and older) grades.
- E. Following a yellow page are found the Gesher Life Cycle sourcebook (without the teacher resources noted on the outline in the main curriculum), an orange sheet, and the Jewish Responsibility sourcebook, with teacher guide.

(CONTINUED)

F. The curricular material can be found in the computer as follows:

1. Curriculum outline (first 50 pages):

RECORDS/CURRICUL - PAGES 1-16, 25-32, 35-37, 41-46

RECORDS/TEF.CUR - PAGES 17-18

RECORDS/CHAGIM.CUR - PAGES 19-24

RECORDS/TANACH.DAL - PAGE 33

RECORDS/TANACH.HAY - PAGES 38-40

RECORDS/JEWPRAC.OUT - PAGES 47-48

RECORDS/TANACH.PRZ - PAGE 49

2. Tanach curriculum:

RECORDS/TANACH.DAL - DALET CURRICULUM

RECORDS/TANACH.HAY - HAY CURRICULUM

RECORDS/TANACH.GES - GESHER CURRICULUM

RECORDS/TANACH.PRZ - PROZDOR CURRICULUM

G. The Geshet Life Cycle and Jewish Responsibility sourcebooks are compilations of sources. The originals are found in the school files. Ask the school secretary for them. There are also a number of copies in the Time clock room.

9 1

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL - SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES

CURRICULUM OUTLINE FOR 1993-1994

I. OVERVIEW

- A. This curriculum outline presents the complete curriculum as it will ultimately be implemented. Major sections of the curriculum have already been implemented; the remaining parts will be introduced over the next few years. Interim steps continue to be taken in the areas of Hebrew, Prayer, and Bible, although the gap is closing in the latter area.
- B. As in any curriculum, it is an evolving process subject to continuous evaluation and revision. It is by no means a finished product.
- C. The curriculum is divided into various parts: by age and grade level (Primary [Gan through Sha'ar], Elementary [Kitot Aleph-Hay], Gesher [Grade 8], and High School [Prozdor, Bikkurim, Ha'asharah]); and by subject area (Hebrew, Prayer/Siddur, Bible, and Social Studies [Jewish Values, Jewish Life Cycle, Holidays and Calendar, Israel, History, etc.]). Creative arts, e.g. music, crafts, etc., will be integrated into the major subject areas.
- D. The curriculum is designed to flow both vertically (from grade to grade within the same subject area) and horizontally (between subject areas on the same grade level).
- E. The Hebrew and Prayer curricula, as well as most of the Bible curriculum, are centered in the Primary and Elementary levels. The Gesher and High School levels concentrate mainly on the Social Studies area, with a lesser emphasis on Bible.
- F. Wherever possible, Kitot Gimel, Dalet, and Hay will be departmentalized, with different teachers teaching different subjects.
- G. Primary students will attend on Sundays for two hours. Students in the Elementary Department attend for six hours over three days. Gesher (Sunday morning) and High School (Sunday afternoon/evening) students attend for two hours.
- H. The policy of the School of Jewish Studies is to pursue an integrated approach to the study of Hebrew. Hebrew language should be a part of the daily structure, rather than delegated to certain days.

II. OVERALL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES

- A. The overall mission of the School of Jewish Studies is to imbue the student with both the knowledge and the commitment necessary to become an active and contributing member of the Jewish community on the local, national, and world levels.
- B. To carry out this mission, the following goals will be pursued:
1. To help the student gain an understanding of the philosophy, teachings, and practices of the Conservative Movement.
 2. To help the student develop a religious and ethical approach to everyday living.
 3. To assist the student in developing a sense of his/her Jewish identity in a non-Jewish environment.
 4. To encourage and help the student to develop a commitment to the principle of "Klal Yisrael," and to act upon this commitment. A major component of this goal is the building of a life-long commitment to the State of Israel and a feeling of oneness with its citizens.
 5. To help the student to acquire basic skills necessary for participation in Jewish religious life in the home and synagogue, and to encourage the desire to increase and sharpen these skills in future years, as both a teenager and an adult.
 6. To enable the student to appreciate the continuity of Jewish life through the study of the Hebrew language, prayer, customs and holidays, Jewish texts (in particular the Bible), history, and tradition.
 7. To plant and nurture the seed of Jewish learning as a life-long venture and obligation.
 8. To foster and provide programs which emphasize the vital role of the Jewish family in the survival of the Jewish people and religion, programs which involve the entire family, either at home or in conjunction with other families.
 9. To develop in the student and his/her family an understanding of and an active commitment to the values of Tzedakah and Gemilut Hasadim as Jewish obligations required of Jews of all ages.
 10. To encourage the celebration of Shabbat, festivals, Jewish rituals by both individuals and families.

