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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

"A TIME TO ACT"

"To everything there is a season," including "a time to break down," a "time to build up," a "time to plant, and a time to harvest." (Ecclesiastes, 3:1) In essence, time is a teacher. It instructs us when intelligence, knowledge and logic fail. "What the sechel will not do, time accomplishes [for us]," we are informed innumerable times in Hebraic literature.

When considering the status of Jewish education in America and its necessary contribution toward Jewish continuity and the enhancement of Jewish life, time is not on our side. This is why The Report of the Commission of Jewish Education in North America, "A Time to Act" is most timely.

The condition of Jewish life in America has been bemoaned in numerous accounts over the last century. Professor Shimon Ravidovich's claim that we are "an everdying people," yet managing to survive in every generation, might give us heart when we indulge in self-criticism about the problems of Jewish survival. To be sure, Look magazine, some three decades ago, forecast "The Vanishing Jew." It seems now that nothing is less true than this prophecy. Nevertheless, one need not be a pessimist to be shaken by the findings of the recent CJF 1990 National Jewish population survey. Reading facts such as a fifty-two percent intermarriage rate and only ^{of Jewish youth} forty-six percent being raised completely as Jews must give us major cause for concern.

And, this is precisely the time to consider the role and potential of Jewish education to stem the tide of deculturation.

Given what we know about the status of Jewish education - its accomplishments and failures during the last several decades and its potential ability to impact the future generation of young Jews - we must take stock and marshall our resources, post haste, to meet what this writer believes, is an unprecedented challenge, notwithstanding Ravidovich's insightful contention.

And, this is why "A Time to Act" is on time. Never before in Jewish life in America has such a prestigious group of philanthropists, educators, academics, rabbinical leaders and Jewish communal professionals been assembled in an ongoing series of deliberations about Jewish education on this continent as assembled by the Commission. The composition of the Commission by itself, is noteworthy. Even more significant ~~than that~~ is the conscientious involvement over a period of two years by forty-three commissioners. Ninety percent of the commissioners were in attendance at every one of the six all-day sessions held between August 1, 1988 to June 12, 1990. In addition, some fifteen Commission staff and consultants were actively involved.

The seriousness of the discussions is underscored by the kind of preparation that earmarked each meeting. Between meetings, highly focussed staff preparatory activity took place, involving among other things, the collation and presentation of pertinent data and individual consultations with each commissioner prior to every session.

Thus far, the Commission idea and its success, as it has evolved into the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, (a cost-effective professional organizational effort to initiate the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission) is a tribute to the perspicacity and support of Morton Mandel, Cleveland-based philanthropist par excellence, and the academic leadership of Professor Seymour Fox of the Hebrew University. Moreover, the Report of the Commission serves to highlight the seriousness which the Commissioners and the Mandel Associated Foundation partners - the JCC Association, JESNA and CJF - attached to their respective roles in the development of "A Time to Act."

It is because of the historic nature of this communal venture and the promise it holds in providing the much needed response to the challenges of Jewish education that this issue is devoted to "A Time to Act."

There is a "time for everything." Hopefully, the next generation will be a "time to rejoice" over our collective Jewish educational accomplishments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Jewish community of North America is facing a crisis of major proportions. Large numbers of Jews have lost interest in Jewish values, ideals, and behavior, and there are many who no longer believe that Judaism has a role to play in their search for personal fulfillment and communality. This has grave implications, not only for the richness of Jewish life, but for the very continuity of a large segment of the Jewish people. Over the last several decades, intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews has risen dramatically, and a major proportion of children of such marriages no longer identify themselves as Jews.

It is clear that there is a core of deeply committed Jews whose very way of life ensures meaningful Jewish continuity from generation to generation. However, there is a much larger segment of the Jewish population which is finding it increasingly difficult to define its future in terms of Jewish values and behavior. The responsibility for developing Jewish identity and instilling a commitment to Judaism for this population now rests primarily with education.

The Jews of North America have built an extensive and diverse system of education that takes place in many formal and informal settings. Outstanding educators who are excellent teachers and role models for young people and adults can be found throughout North America in classrooms and community centers, on educational trips to Israel, and in summer camps. However, the system of Jewish education is plagued by many problems, and because of its inadequacies it is failing to engage the

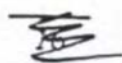
minds of a critical segment of the Jewish population who have no other way of experiencing the beauty and richness of Jewish life.

Careful study of the current state of Jewish education reveals that much of the system, in its various forms and settings, is beset by these problems — sporadic participation; deficiencies in educational content; an underdeveloped profession of Jewish education; inadequate community support; the absence of a research function to monitor results, allocate resources, and plan improvements.

Recent developments throughout the continent indicate that a climate exists today for bringing about major improvements. However, a massive program will have to be undertaken in order to revitalize Jewish education so that it is capable of performing a pivotal role in the meaningful continuity of the Jewish people. It was to achieve this goal that the Commission on Jewish Education in North America was established.

After analyzing the problems, the Commission decided to focus its effort on the two building blocks upon which the entire system rests — developing the profession of Jewish education and mobilizing community support to meet the needs and goals of Jewish education. In order to secure these essential building blocks, a blueprint for the future consisting of a series of concrete steps was worked out by the Commission. The plan includes both short- and long-range elements, and implementation can begin immediately with initial funding already provided.

The core of the Commission's plan is to infuse Jewish education with a new vitality by recruiting large numbers of



talented and dedicated educators. These educators need to work in a congenial environment, sustained by a Jewish community that recognizes Jewish education as the most effective means for perpetuating Jewish identity and creating a commitment to Jewish values and behavior.

The plan developed by the Commission includes the following elements:

1. *Building a profession of Jewish education* — By creating a North American infrastructure for recruiting and training increasing numbers of qualified personnel; expanding the faculties and facilities of training institutions; intensifying on-the-job training programs; raising salaries and benefits of educational personnel; developing new career track opportunities; and increasing the empowerment of educators.

2. *Mobilizing community support* — By recruiting top community leaders to the cause of Jewish education; raising Jewish education to the top of the communal agenda; creating a positive environment for effective Jewish education, and providing substantially increased funding from federations, private foundations, and other sources.

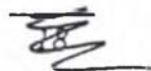
3. *Establishing three to five Lead Communities* — To function as local laboratories for Jewish education; to determine the educational practices and policies that work best; to redesign and improve Jewish education through a wide array of intensive programs; to demonstrate what can happen when there is an infusion of outstanding personnel into the educational system, with a high level of community support and with the necessary funding.



4. *Developing a research capability* — By drawing up a comprehensive research agenda for Jewish education; creating the theoretical and practical knowledge base needed to monitor results and make informed decisions; conducting ongoing studies on the state of Jewish education in general, and on the progress of each component of the Commission's plan.