X

- C. Although the School of Jewish Studies can provide the students with the basic tools and expose them to values and experiences, we recognize that commitment comes about experientially, which needs family participation. We can provide the tools and the spark, but the home must reinforce them.

III. SUBJECT AREAS - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. HEBREW

what counts as fluency? understood.

1. The main objective of the Hebrew program is to provide the reading skills and basic vocabulary required for Siddur fluency and basic Jewish rituals. A graduate of our school should be able to pick up and read - with a minimum of mistakes and hesitation - any prayer or blessing connected to Jewish religious observance.
2. Another goal of the school is to enable the student to build a vocabulary of key Hebrew words and terms connected with (a) home and life cycle, (b) Shabbat, Festivals, and holy days, (c) Jewish values, and (d) the school environment. NOTE: although teachers may utilize words and even simple Hebrew sentences in the teaching process, because of limited time allocation and the intermittent attendance structure, CONVERSATIONAL HEBREW is not, and cannot be an achievable and reasonable goal of the program.
3. The student should acquire a fluency in the reading of both print and cursive letters.
4. The student should possess an ability to write in cursive letters.

B. PRAYER

1. The student should be able to take key prayers and:
 - a. read them fluently (and chant appropriate ones)
 - b. identify their main concepts and purpose.
 - c. identify their source and/or author
 - d. pick out and translate key words
2. The student should possess an understanding of the structure and organization of the Siddur as well as the structure and major sections of the various services.
3. The student should possess the ability to function in the Shabbat and Festival services as a participating member of the congregation. The study of Haftarah trope is included in this goal.

Victor
with
here?

Nothing about "meaning" of prayer

- 4. The student should know personal prayers and should acquire the skills related to the rituals and prayers of home observances for Shabbat and the various festivals.
- 5. The student should know the different brachot for food (before and after the meal) and their application, and the brachot and prayers for special occasions.

C. BIBLE (TANACH)

- 1. The student should be familiar with the structure, terminology, and key sections of the Bible.
- 2. The student should possess a familiarity with the main Bible stories, events, and heroes.
- 3. The student should be familiar with the narrative sections of the Torah, and have a sense of the chronology of events. The student should be able to identify key personalities associated with these events.
- 4. The student should be able to draw lessons from key Biblical events - especially those involving intra-family relationships - as a guide for his/her own life.
- 5. The student should be able to recognize the Mitzvot and rituals which are derived from Biblical texts.

D. SOCIAL STUDIES (Note: this area encompasses all studies not specifically covered in the three areas outlined above. These studies include: Jewish Values, Jewish Life Cycle, Holidays and Calendar, the Israel Connection, Institutions of Jewish Life and the Community, and History. The goals marked with an * will be primarily addressed on the Post-B'nai Mitzvah [Gesher and High School] levels.)

Jewish Values

- 1. The student should exhibit pride in being Jewish and should identify with Klal Yisrael (the Jewish people) in an active way.
- 2. The student should possess an understanding of the main Mitzvot and values associated with Jewish and daily living, and should acquire a desire to inculcate them into his/her personal life.
- * 3. The student should understand the meaning of ethics in the Jewish sense, and incorporate these lessons into his/her life.

4. The student should develop an understanding of the Jewish values of Tzedakah and Gemilut Hasadim through both study and active participation in doing Mitzvot. This understanding should become the basis of a feeling of responsibility for others, both Jews and non-Jews, a feeling that will be translated into action.

Jewish Life Cycle

1. The student should possess a comprehension of the different Jewish Life Cycle events, and the vocabulary and rituals associated with each.
2. Wherever possible, the student should experience the actual life cycle ritual.

Holidays and Calendar

1. The student should possess a basic comprehension of the structure of the Jewish calendar and be able to compare and contrast it with the secular calendar.
2. The student should be able to identify and describe Shabbat and Jewish holidays as they occur and the history, customs, observances and modern significance connected with each.
3. The student should develop a sense of joy in and a commitment to the holy days of Judaism, and incorporate their observance into his/her personal life.

What is the "modern" signif.?

How reflect?

The Israel Connection

1. The student should develop an affinity and love for the State and people of Israel through the study of its geography, customs, and uniqueness. Incorporated into this study will be hands-on activities designed to bring a flavor of Israel to the children.
- * 2. The student should understand the place of Eretz Yisrael in Jewish thought and religious belief and the prayer references which express this.
- * 3. The student should understand the rise of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel in the light of Jewish history.