5. *Creating the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education* — A new entity that will operate as a catalytic agent, working mainly through the efforts of others to ensure the implementation of the Commission's plan; helping to secure necessary funding; overseeing the establishment of Lead Communities; coordinating research activities; providing a setting in which creative people, institutions, organizations, and foundations can work together to develop new undertakings in Jewish education; and helping to replicate the successful experiences in Lead Communities throughout North America.

The Commission is confident that its blueprint is realistic and feasible, and will indeed provide the foundation for a new era in Jewish education. An enormous investment of resources and energies will be required to bring this about, but the Commission is convinced that the will is there and the time to act is now.



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"A TIME TO ACT"

A Jewish Community Center Response

Executive Director, Jerry Wische, The Jewish Community Center of Houston

The important leadership initiative in Jewish education undertaken by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America can be viewed as a reinforcing catalyst to the Jewish Community Center movement. Its work and final report make it necessary for Center leaders to reevaluate the status of our efforts to increase the quality and impact of Jewish educational experiences for our 1,000,000 member-constituents which began in 1985. Center leaders have been engaging in the arduous task of increasing the Center's opportunities to aid in the strengthening of Jewish identity and expanding the offering of appropriate Jewish education and life experiences for lay leaders, staff and members since the watershed Commission on Maximizing Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers was convened in 1984-1985. The "maximizing process" pushed Centers headlong into the examination of the JCC role in Jewish education, and created the ongoing challenge to the JCC to use its unique capabilities to engage individuals and families in developing a stronger commitment to Jewish continuity. The most important conclusion of COMJEE (Maximizing Commission) was its definition of Jewish education for the JCC:

"Jewish education is a lifelong process of acquiring Jewish knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Its goals are to help individuals develop and reinforce positive Jewish identity and participate intelligently in Jewish life.

Jewish education takes place in the home, synagogue, classroom, Center and wherever efforts are made to awaken and deepen in the sense of Jewish belonging, motive the pursuit of Jewish knowledge and give expression to Jewish beliefs, practices and values."

The acceptance of the broad definition of Jewish education was a key incentive for JCC leaders to evaluate the role each Center was playing in helping to reach the goals of stimulating Jews to deepen their sense of belonging, pursuing Jewish knowledge and giving expression to Jewish lifestyle. COMJEE's report placed equal responsibility on lay leaders and staff to engage in the process of defining goals, assessing current program methodology and creating plans of action to move forward in the Jewish education arena. COMJEE was chaired by Morton L. Mandel, the primary force in the development of The Commission on Jewish Education in North America. His leadership and concern for strengthening Jewish education bring both pieces of work together for the Center movement and inspire us to act again.

As a follow-up to COMJEE, the JCC Association developed a Jewish Education Planning Guide which encouraged each JCC to establish a Board level committee to engage in a self-assessment study, to develop specific program goals over a three-year period, and to increase the quality and quantity of Jewish education services in Centers. As a result, many JCCs have significantly increased Jewish educational activity in all areas of Center programming during the last five years. Departments of Jewish Education, Scholars-In-Residence and increased formal courses in Jewish history and thought are a few of the significant results.

In most North American communities, the JCC membership reflects the broad range of involvement, educational levels and identity of the Jews of that community. Centers serve the highly identified and affiliated, the unaffiliated, the inter-married and all variations in between. Therefore, the educational challenges are significant. In which direction should the educational programming and resources be directed? What type of professional

staff should be recruited to meet the program focus? How should the Center work with other groups involved with Jewish education?

The answers to many of these challenges facing JCCs are parallel with the initial concerns of the Commission of Jewish Education in North America: 1) building of a quality professional core of Jewish educators; and 2) mobilizing community support. Without increased opportunities for existing Center personnel to expand on-the-job-training and training for new personnel available from creative recruiting efforts, Centers will be unable to implement more effective Jewish education programs. Without a more committed and educated senior community leadership, the Center's role in Jewish education will not be supported; in fact, there may be conflicts if there is a lack of understanding of the JCC's potential to compliment existing Jewish educational institutions. JCC movement leadership identifies strongly with the effort at increased community-wide support to create the positive environment for effective and expanded programs of Jewish education and for increased funding for these efforts.

Current JCC leaders support the Commission's plan for expanding training opportunities for professionals in North America, as well as Israel. Many JCC professionals at all levels have strong commitments to the continuity of the Jewish community and a desire to utilize their professional disciplines to increase Jewish identity and participation in Jewish life. Some lack formal Jewish educational training. Seminars and In-service opportunities will be key to enhancing JCC staff effectiveness. Specially designed programs for Center professionals within the scope of CAJE or independent seminars designed for the unique needs of Center workers would be appropriate.

In regard to mobilizing community support, it should be noted that since the "maximizing effort," many JCC leaders are strongly committed to developing Jewish educational experiences within the Center and between the JCC and other Jewish institutions. Jewish education experiences have been integral to all JCC movement conventions and conferences for laymen and professionals, especially Executives, since 1985; this effort by JCCA has increased the commitment of Center leaders to the Jewish educational goals through their own involvement in high quality educational programs. The Commission on Jewish Education in North America should capitalize on this affinity for Jewish educational activity by recruiting Center leaders in the local mobilizing efforts.

The JCC movement can clearly identify with the Commission's thrust to serve the larger segment of the Jewish population which is finding it increasingly difficult to define its future in terms of Jewish values and behavior. With its diverse membership population, the Center should concentrate its effort at providing meaningful Jewish educational opportunities and life experiences for those who are not already deeply committed to Jewish continuity.

In order to impact this group, the educational experiences cannot be sporadic; therefore, target groups should be pre-school families, children and their parents who are enrolled in year-long JCC programs such as after-school care, scouting, youth groups and also summer day camp programs. The Center movement, with the support of Jewish educational bodies, must develop exciting educational formats and materials that overcome the deficiencies in content and are sophisticated and meaningful. It may be possible for JCCA to undertake the development of a Center movement curriculum in Jewish education for pre-schools; for children enrolled in after school programs not sponsored by synagogues or Bureaus of Jewish education; to create

curriculum guides and educational experiences on Jewish values and life experiences for summer day camps; and to develop retreat guides for pre-teens and teens on Jewish values, history and thought. Each curriculum can be implemented, evaluated and revised separately.

The undertaking of the development of curriculum for these membership groups requires the simultaneous training of Center professionals to appropriately implement the experiences and retreats and the ability to train other staff involved in delivering the program. In this regard, JCCA along with other bodies associated with the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, should develop special training institutes in North America for JCC personnel, especially pre-school, children, youth and camp staff who are already committed to the Jewish continuity and who desire to increase their own learning and ability to implement Jewish educational programs. These training programs should be done regionally or nationally.