History

- * 1. The student should acquire a general understanding of Jewish history throughout the centuries, with a greater emphasis being placed on the modern era of Jewish history (from approximately 1700 to the present).
- * 2. The student should possess an understanding of the sequence of Jewish history, and its relative relationship to other world events.
- * 3. The student should understand the impact of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust on Jewish history and the Jewish people.

Institutions of Jewish Life and the Community

- * 1. The student should be able to identify and define various groups within Judaism - including Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, Reform.
- * 2. The student should acquire a basic understanding of Conservative Judaism as well as its points of similarity with and divergence from the other streams.
- * 3. The student should understand the American Jewish community as it is today, and should have an understanding of its evolution and history.
- * 4. The student should be familiar with the local Jewish institutions. Wherever possible, primary experiences should be incorporated into the learning.
- 5. The student should understand the evolution and development of the synagogue, its structure and functions.
- 6. The student should acquire and utilize the basic terminology of synagogue life - honors and personnel connected to the service, ritual objects, and other key terms.

IV. CURRICULUM OUTLINE

(TEXTBOOKS listed in capital letters, Resources in upper and lower case letters)

<u>KITAH</u>	<u>HEBREW</u>	<u>TEFILLAH</u>	<u>BIBLE</u>	<u>SOCIAL STUDIES</u>
GAN [NOTE: GAN WILL FOLLOW A 2-YEAR ROTATING CURRICULUM. 1993-1994 IS YEAR 1]				
YEAR 1	Basic vocabulary: seasons, weather, numbers	Memorization of key brachot: food, candles, holidays	Weekly Parsha	Synagogue celebrations of Shabbat and holidays (OUR SYNAGOGUE, My Synagogue, Building Jewish Life)
YEAR 2	Basic vocabulary: family, colors, body parts, surroundings	Memorization of key brachot: bread, wine, fruit, vegetables; Shema, Modeh Ani	1. Bible stories tied into ethical values. 2. Weekly Parasha	Home observances of Shabbat and festivals (HOME START - LEVEL ONE, Building Jewish Life)
MECHINA	Hebrew letter recognition; reading readiness (Reading Readiness booklet)	Brachot and short prayers based on home Shabbat observance	Heroes and events connected to the Pre-Patriarchal and Patriarchal Periods	1. MCR Shabbat Curriculum - Lessons 1-4 (Baltimore, Montreal) 2. Tzedakah
SHA'AR	Hebrew readiness, (READING READINESS BOOK FOR HEBREW AND HERITAGE, SHABBAT SHELOM)	Brachot and short prayers based on synagogue observance	Heroes and events throughout the Tanach (LET'S DISCOVER THE BIBLE)	MCR Shabbat Curriculum - Lessons 4-8 (see above for resources)

<u>KITAH</u>	<u>HEBREW</u>	<u>TEFILLAH</u>	<u>BIBLE</u>	<u>SOCIAL STUDIES</u>
ALEPH	Basic reading and writing skills (PRIMER FOR HEBREW AND HERITAGE, HEBREW AND HERITAGE 1 (siddur track))	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Friday evening home rituals (Shabbat box) 2. Daily service: Mah Tovu, Shema/V'ahavta, Sim Shalom, Aleynu, Adon Olam 3. Shabbat: Shalom Aleichen, L'cha Dodi, V'shamru (chorus), Bin Keylohaynu 4. Basic siddur terms 	Parashat Hashavuah (Teacher resources)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MCR Calendar Curriculum 2. Tzedakah mini-unit (5 weeks) 3. Israel (Touring Israel: Experiential Approach)
BET	HEBREW AND HERITAGE 1 (siddur track), HEBREW AND HERITAGE 2 (siddur track), Introduction of Milon	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shabbat prayers: Shalom Aleichen, Bin Keylohaynu 2. Havdallah service (Havdallah box) 3. Birchat Hanehenin 4. Daily service: Vayomer, Halleluyah, Or Chadash, first 3 brachot of Amdah, Shema/V'ahavta, Ahavah Rabbah 5. Torah brachot 6. Birchat Hamazon (main parts, esp. first paragraph) 	Torah (A CHILD'S BIBLE - LESSONS FROM THE TORAH)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shalosh Regalim (Melton) 2. Gemilut Hasadin mini-unit (Melton) 3. Israel 4. Yom Haatzmaut program 5. Kashrut (Melton)
GIMEL	HEBREW AND HERITAGE 2 (siddur track)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Birchat Hamazon 2. Daily service: Shema/V'ahavta, Ahava Rabbah, Kedushah, Aleynu, Ashrei 3. Shabbat: V'shamru, Kiddush 4. Torah Service 	Prophets and Writings (A CHILD'S BIBLE - LESSONS FROM THE PROPHETS AND WRITINGS)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minor festivals (Melton, Montreal) 2. Jewish Life Cycle (JEWISH LIFE CYCLE WORKBOOK) 3. Purim program