JCCA, in order to influence and monitor the implementation of the curriculum and to give ongoing support and training to newly recruited professionals, should engage its own full time Jewish educational consultants at the pre-school, children and youth levels, who can assist communities in implementing the programs. Working with lay leaders, they can continue to be a catalyst for increased resources development.

IN CONCLUSION

The work of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America serves as an important catalyst and reinforcement for the Center movement to devote its resources to increase the scope of meaningful quality of Jewish education for its constituency and the entire local Jewish community. The imple-

mentation of the Commission's recommendations on increasing the number and effectiveness of Jewish educational professionals and mobilizing top local community leadership to support Jewish educational activity are essential for Centers to meet the shared goal of enhancing Jewish identity and commitment in large numbers of Jewish people.

The work of the Commission now challenges each institution within the Jewish community to act with others to mobilize the leadership, and where appropriate, to act alone and take bold initiatives, to experiment, to cooperate and to create new models of increased Jewish educational content aimed at the largest group of Jews not yet engaged in the joys of Jewish learning.

It is a time to act; we need to accept the challenge from Hillel -- "and if not now, when?"

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Building Blocks and Firm Foundations
Some thoughts about A Time to Act

by Barbara Steinberg
Executive Director
Commission for Jewish Education
of the Palm Beaches

The publication of A Time to Act signals the beginning of a renaissance of serious interest in North American Jewish education. For the first time, a major American lay leader -- Morton L. Mandel -- has stimulated the interest and commitment of other major lay leaders to look critically at the current challenges to the field of Jewish education and to act responsibly in responding to them. Mr. Mandel has rallied unprecedented support for the need to address the basic problems of Jewish education. His demonstration of leadership, insight, and dedication have already, at this early stage of his concentrated involvement with North American Jewish education, inspired his peers to begin investing in the Jewish future on this continent through Jewish education. As Jewish education professionals, we are gratified by the investment of thought, time, energy and funds of this extraordinary lay leader.

Defining the Problem

In defining the problem which A Time to Act addresses, the authors note that "The Jewish community of North America is facing a crisis of major proportions". Assimilation and intermarriage are rife; apathy abounds and ignorance of the Jewish tradition and its meaning are the norm. "The responsibility for developing Jewish identity and instilling a commitment to Judaism for this (uncommitted) population now rests primarily with Jewish education" becomes the call the action of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America. While placing this enormous burden on the Jewish education system, the Commission posits a plan for developing the lay and professional supports which will be required in order for the system to respond effectively to this challenge. Even with the required supports, we must be careful not to place most or all of our hopes for the reinvigoration of Judaism in the 20th and 21st centuries at the doorstep of our education system. In the past decades, the United States made the mistake of trying to enact the national agenda for social change through the public schools. Neither the social agenda nor the appropriate functions of school have benefited from this unfortuitous decision.

Few thoughtful American Jews would argue that the current Jewish education delivery system has done its job effectively. Assimilation and intermarriage are rife; apathy abounds and ignorance of the Jewish tradition and its meaning are the norm. Educational delivery, however, should not and cannot accept the responsibility for the existence of these devastating factors and forces.

While the confrontation of Judaism with the modern world has contributed to the continued development of our rich religious and cultural heritage, it has not yielded cohesive messages and meanings that compel or stimulate non-Orthodox Jews to choose an active and committed Jewish lifestyle.

The current emphasis on the importance of the Jewish family in forming the Jewish identity and identifications of Jewish children speaks to the need for Judaism to appeal to adults. If we truly believe that Jewish education cannot succeed in the classroom unless the home supports it, then we must address the needs of Jewish adults in order to assist the educational delivery system in doing its job. Intelligent Jewish adults need to feel that Judaism adds meaning to their lives -- meaning that cannot be acquired through involvement in the myriad other opportunities to which they can devote their time and energy and which are available to them in a free and open society.

The content of Judaism -- what it means to us in the modern world and why it is indispensable -- is an issue of core concern to our future in a free and open society. Jewish historians and philosophers must be added to the list of those mobilized by the Mandel initiatives. An agenda of meanings must be developed (by those who are most qualified to create it) so that excellence in the classroom reflects an understanding of a Judaism that responds to the needs of growing and adult Jews in real life.

Have the supplementary schools failed us?

Meir ben Horin z"l liked to say that the solution is the problem in Jewish education. He and others like him believed that the absence of a coherent philosophy of education crippled our efforts. Of late, support for Jewish education has focused on what's new. Many innovations have proved themselves worthy; in other cases, what's new, like much of what's old, has not fulfilled its initial promise.

What's new is perhaps not as important as what's effective that we already know about. The past decade has seen a wave of interest in the results of general education research as it applies to day schools. Not only in the general studies area, but also in Jewish studies, day schools have increased their effectiveness by adapting the findings and approaches of American education to their settings. Educational philosophy, curriculum and program development, organization, leadership and staff development, values and character education have all benefited the growth and development of day schools, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. These elements of formal education are the bedrock of effective schools. They are labor intensive and require a long range time frame in order to bear fruit. While a specific approach or method involved in creating an effective school may be new, by and large, we have known what it takes to create and maintain effective formal education for some time.

The question is not "Have the supplementary schools failed us?" but rather, "Have we failed the supplementary schools?" A Time to Act would agree, I believe, that we have failed the supplementary schools. We have grasped at straws, thrown the baby out with the bath water (abandoning every potentially meaningful approach in order to jump on the band wagon for something newer and potentially more meaningful), and eschewed the kinds of educational standards that are the foundation of effective educational delivery systems to the point that the staff is demoralized and the clientele disgusted. A Time to Act calls upon us to remedy this sad situation by creating models of what works. If we decide (assuming the "message" of Judaism continues to be both content and experience-based) that formal education has a place in building the Jewish future, and if we decide that universal day school education is not a feasible alternative, then we will continue with a system of some kind of supplementary education. Properly investing in that system is one of the major challenges of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education. Encouraging that system to utilize what we already know about the organizational, curriculum and staff development of effective schools -- as the day schools have done (in order to survive in a market economy if for no other reason) is a must. What's new isn't necessary good or bad; what we already know but hitherto have been unable (for financial and other reasons) to implement must be put into practice first. Considered and coherent curriculum design processes on a local level would be my first priority in this area; as long as this priority figures somewhere in the plan, I will not be unhappy.



COMMENTS ON "A TIME TO ACT"

Daniel J. Elazar

At a time when much of what has been the conventional pattern of Jewish education in America is in crisis, almost any effort to grapple with that crisis must be welcomed. "A Time to Act," the report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, convened by the Mandel Associated Foundations, JCC Association, and JESNA, in collaboration with the Council of Jewish Federations, represents such an effort. The Commission represented the first attempt to recognize the potentially powerful new role of private Jewish foundations on the North American Jewish scene and to bring together the major private foundations to form a common front on matters related to Jewish education in association with the major framing institutions of the Jewish community operating in this field of formal and informal education. Beyond that, the membership of the Commission reads like a Who's Who of American Jewry. It was designed to be broadly representative of all the various partners in the enterprise.