<u>KITAH</u>	<u>HEBREW</u>	<u>TEFILLAH</u>	<u>BIBLE</u>	<u>SOCIAL STUDIES</u>
DALET	HEBREW AND HERITAGE 2 (siddur track), HEBREW AND HERITAGE 3 (siddur track)	1. Torah service 2. Ashrei 3. Amidah 4. Tefillah structure: synagogue personnel and objects, daily services 5. Haftarah trope	1. Creation to end of Jacob's life 2. Introduction to Midrash (JPS TORAH)	1. Shabbat values (CAJE, Melton, Montreal) 2. Jewish history - post-Biblical, Talmudic periods (Nehemiah and the Return from Exile, PASS THE TORAH, PLEASE, Rashi and His World) 3. Jewish Ethics (MAH LA'ASOT) 4. Chanukah program
HAY	HEBREW AND HERITAGE 2 service (siddur track), HEBREW AND HERITAGE 3 (siddur track)	1. Torah service 2. Ashrei 3. Amidah 4. Kriat Shema 5. Hallel - selections 6. Birchot Hahaftarah 7. Tefillah structure: review of daily services, Amidah, Kriat Shema 8. Kaddish - various forms	1. Joseph story 2. Exodus story 3. Thematic approach to remainder of Torah 4. Introduction to commentary (Hertz Chumash, JPS TORAH)	1. High Holidays (Melton, Yom Kippur Kit) 2. Shalosh Regalia (Melton) 3. Jewish history - Jews of Spain, Holocaust, Israel (Our Story: The Jews of Sepharad, Holocaust: A Mini-Course for Intermediate Grades) 4. Tu B'Shevat program 5. Yom Hashoah program

7. TIME ALLOTMENTS FOR VARIOUS SUBJECT AREAS (PRIMARY AND ELEMENTARY)

(NOTES: The figures noted below serve mainly as a guide for the teacher rather than as a rigid structure. Each teacher in Gan-Bet should use his or her own discretion in structuring class time. The schedules for Kitot Gimel-Hay are more fixed, but teachers in these grades may choose at times to revise the schedule to meet needs for specific occasions.)

* - this subject area is not scheduled on a weekly basis. The time allotment is only for those weeks when they are scheduled.

A. GAN

- * 1. Library - 20 minutes
- 2. Hebrew - 20
- 3. Prayer - 20
- 4. Bible - 30
- 5. Social Studies - 30
- * 6. Music - 30
- * 7. Art - 45

C. ALEPH-GIMEL

- * 1. Music/Library (alternating) - 20-30
- 2. Hebrew/Prayer/Minyan - 130-150
- 3. Social Studies - 100-150
- 4. Bible - 50
- 5. Kabbalat Shabbat - 20-30
- * 6. Art - 60

B. BECHINA/SHA'AR

- * 1. Library - 20
- 2. Hebrew - 30
- 3. Prayer - 20
- 4. Bible - 20
- 5. Social Studies - 30
- 6. Music - 30
- * 7. Art - 45

D. DALET/HAY

- 1. Bible/Trope - 80-90
- 2. Hebrew/Tefillah/Minyan - 150
- 3. Social Studies: 80-90
- 4. Kabbalat Shabbat - 20

VI. CURRICULUM OUTLINE FOR GESHER AND HIGH SCHOOL

A. GESHER (GRADE 8)

1. The Geshher program consists of three interwoven strands tied together with Gemilut Hasadim projects related to the course of studies. The three strands are as follows:
 - a. Tanach - a continuation of the Kitah Hay Tanach curriculum, beginning with the selection of Joshua as the successor to Moses, and the death of Moses. It then will provide an overview to the latter two sections of the Tanach, the Prophets and Writings, and will offer selections from the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.
 - b. Jewish Life Cycle - covering the basic life cycle events, but also delving into what Judaism says on such issues as abortions, homosexuality, suicide, transplants, etc.
 - c. Jewish Responsibility Toward Others - each trimester the students will study one area-hunger, the disabled, and the aged. The students will plan and implement a two-three week Gemilut Hasadim project related to each area.
2. The goal of the Geshher program is to help the student make a transition to the post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah studies through the means of subject areas meant to stimulate thought and discussion.
3. There are three trimesters of 9-10 weeks in length.