The Commission labored for a period of two years. Its findings and recommendations are unexceptionable. Who can oppose the desire to build a profession of Jewish education, to mobilize

community support, to develop local laboratories for Jewish education, to develop a research capability that will enhance the theoretical and practical knowledge base needed to monitor results and make informed decisions?

Had this report appeared 30 years ago it might have been a revolutionary document since at that time few of the leaders of the Jewish community at large had fully recognized the importance of paying serious attention to Jewish education. Today, 30 years into the process when federations and Jewish community centers as well as the institutions of formal Jewish education have repeatedly demonstrated that commitment and have also demonstrated what the limitations on that commitment are, the report reads like an anachronism. In essence, this report differs from the many reports on Jewish education in America since the first appeared at the turn of the century only in the slickness of its published format.

The report's analysis of the present situation of Jewish education, principally in the United States, is honest and accurate. Moreover, unlike many previous studies which concentrated on elementary education, it has sought to identify all the components of the Jewish educational "system" in North America on all levels. Nor, as I have indicated, can one fault its recommendations. But in many respects they are like

the report itself. (The whole book is 97 pages long, of which half constitute the report and the rest the executive summary, the acknowledgments, lists of participants, biographies of members of the commission, bibliography, lists of consultations, etc.) There are no practical recommendations of how we get there from here.

Nor does it confront the endemic problems of Jewish education in the United States. How do we get more professional Jewish teachers when there are so few full-time positions available? Certainly not in the supplementary school system, where the hours of instruction per week have more or less continuously declined for the past 50 years. One doubts if local demonstration projects are going to make much difference in this regard, since, despite all efforts supplementary Jewish education remains as fragmented as it has been for the past 60 years and there is no critical mass of students available for professional teachers to teach. The ideas for training of teachers (none of which are new) are worthy, but without jobs are worth little. The situation is better in the day schools and better professional education may help them but that point is not made.

Among the report's most laudible features is its effort to include every form of Jewish education, formal and informal. At the same time, that has the disadvantage of not discriminating

among any of the forms or even assigning priorities. Indeed, the politics of the Commission, which was designed to bring together both the JCCs and the Jewish schools, the religious movements and higher Jewish education, probably dictated that this would have to be the case, but as long as they were at it they should have spent a little more time and another 50 pages looking at existing centers of excellence and suggesting where it was possible to build on strength. Since we cannot do everything, we must make choices. Here we have either no discussion or vagueness. For example, they note the tripling of the number of day school students in the past 30 years but they do not single out the day schools as areas of special promise. This, even though most of the supplementary schools have ceased to be schools worthy of the name, offering 2-4 hours a week of instruction (less than the average Sunday school back in the 1940s). If there are to be professional Jewish educators, they will be in the day schools, but there is not even a word to that effect in this report.

Moreover, there is no discussion of the sad fact that even those Jewish parents who want their children to go to elementary Jewish day schools for the most part have resisted day high schools and have not provided other opportunities for the continued Jewish education of their children past 6th or 8th grade. Here is a concrete problem that needs to be tackled, but there is not a word about it in this report. Was it too sensitive an issue

politically for such a commission?

The report presumes to deal with North America and the Commission included Canadian as well as American members, including Charles Bronfman and his powerful CRB Foundation. Yet no effort was made to compare Jewish education in Canada, where the day school has become the community norm, and the United States, where that is not the case. Canadian Jewry has learned that there are problems with attempting to create a mass system of day school education given the realities of Jewish life today. Would it not have been worthwhile to at least note them in passing in a serious document?

With all the deficiencies in our knowledge and all the lack of research, we do know more than this report lets on. The report itself should have built on the research base that we have instead of merely calling for more research. The background papers did look at that research but their findings were not integrated into the final report.

The report has led to the establishment of another body, the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education. However, has it succeeded in adding new dimensions to the pursuit of better Jewish education in North America? I sincerely doubt it.

That brings us back to another harsh reality of contemporary Jewish life. Ninety percent of the Jews of the United States are not Orthodox, only 10 percent are. The non-Orthodox have been sponsoring commissions for nearly a century. In the beginning, they spent more time founding schools, including the great community Talmud Torahs and Hebrew Colleges and, later, Hebrew-speaking camps. Since the 1960's the building of day schools has been the cutting edge of progress in Jewish education although still serving a small percentage of students in day schools.

Since the end of World War II, the Orthodox 10 percent have been founding day schools, both elementary and secondary, and establishing yeshivot, without fanfare and certainly with no greater resources than those available to the general Jewish community. Like it or not, they have built a Jewish educational edifice that provides most of the serious Jewish education available in North America, to the point where many non-Orthodox Jewish parents send their children even to ultra-Orthodox day schools because that is all that is available. They also produce full-time teachers for their schools, people whose commitment to Jewish life is such that they welcome the opportunity to make even a barely adequate living working in a Jewish profession.

Among the research that the new Council should undertake is a

comparison of what has happened in Jewish education in the Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities in the United States over the past 30 or 40 years. The results would be instructive. This is merely another sign of how, for better or for worse, a major share of the energy in Jewish life has become concentrated in the Orthodox camp in recent decades.

While they are at it they should compare the curricula of Orthodox and non-Orthodox day schools in terms of the intensity of the Jewish study involved. Even where there are non-Orthodox day schools -- one of the hopeful signs in Jewish education -- most teach about what the community Talmud Torahs taught as supplementary schools 50 years ago. All of this is known. A report that does not address what is known cannot be expected to move us forward.

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A TIME TO ACT: ACTION PLAN

Ira J. Steinmetz
Executive Vice President
Jewish Federation of St. Louis

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America should be commended on their report's thorough and comprehensive look at the status of Jewish education. The report captured the current state of Jewish education, the system's deficiencies and problems, and developed a blueprint for the future -- a most ambitious undertaking.

The achievement of this document was made possible by the talent represented on the Commission, talent composed of communal and religious leaders, educators (formal and informal Jewish educators), and philanthropists who encompass the broadest disciplines within the Jewish community.

It takes the dynamic leadership of a Mort Mandel to bring together this "powerhouse" of talent to respond to the critical issues affecting Jewish continuity on the North American scene. Mort Mandel has been in the forefront, advancing the cause of Jewish education over the past decade. He has had the courage and determination to head every major venture, beginning with the JCCA's Commission on Maximizing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers, to similar commissions at the Jewish Agency and CJF.

It will take the determination of the newly created Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, to work with local communities to raise consciousness on leadership's part; and to elevate Jewish education as a top priority, while recognizing that Jewish communities across the country face a multitude of needs,

not the least of which are the resettlement of emigres in Israel and in the local communities.

While the recommendations and the direction set by the Commission are all encompassing in the areas of school curriculum, the necessity to upgrade the profession, and the area of mobilizing community support, more funding is needed than the current 25% ascribed to Jewish education by Federations. One need only analyze the current CJF National Population Study to corroborate the findings of the Commission, and see that our current Jewish education infra-structure has not succeeded. We have witnessed erosion of young people's commitment to Jewish continuity; we see people who find greater fulfillment in participation in the general community than they do within the Jewish community. The "baby boomers" have not found a sense of fulfillment and gratification in their Jewish tradition, culture, or values. If we are to avert the current state of affairs, we must create vehicles to deepen awareness of the importance of Jewish continuity and Jewish education in our leadership's hearts and minds.

While the Commission addresses upgrading the level of professional Jewish educators and professional recruiting and training, the following areas of concern need to be addressed:

1. The whole area of informal education needs to be placed on the same level as formal Jewish education to achieve a well-rounded communal response. Federation planners, program directors, and staff in Jewish Community Centers are not included on the same level as Jewish educators, who appear to be the primary focus of the report.

2. While recognizing the need to elevate the stature of Jewish educators, we must also address the stature of other Jewish communal workers in the informal and secular settings.
3. The overwhelming portion of Jewish education takes place in congregational schools. The report is somewhat limited in defining a relationship between its recommended programs and the realities facing congregations. Congregational teachers work 4-6 hours a week. How can we help them develop career goals that can provide personal satisfaction as well as adequate remuneration to recruit and attract personnel? Will competing ideologies work together to provide sufficient hours so that teachers can work in a variety of settings?
4. Will local communities find the resources to offer salary and other fringe benefits to attract top-notch professionals in this downturned financial climate as well as for part-time teachers? How will local communities be able to access the infusion of dollars from major foundations?
5. Recruiting and training large numbers of talented and dedicated educators realistically cannot be accomplished for teachers who teach only four hours a week. Such training must be accomplished in local communities.

As to the second building block relating to the mobilizing of community support to meet the needs and goals of Jewish education, one must deal with denominational fragmentation.

Although the Commission make-up was representative of denominational leadership, this configuration must filter down to communal leadership in local communities to invigorate Jewish education. There must be greater cooperation, commitment, and support for all phases of Jewish education, including the all day schools.

I would hope that as the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education addresses implementation of the recommendations, it will develop a more holistic approach to content as well as methodology, addressing areas that all denominational schools can buy into so that school curriculums can be innovative and attractive to all age groups in the family. While there is much common ground in areas of technique and methods, between denominations, there are still large differences in the interpretation of subject matter. I would hope that some thought will be given to unifying aspects of Jewish education to address these needs.

As we address the organizational sphere we are confronted by such issues as:

- (a) Will congregations be willing to divert greater funding and resources to Jewish education, when a vast majority of the congregants have no children and are rarely consumers of Jewish education?
- (b) Will consumers of Jewish education be willing to pay increased costs or should we create entitlements with support coming from external sources?

(c) Is the Federation system ready, financially and politically, to provide increased funding to Jewish education at the expense of other traditional services?

In summary, the Commission's report is far-reaching and a step in the right direction. I look with optimism to defining a course of action to elevate Jewish education as the top priority on the communal agenda. And, I am further confident that as we see Jewish education as a top priority, all sectors of American Jewry will begin to work together, pooling their resources to improve the quality of Jewish education. I am also comforted by the selection of 3-5 lead communities through which we will develop models of services for replication in all communities.

I would hope that part of the research component would be utilized to assess those aspects of the Jewish educational system which no longer prove effective. Such activity could redirect existing Jewish educational dollars to the new creative ventures attempted by lead communities.

As a Jewish communal worker committed to the enhancement of the quality of Jewish life, I am grateful to the Commission. The report submitted as "A Time to Act" might perhaps be better entitled "A Time for Action."

1

THE COMMISSION AND CIJE AS TRAILBLAZERS OF
EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Susan L. Sheuitz*

9

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America is to be congratulated for focusing attention on Jewish education. Its work furthers current interest, rooted in the community's collective fears and aspirations, in improving Jewish education. That so diverse a group of Jewish leaders spent two years examining the issues faced in this field is itself a commendable feat. The document it produced, *A Time to Act*, is a helpful primer to those who want to be involved in improving Jewish education. It looks at the inter-related factors which influence what happens in the Jewish educational setting: leadership, funding, faculty, career paths, research and professional knowledge and vision. While one might quibble with specific aspects of the report, it provides conceptual and practical links among these diverse elements. It reminds the reader that no one action, or even several actions on any single aspect Jewish education, will yield satisfactory results. By insisting on this comprehensive approach, the report suggests a core dilemma: how can significant change be accomplished when the problems (and solutions) are complex and influenced by different "loosely coupled" groups which do not need to satisfy each other? It is to this concern that I address my remarks. How can the report catalyze change in the ever-changing mosaic which is Jewish education? Or put differently: how can systematic change be encouraged in a non-system?

systemic?

As a call for action, *A Time to Act* insists that the problems are solvable. Needing to convince others to participate in the process of change, the report projects a sense of crisis which is incompatible with the time and activity required to change educational institutions. Crisis implies an emergency which can be mitigated by swift and forceful action, whether that is influencing congressional votes or rescuing Jews from a war-torn country. As implied by the Commission's comprehensive approach, there is no such swift and decisive action to be taken in this realm. Significant changes are made slowly and in a non-linear fashion.²

We live in a society enamored of the "quick fix." As our ability to measure time grows more sophisticated (a computer's nanosecond is one billionth of a second!), we have become increasingly impatient with longstanding problems and search for immediate cures. Much educational legislation of the last decade in the public sector, from competency tests to merit pay, can be understood as attempts to impose quick solutions on complex problems which have evolved over time. Yet what is known about educational change indicates that lasting and beneficial reform emerges slowly from group experimentation and learning; significant change takes about five years to be incorporated into a school or system.

I wonder whether a crisis orientation --used to motivate people-- doesn't reinforce the yearning for the quick solution, thereby undermining the ability to develop effective long-term strategies. As the Commission's agenda is furthered by CIJE, I hope that it confronts this issue. The community needs to be helped to face chronic problems

for which there are no simple solutions. Can positive aspects of Jewish education be used to excite people and build the momentum for change? Can expectations grounded in what we know about the change process?

The wonderful concept of "lead cities" poses similar dilemmas. Does it recognize variability as a central feature in educational agencies settings? A community, no matter how talented and committed its personnel and leadership, can not discover "the best educational practices" to be replicated in other areas. Specific practices are best only under certain conditions. Communities need instead to understand their limitations and utilize their own capacities. What will be generalizable from the lead communities will be underlying principles, not specific practices. Some of the most effective innovations may not even be replicable!