B. HIGH SCHOOL (PROZDOR, BIKKURIM, HA'ASHARAH)

1. The High School curriculum is a two-year curriculum leading up to the Bikkurim ceremony.
2. The goal of the High School curriculum is to serve as a bridge to Jewish adulthood, and to the process of identifying oneself as an active, committed Jew.
3. There are two semesters of 12-15 weeks. There are also a mini-Shabbaton and 2 Gemilut Hasadim projects.
4. The Prozdor (Grade 9) students will study Israel, with one semester being devoted to a historical overview and one semester on the demographic and sociological aspects and problems. They will also study Jewish religious practices and Tanach.
5. The Bikkurim (Grade 10) students will study one semester on the Holocaust. They will also study about Conservative Judaism. for the entire year. In addition, there will be a semester of study with Rabbi Panitch.
6. Ha'asharah (Enrichment) Classes will be offered to students in Grades 9-11 who are graduates of Jewish day schools. There are two classes (history and text) for Grade 9 students, and history classes for both Grade 10 and Grade 11 students. Qualified High School students from the regular track may be invited to attend the history classes.

Danny,

Please review, edit, etc.... and I'll type a final draft to send out. I'd like to invite Sandy Thau to participate on the Steering Committee not because she is an educator or because she has a stake in a project like this, but because she has conducted focus groups for us with great success. What do you think? Also, what was the consensus about Ateret?

MEMO

TO: Roberta London
 Bob Hirschman
 Debbie Herz-Mazius
 Judy Werlin
 Michael Colton
 Gayle Weber Rakita
 Liza Wiemer
 Ed Rettig
 Bunny Dolnick
 Pamela Lager
 Ruth Cohen
 Louise Stein
 Sandy Thau

FROM: Rabbi Lee Buckman

QUICK FAX™ OfficeMax	
Date:	# of Pages
To: Danny Peckarsky	From: Lee Buckman
Co./Dept: U of W	Co./Dept: CBI
Fax: 608-233-4044	Fax: 414 352-2050
Phone: 262-9074	Phone: 414 352-7310
Note:	E-Mail:

As you may know the Milwaukee Jewish Community was chosen three years ago to be one of three nationwide "head communities" to become a living laboratory for initiatives in Jewish education. Congregation Beth Israel has benefitted directly from the Lead Community Project in that we were one of four synagogues to be awarded a grant to hire a family educator who would enable us to grow in this vital area of Jewish education.

Now Congregation Beth Israel stands to gain in another way. We have been selected to participate in a goals project which is designed to help us articulate our fundamental goals as a synagogue and to achieve greater coherence between our goals and what we are doing to achieve those goals. We have already begun working with Dr. Daniel Peckarsky, Professor of Education at the University of Wisconsin - Madison and Goals Project Coordinator for the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education.

I am writing to enlist your participation on the Steering Committee for our Goals Project. It is our hope that through interviews, focus groups, date interpretation, and deliberation of policy implications, the work of the Steering Committee can make a noticeable impact on the educational process an outcomes of our synagogue.

Please join me on Monday evening, October 7 at 7:45 pm in the Congregation Beth Israel library for our first meeting of the New Year. I will contact you personally within the next few days to follow up on this invitation.

I look forward to your assistance on this exciting project.

SHABBAT THEMES

It is all-too common to think about Shabbat in terms of the traditional activities and rules that define it: tfillot, big meals, and the various prohibitions that define it. The danger of starting here is that it encourages people to apply a certain measuring-stick to themselves and to others -- what do I and don't I do? People who aren't observant may very quickly become uncomfortable, if not defensive. Instead, the challenge may be to approach Shabbat via the big ideas that it represents -- ideas which are very relevant in our own times.

1. Work and rest:

a) the Aristotelian view that rest in re-creation designed to prepare us once again for the challenges of work VERSUS Jewish view: work is the means, and rest is the aim. We work in order that we may rest.

b) What does it mean "to rest"? Is it simply the absence of work, or does it signify a different mode of being, of relating to the world?