Lead communities have another central task which is not made explicit in the report. They can provide the mythology of success. If attention is paid to the process of change, stories of "how we persevered" or "what we overcame" will be told. Heroes and heroines will be anointed; symbols of improved Jewish educational practice will be shared. All this will in turn encourage other communities to develop their own educational enterprises because it will create conditions in which effective action becomes more likely. The lead communities can help transform beliefs about Jewish education from assumptions of difficulty and defeat to assumptions of power and potency.

A Time to Act ought not be seen, despite its own language, as a blueprint. A blueprint is static. It assumes we build from scratch and on relatively firm soil. The process of educational change is more like renovating an old, neglected building. While having a vision of the desired results, the renovator has to approach the task flexibly. Until a few holes are lovingly made in some walls, he or she is not even sure about what is possible. The holes reveal the structure's weaknesses and strengths. As work proceeds, plans change: the plumbing can't be salvaged but a wood floor under the layers of linoleum is unexpectedly found! Each change brings both anticipated and unanticipated consequences which then inform subsequent actions. What results may not look as we'd first imagined it but, using the building's strengths, it is stronger and more pleasing. The renovator's approach is far better than a more rigid blueprint or master plan which lays out the route to the solution. In the elaborate ritual of educational change, CIJE and the lead cities are the trailblazers. And as implied in Pirkei Avot (2:1), there is not one best route.

* Susan L. Shevitz teaches courses in organizational theory and culture and educational change at Brandeis University where she heads the Hornstein Program's Jewish Education Concentration. As a lover of old houses, she has experience with the limitations of blueprints when renovating an old structure--- whether a house or a school!

¹This phrase was introduced by organizational theorist Karl Weick to describe the situation when different parts of a system can act semi-autonomously and without direct consideration of the other parts. This is true in Jewish education where a denominational office, local BJE, federation, national agencies etc. all seek to influence Jewish education. In some sense they are part of the same system yet they bear no hierarchical relationship to each other and can act semi-autonomously.

²A useful volume for people interested in educational change is *Rethinking School Improvement: Research, Craft and Concept*. (Ann Lieberman, ed. NY: Teachers College Press, 1986).

In Praise of the Research Network for
Jewish Education

5

A TIME TO ACT: A RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

by

Prof. Stuart Schoenfeld

The recommendations of A Time to Act include a call to develop a research capability. Presumably the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education will be the body to see that this recommendation is implemented. The Commission on Jewish Education in North America has already begun the process. The Commission's report contains an appendix listing eleven studies which it sponsored. Taken collectively, they are the beginnings of a detailed appraisal of North American Jewish education. Of these eleven studies, six were authored either in full or in part by participants in the Research Network in Jewish Education.

The Research Network has now had five annual conferences. We've gathered together American, Israeli, English and Canadian researchers in California, New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Ohio. Our conferences have featured research on Jewish identity, curriculum objectives, Israel trips, teacher characteristics, adult education, supplementary schooling, Reform day schools and more. As with all annual conferences, there has been some variation in participants over the years, but most of us do come to almost every one. Our activity has not been systematically nurtured in the past; the regular contact is important.

The studies sponsored by the Commission, as important as they are, represent only the beginnings of a research process. To begin with, the emerging research agenda in Jewish education will be broader than that undertaken by the Commission so far. Consider two examples - research on the affective dimension of education and research on adult education. Neither topic was among those studied by the commission. Both are important in understanding the situation we are dealing with and in developing a strategy of response. Jewish education, we assume, is not the instrumental acquiring of credentials. Rather, it is about acquiring values and self-esteem. We have some research on the extent to which Jewish education leads to having information; we have almost none on the relationship of Jewish education to self-esteem. Similarly, we assume that a household in which parents study is also one in which children study. Adult education is on the agenda of the Jewish community in North America. Is there research which gives some insight into how this initiative might fit into a general strategy for Jewish education? Many other examples could be found. At this point we don't even have a process for compiling and routinely updating a bibliography of research in Jewish education.

Further, to become an on-going activity around which scholars can build careers, more needs to be done to link communally sponsored research in Jewish education to university based scholarship, including both those institutions of higher learning under Jewish sponsorship and those in the wider community. The studies sponsored by the commission need to be available in university libraries; publication by an academic press would be one way of seeing that this happens. Graduate fellowships in schools of education and departments of social science will bring new scholars into the field. Support for the Research Network in Jewish Education, which has been forthcoming from various communal agencies, will ensure that our conferences will continue and our activities expanded to other areas.

Placing resources into developing university based research in Jewish education in addition to contract research will mean, in the short term, some loss of control over what is researched and how. In the long term, perhaps within as short a period as five to ten years, it will mean that far more people will be engaged in research and that the research produced will be varied, sustained and creative in ways which cannot now be envisaged. David Schoem's research, which the commission's report cited, and William Helmreich's study, which the commission did not cite, are valuable take-off points for the study of Jewish schools written by university based scholars. Each is insightful. Neither is definitive. They raise issues which require further research before we begin to approximate an adequate understanding of Jewish schooling. A continuing program of research of this kind can only be sustained by a research community incorporated into institutions of higher education.

In some ways building a research capacity in Jewish education is a daunting prospect. There is a large research literature in education to be assimilated; there is much else in contemporary social science to be taken into account; and the unique features of Jewish education require originality and creativity in developing research projects. Yet if there is going to be significant improvement in Jewish education we need to know much more about what we do, how we do it, why we do it and what it means to participate. In the process, we are likely to come to understand better not only Jewish education in North America, but North American Jews as well.

Prof. Stuart Schoenfeld (Sociology and Jewish Studies, York University -Toronto) is chair of the Research Network in Jewish Education. The opinions expressed are personal and not formal positions of the network.



And Money Answereth All Things (Ecclesiastes 10,19)

By Rabbi Menachem Raab

6

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America is to be commended for taking the first steps to study the patterns and realities of Jewish education on this continent and for publishing "A Time To Act" with its findings and recommendations.

It is encouraging to see the leadership of the Jewish community of the United States and Canada undertake such an elaborate study. Any open minded concerned Jewish leader will recognize that the greatest assurance of a vibrant Jewish future is a dynamic Jewish education.

What comprises Jewish education is subject to debate and every movement in Judaism will have a different definition. Even the secularist Jew will recognize the need for Jewish education, albeit with his own curriculum.

The varied and wide agenda of Jewish education results in the dissipation of efforts and astronomical costs and waste. This, of course, cannot be avoided since every movement wants the curriculum of its philosophy to be taught. It does, however, lead to financial extravagance and diffused energies.

1.

In reviewing the list of members who comprise the commission it occurs to this writer that greater thought could have been given to involving a few more educators who are actively engaged on a daily basis in education.

Clearly the commission is weighted with leaders of the Jewish community who are either at the purse strings of Jewish monies or are directors of agencies concerned with Jewish education or Jewish life in general. The professional educator who is engulfed daily with the problems of Jewish ^{education} has been overlooked with the exception of perhaps one or two individuals. ^{Bruler / Card v. Ellinger / Gershtein / Hosten / Schiff / Dubin} Professional educators of a few choice schools could have come up with the same conclusions arrived at by this dignified Commission. It is obvious that the status of the people in this Commission was needed in order to lend credence to its findings. The presence of a few more educators certainly would have expedited the deliberations and perhaps even enhanced the deliberations with some practical direction.

When one reads "A Time To Act", one comes away with the impression that it is a work of the proverbial "motherhood and apple pie" of Jewish education. "Building a profession of Jewish education" and "mobilizing community support", part of the blueprint suggested by the study, are a sine-qua-non for extracting the Jewish educational community from the quagmire in which it finds itself. If this study can deal with these two issues successfully it will have justified its existence.

The one most significant drawback in improving the status of the education, is the paltry funds available for building a meaningful educational structure. Not being able to pay decent living wages for qualified teachers results in lowering the standards of the educators to that of unskilled laborers. Anyone who is willing to give time, energy and money for learning a profession will shy away from Jewish education since after all the efforts

invested he or she will not earn a living. The result is that with the exception of a few dedicated hardy souls, the average teacher in Jewish education arrives to this position by default. Either he or she had no other avenue open to them, or he or she is an Israeli who knew Hebrew and became a teacher automatically, or he or she is using this "profession" as an interim stepping stone while abiding time or preparing for some other field. The Commission did deal with this issue and it is good to see that this is singled out as one of the highest priorities. The greatest service the Commission can render is to "mobilize community support". If the finances will be available the rest will fall in line.

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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

2.

In the section of the publication called "Facing The Crises" (p.27) the point is made that "many additional elements that should be central to the mission of Jewish education - such as Jewish values and ideals, the attachment to the State of Israel and concern about Jews throughout the world, the meaning of prayer, the relationship with God and community - are often lacking."

Unfortunately much of this is lacking because too many educational institutions do not see these issues as primary. How many schools do not find the State of Israel an important principle in Jewish life! How many schools feel that teaching about God is not appropriate! How many schools omit prayer as irrelevant in a modern society events! except for occasional moments of life cycle!

The truth is that unless Judaism with its practices becomes part of daily

Jewish living, its teachings are irrelevant and have no meaning. Teaching Hebrew can be equated to teaching Latin. Teaching about Israel can be the same as teaching about Tibet. Teaching prayer can be as foreign and as useless as teaching African tribal mumbo jumbo. Israel and philanthropy, the two main directions of many schools today, in themselves do not make up Judaism, though they are certainly an important part of it.

Unless the educational institutions begin to teach commitment and observance of all aspects of Jewish life, be it cultural or religious, the curriculum will remain superficial and will touch the lives of the young students only peripherally. It will have no impact on their existence.

3.

According to the Chapter in the publication entitled "The Realities of Jewish Education. Today it is estimated "that more than \$1 billion is spent annually on Jewish education". (p.32) This is an enormous sum, but using the figure of school age children suggested by this study, it amounts to approximately \$1,000 per child. No one can contend that this is sufficient to offer a meaningful education. If one assumes the money spent on Jewish education mentioned includes informal forms of education, so much less is available for the formal schools.

While informal settings can "turn on" many young people, this is the exception rather than the rule. Nothing can equate or supplement a formal education in a Day School or even in a good supplementary school. If greater efforts would be expended by the new Council for Initiatives proposed in this

study to enable parents to send children to Day Schools at reduced tuitions, more Jewish children will be getting a good Jewish education. (see Jewish Education 51:1, spring 1983 p. 38 "Make Jewish Day School Education Free; by Menachem Raab). Every year more children drop out from Jewish education because of the spiraling costs and the constant increasing tuition.

4.

One area not given sufficient attention in the study is the paucity of Jewish educational texts and materials. The only major attempts to prepare meaningful texts and materials comes out of Israel, but unfortunately this work is prepared mostly by Israelis who make an effort to study American needs but do not always succeed. Greater effort must be made by American sources to provide the texts and the supplementary materials needed for the classroom.

This calls for tremendous financial expenditures. In the field of general education, hundreds of millions of dollars are spent to develop texts.

In the Jewish education field most of the texts are produced by individuals without the required elaborate studies that make useful educational tools and without field testing. This area requires immense effort in order to make it possible for teachers to convey the necessary content by means of exciting and sequential texts and stimulating materials.

5.

The plan to select "Lead Communities" theoretically sounds feasible and desirable. The danger in such an approach, however, is that the choice of cities may depend basically on how much money can be raised in these

communities. This will, of course, exclude those communities less able to support the financial needs and as stated in the beginning of this writing, finances is the most important factor in resolving the complex problems of Jewish education.

6.

One final observation. No attention is given to the entire structure of the higher Yeshivot institutions in North America. They are probably the greatest potential source of teachers. Their students come highly knowledgeable in Jewish culture and teachings and they are more inspired and dedicated to Judaism. The graduates of these institutions could easily be transformed into a cadre of top notch teachers and educators - at the ~~least~~ cost. Yet no plans seem to be present in the blueprint for the future of these institutions. It would be most cost effective to try to incorporate schools of education or at the very least practical education courses in these institutions. Properly financed these schools would certainly cooperate in this endeavor.

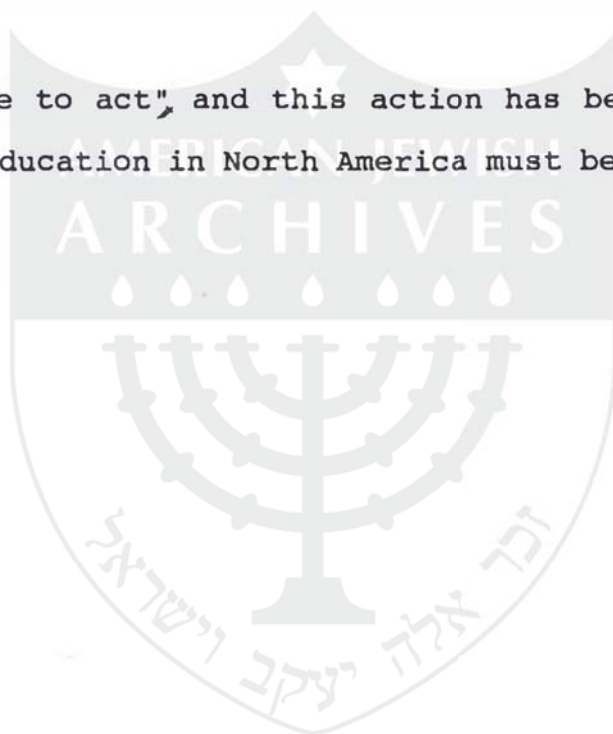
7.