2. Different modes of being in the world

3. Ecology -- leaving nature undisturbed

4. Different conceptions of rest -- of its character, of its point, of the purposes.

5. Larger question: why do some people say that Shabbat is our greatest contribution to the world?

6. Man was not made for Shabbat; Shabbat was made for man.

7. It is Shabbat that has preserved the Jewish People.

8. Shabbat and spirituality -- an unsatisfied hunger.

9. Quieting the din of technology:

10. Being together as a family -- the Friday night meal as an example: eating together, being together for the sake of being together. The family as a microcosm of the cosmos, coming together to "just be".

23

קהל בית ישראל
Congregation Beth Israel
School of Jewish Studies

Pamela Lager
Education Director



Herbert G. Panitch, Rabbi Emeritus
Lee Buckman, Rabbi
Carey Cohen, Hazzan
Gayle Weber Rakita, President

*Attention:
Dan Bekarsky*

November 13, 1996

Dear Teacher:

As part of our synagogue CIJE project, this survey for all teaching staff has been prepared. Please reflect thoughtfully on the questions. Within the next 2 weeks, someone will be calling a random sample of teachers for answers. Your answers should be honest and well thought out. This is not in any way an evaluation of you or your classroom.

Thank you for your time in considering the questions.

Sincerely,

Pamela Lager,
Director

PL/ec

enc.

Congregation Beth Israel
School of Jewish Studies
6880 North Green Bay Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53209

**Congregation Beth Israel
School of Jewish Studies
6880 North Green Bay Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53209**

Teacher Survey

1. Is Shabbat a part of your official curriculum?
 - a. if so, how do you teach it in actuality?
 - b. if not, do you incorporate in anyway? And in what way?
2. What are your major objectives?
3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?
4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently....
5. What do you think made it effective?
6. What, in your opinion should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?
7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to shabbat?

1. IS SHABBAT A PART OF YOUR OFFICIAL CURRICULUM:

- Yes

a. If so, how do you teach it in actuality?

- Every week we light candles, say the bracha, say Shalom Aleichem, first part of the long Kiddush, and sing the whole second half, say Ha Motzi, and eat challah and use "The Little Midrash Says." We do Aishet Chayil. Sometimes students are assigned certain topics on Shabbat which they report on, or we talk about the parsha of the week.
- Last year we took parts of musaf and discussed them. We discussed what sacrifices were and that now we have davening.

b. if not, do you incorporate in any way? In what way?

2. What are your major objectives?

- To experience Shabbat as much as possible
- For Kabbalat Shabbat, to be able to say the prayers in Hebrew and English and know what they're about.

3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?

- I invite the class to my home for a Shabbat, or part of Shabbat if they cannot stay the entire time—to experience a nice Shabbat and to be together and enjoy each other's company.
- See #1a

4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently...

- Each student made a large poster containing the Aishet Chayil in Hebrew and English. They then decorated it and had it laminated. It was given to their mothers as a gift.

5. What do you think made it effective?

- The students care very much about their mothers and they gave something of themselves to their mothers.

6. What, in your opinion, should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?

- Eight Steps of Maimonides. If you talk about tzedakah for Shabbat, talk about the steps.

7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to Shabbat?

- The school is doing a good job now. Maybe have Shabbat dinner for the families of each class. Have students participate in the service.

1. Is Shabbat a part of your official curriculum?
 - No
- a. If so, how do you teach it in actuality?
- b. if not, do you incorporate in any way? In what way?
 - We do Parshat Hashavua every week. Part of our curriculum is "Jewish Practices." One day is spent discussing Shabbat.
2. What are your major objectives?
 - Knowledge of the different parts to the Shabbat service and a halachic introduction to Shabbat.
3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?
 - We read the section in the text on Shabbat and discuss it.
4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently...
 - Haven't taught it yet.
5. What do you think made it effective?
 - NA
6. What, in your opinion should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?
 - Have students participate in a service. Maybe meeting at mincha and do it that way.
7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to Shabbat?
 - Get the kids to attend services on a regular basis and observe Shabbat in some way they are not already observing it, if possible.

1. Is Shabbat a part of your official curriculum?
 - No
 - a. If so, how do you teach it in actuality?
 - b. if not, do you incorporate in any way? In what way?
 - We do Kabbalat Shabbat on Thursday. The students learn Lekhah Dodi, Shalom Aleichem, Kiddush, Ha Motzi, blessing over the candles, and I explain the Aishet Chayil. Once in a while I ask students what they do at home to make Shabbat special.
2. What are your major objectives?
 - Knowledge and awareness of how Shabbat should be observed, what the laws are, not necessarily that they should do it.
3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?
 - When we talk about what the family does that's special for Shabbat, we talk about other special things that can be done—see friends, play different games than usual, read Jewish books.
4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently...
 - The first Sunday of the year when the whole program was devoted to Shabbat. The parents were there. We played games with Shabbat content, studied laws of Shabbat, talked about things that were special for Shabbat, and made posters advertising Shabbat.
5. What do you think made it effective?
 - The total involvement with the subject and the participation of the parents.
6. What, in your opinion should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?
 - Nothing—the students studied Shabbat in depth last year.
7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to Shabbat?
 - Convince parents to make Shabbat important in their lives and home. The school is limited in what it can do.

1. Is Shabbat a part of your official curriculum?
 - I don't think so. I don't know my whole curriculum well because I just started this year.
 - a. If so, how do you teach it in actuality?
 - b. if not, do you incorporate in any way? In what way?
 - Any way I can. Now we're doing Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins. The scenery is an old synagogue. The inside has all the usual items you find in a synagogue plus Shabbat candlesticks.
2. What are your major objectives?
 - Knowledge of and a positive attitude toward Shabbat. To have students feel comfortable and happy with Shabbat. If they have good feelings, they'll "go for it."
3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?
 - Plan to have a Shabbaton.
4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently...
 - One Shot Shabbat - Students made a mobile, diorama or poster about a memorable Shabbat experience.
5. What do you think made it effective?
 - Kids were able to personalize the experience.
6. What, in your opinion should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?
 - Shabbaton. I think it's too much to ask of teachers unless they want to do it.
7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to Shabbat?
 - Building more of a Shabbat community. i.e. having kids in school on Shabbat; participating in the service; come to study sessions at mincha; make it more of their weekly routine.

1. Is Shabbat a part of your official curriculum?
 - Yes.
 - a. If so, how do you teach it in actuality?
 - I had the kids over for Shabbat dinner.
 - We use the *Book of Jewish Holidays and Customs* textbook and student activity guide and *The Specialness of Shabbat* MCR unit from MAJE.
 - We do Kabbalat Shabbat for about one half hour every Thursday—brachot over wine and challah, zmirot, parsha summarization.
 - b. if not, do you incorporate in any way? In what way?
2. What are your major objectives?
 - Help kids understand why Shabbat is so important to us as Jews. I want them to experience Shabbat, to feel it. Ultimately, they may impart some of this feeling to their family.
3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?
 - Make Shabbat box, a kit that contains all the items necessary to celebrate Shabbat in the home. Do worksheets and activities in pairs. Kabbalat Shabbat. See #1a
4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently.
 - When the kids all came over for Shabbat dinner.
5. What do you think made it effective?
 - Sharing Shabbat outside the classroom. Actually doing it on Shabbat. Having a meal together. (I really enjoyed having the kids over; it was better than any lesson.)
6. What, in your opinion should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?
 - A Shabbat box, a kit that contains all the items necessary to celebrate Shabbat in the home.
7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to Shabbat?
 - Instill in the kids a desire to celebrate Shabbat, that they will take what they learn in school home and practice it there.

1. Is Shabbat a part of your official curriculum?
 - No
- a. If so, how do you teach it in actuality?
- b. if not, do you incorporate in any way? In what way?
 - I teach the brachot for wine and challah and how to write "Shabbat" in Hebrew.
2. What are your major objectives?
 - None, because Shabbat is not part of the curriculum.
3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?
 - NA
4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently.
 - NA
5. What do you think made it effective?
 - NA
6. What, in your opinion should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?
 - I haven't thought about adding anything on Shabbat because it's taught in so many other grades.
7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to Shabbat?
 - Educate parents about Shabbat so that they can practice it at home.
 - Teach kids the meaning, practices, symbolism and prayers of Shabbat.

1. Is Shabbat a part of your official curriculum?
 - Yes
 - a. If so, how do you teach it in actuality?
 - We learn about creation, and make some kind of book on creation. We have a pretend Shabbat: cook, vacuum, clean play corner, set table, sing Shalom Aleichem, say Kiddush, etc.
 - b. if not, do you incorporate in any way? In what way?
2. What are your major objectives?
 - That kids should know that Shabbat is a special day; it's different from the rest of the week.
3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?
 - Make kiddush cup, candlesticks, candle holder for havdalah, Shabbat book. Purim time—make shalach manot baskets containing items for Shabbat such as challah and wine or grape juice.
 - I want to do something with the parsha also. A calendar of activities relating to each parsha would be sent home in advance. For example for Noah, the kids would bring stuffed animals. For Jacob and Esau, we would have a twins day.
4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently...
 - We had a pretend Shabbat: The kids participated in the preparations for Shabbat like cooking, vacuuming, cleaning, and Shabbat experiences like singing Shalom Aleichem, saying Kiddush, etc.
5. What do you think made it effective?
 - The kids were very involved, actually doing things.
6. What, in your opinion should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?
 - Kids need to really experience a Shabbat.
7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to Shabbat?
 - Kids should know it's a special day, different from the rest of the week.
 - Teach parents how to do their own Shabbat.

1. Is Shabbat a part of your official curriculum?
 - I don't have an official curriculum. I change it every year.
 - a. If so, how do you teach it in actuality?
 - b. if not, do you incorporate in any way? In what way?
 - I teach brachot, crafts for Shabbat, read stories, encourage kids to come to shul and sit with me, sing songs.
2. What are your major objectives?
 - That kids should know that Shabbat is a special day; a family time. The family should do something different on Shabbat to know it's a special day. What they do is for the family to decide. I talk about Shabbat as a day of rest and things that families could do.
3. What activities/learning experiences do you construct in order to realize these objectives?
 - Make "Shabbat in a Bag," a kit that contains all the items necessary to celebrate Shabbat in the home. The kids make all the components including: kiddush cup, candlesticks, candle holder, challah and challah cover, and tzedakah box. Also included is a laminated sheet of brachot and grape juice.
4. Please give an example of the most effective Shabbat lesson you have taught recently...
 - "Shabbat in a Bag." See #3 above.
5. What do you think made it effective?
 - The fact that the families had all the things necessary to make Shabbat at home. The parents came back and said they used it on Shabbat and thanked me for sending it home.
6. What, in your opinion should be added to the Shabbat curriculum for your grade? What resources would you need?
 - More time. More storybooks, so I can get into more of the richness of Shabbat. I would like all the kids to come to my home for Shabbat dinner or on Saturday afternoon.
7. Considering the school as a whole, what should be the school's objectives in relation to Shabbat?
 - Encourage participation and more Shabbat-type activities; i.e. economical Shabbat dinner at synagogue, Shabbat storytelling, dancing or singing on a Shabbat afternoon.
 - Teach the positive aspects of Shabbat— Shabbat as a day of "can's," not "cannots."

DISCUSSION GUIDE: CBI - "SHABBAT" FOCUS GROUPS

I. Warm-up

- Focus group purpose/objectives
- No right or wrong answers - not here to pass judgment - only to gather information in order to better meet the needs of congregation
- Introductions
 - length of membership
 - participation level
 - children?/ages

II. Background Information

- role Judaism played in own childhood
- has that role changed as an adult - if so, how and why
- current lifestyle - any lifestyle changes which have affected relationship with synagogue
- concerns - what do you worry about as a Jewish adult/Jewish parent
- interests - as a Jewish adult/Jewish parent
 - what do you do in "free" time
 - how do you relax/renew/replenish yourself after working
 - Probe: do you turn to any aspect of Judaism to help you to replenish yourself - why or why not

III. Attitudes Toward Shabbat

- Describe (in detail) a typical Shabbat in your home

Probe

 - how is it different than the rest of the week
 - is it special - why or why not
 - how does Shabbat fit into the rest of your life
- Does Shabbat "click" for you - is it what you want it to be - explain
- FOR THOSE WHO AGREE - Was there any particular experience which made Shabbat "click" for you

Probe

 - family situation
 - retreat
 - synagogue experience
 - nature - camp experience
 - vacation
- Are Shabbats all special - what are the attributes which make one more special than another
- Describe an "ideal" Shabbat

- FOR THOSE WHO DISAGREE - What's missing
 - what would you like to do differently
 - what (if anything) is standing in your way
 - what would have to change in order for Shabbat to be what you want it to be

IV. Role of Synagogue

- what can CBI do to deepen your Shabbat experience - to make Shabbat click more often
- how can CBI become a more vital part of your Shabbat
- are Shabbat related programs what you are looking for why/why not?
 - what's missing
 - what can the synagogue offer that they are not currently offering

V. Perceptions of Overall Climate at Beth Israel Synagogue

- do you consider CBI to be warm and friendly
 - why/why not
 - suggestions for synagogue becoming more warm and friendly
- what do you like best about being a CBI member/like least
- are expectations being met by each CBI staff - why/why not?

Please complete each sentence.

1. The thing I like best about Shabbat is _____

2. The thing I like least about Shabbat is _____

3. If I could change one thing about the way I experience Shabbat I would...