In conclusion, it is reassuring to see American Jewish leaders addressing what may be the greatest need for the future of Judaism in North America -the educational need. The plan the Commission proposes is generally a good one and what remains to be seen is how seriously its recommendations will be pursued.

If the newly created Council for Jewish Institutions can capture the

imagination of the Jewish community and can bring into reality its noble plan, only time will tell. It is a good beginning and hopefully will bear fruit. The road ahead is long and arduous, but the need cries out from the very depth of the Jewish soul. If the Council will pursue its goal vigorously and not be distracted by other vested interests of the different community establishments, it will succeed. The Council must recognize the successes that already exist and give them the means to continue to grow and to expand.

This is indeed a "time to act", and this action has been long needed. The Commission of Jewish Education in North America must be commended for taking the first step.



7

Focus on Jewish Education

Abraham P. Gannes*

"A Time to Act", the Report on the status of Jewish education prepared by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, is the most recent attempt to confront the crisis of Jewish education and to propose an ambitious plan of strategies for change and improvement. The report is the result of two years of deliberations by a distinguished group of forty four commissioners of scholars, social scientists, philanthropists, industrialists, rabbis, educators and the heads of the rabbinical seminaries under the chairmanship of Morton Mandel.

The crisis is described, analyzed and diagnosed succinctly, cogently and correctly. That Jewish education is in a deep crisis is well known and amply documented in numerous community studies and surveys, in pedagogic journals, in recently published books and dissertations. Why was it necessary to spend a million dollars to research and analyze the crisis once again at a time when the Jewish community is hard pressed to raise huge sums for local needs, for Israel and the unprecedented Operation Exodus?

To achieve its goals the Commission projects a blue print of five interrelated elements two of which constitute the primary thrust of the plan: Building a Profession of Jewish Education and Mobilizing Community support. The other three parts of the plan, Establishing Lead Communities, Developing a Research Capability and Creating a Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, would serve as integral concomitants of the overall plan.

Space will only permit a few comments and question.

Each generation, presented with new problems and challenges, strives to take a fresh look at the status of Jewish education. Following the tradition of dor dor v'dorshav, each generation brings to bear new insights and interpretations keeping in mind the changing conditions and the educational climate. It is one way of saying "They had their turn now it is ours". This is what the Commission has set out to do. Yes, there is urgent need for change. Jewish schools need new thinking, new planning, coordination and direction in keeping with the rapidly changing social, educational and cultural conditions.

The Commission's approach is valid provided it gives consideration to the work of preceding generations, their achievements, successes, deficiencies and failures and in the process, learns from the experiences and builds on them. From a historic perspective Jewish educators and committed laymen have over the decades continued to grapple with the issue of survival and creative continuity in the climate of freedom and the role of Jewish education in the struggle. They devised a multitude of educational strategies calculated to strengthen, intensify, expand educational opportunities and to sensitize the organized Jewish community to the priority needs of Jewish education and community responsibility for it. The instruments used included the Bureaus of Jewish Education, the American Association for Jewish Education (now JESNA), educational camping, the day schools, the ideological Commissions on Jewish Education and a vast pedagogic literature and curricula.

Recognizing and accepting the reality of pluralism in Jewish education, a major strategy was the principle of "unity in diversity". The goal was to build an educational system based on coordination and cooperation, encouraging each school system trend to develop high standards of achievement in keeping with its ideological and educational outlook. Separatism, parochialism and divisiveness were and continue to be major challenges.

It is therefore incumbent upon the Commission to learn from the past and present, select those programs still viable and valid to-day, shore them up, build on them, expand them and provide them with the means to do so.

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Jewish education was not clearly defined in the Report except for a brief but inadequate statement by Professor Isadore Twersky, in view of the variety of definitions of Judaism and education. In the Report there appears to be an unspoken assumption that every one understands what Jewish education is and what are its goals. The Report does not address this issue.

tell
why

Basic questions arise which should be of deep concern: Will the ideological Commission^S on Jewish Education and the Bureaus of Jewish Education readily accept the authority and guidance of the Commission as to needs, curricula, consultation, teacher training, etc.? Will not the Commission supersede JESNA (Jewish Education Service of North America) which is mandated to carry out a program in many ways

similar to that of the Commission? Is another national organization being foisted on American Jewry? Are the professionals conducting the program qualified and experienced Jewish educators rooted in Jewish schooling and experience?

That there is no Jewish teaching profession is also well known and documented. The Commission projects a multifaceted plan for the recruitment and education of personnel. It appears to this writer that the emphasis is placed primarily on the training of principals, consultants and heads of educational agencies. Recruitment, education and licensing of classroom teachers should be the principal focus. The late Leo Honor, a distinguished teacher of teachers and educator emphasized that Jewish teaching is "a calling" not a job. Idealism, conviction, dedication and practice are the key criteria. Recruitment of potential candidates is hardly a marketing job. Videos, advertising, articles and all the gimmicks of modern technology will not do it. Money and all the benefits are essential but it will take more than money to attract young men and women to choose Jewish education as their profession. Personal and professional satisfaction and possibility of growth, advancement and community recognition are key factors. Successful recruitment and training will ultimately devolve on inspired and inspiring leaders. The Commission should take a lesson from the past and study the success of predecessors, the pioneers in American Jewish education, the founders of day schools and educational camps and many others who, against all odds, persisted in their efforts to find, train and influence men and women to follow in their footsteps.

based on what? wrong
(must gain)

Why not shore up the existing Colleges of Jewish Studies and restore the words "Hebrew Teacher Training" in their names? This task cannot be left entirely to the Jewish Studies Departments of the Universities. Why not revive the proposal made years ago by the late Louis Hurwich of Boston to establish an All-Day Hebrew Teachers Training School under community auspices?

who says they'll do the job?

Why not recruit women as teachers? Women make up the preponderant majority of the teaching staff in the public schools. Why not in the Jewish schools?

Y4

The Report places emphasis on continental planning. Would it not be advisable to focus on local planning where the responsibility should rest? Lead communities, ie experimental and model pilot schools is a good idea but success in a specific community does not necessarily guarantee transfer to others.

Crucial as is the problem of qualified personnel, imperative unmet needs are secondary Jewish schooling, parent and home education, issues not addressed by the Report.

Why is there no reference to the recently established Jewish Agency Education Authority and its comprehensive plan for Zionist-Jewish education and personnel recruitment and education in the Diaspora, the United States included? Should there not be coordination, cooperation and joint planning in order to eliminate duplication of programs and fund raising efforts?

The Commission's challenge is enormous. It should address the aforementioned and other serious questions. With all the reservations, those of us who have labored long in the profession can only wish the leaders a full measure of success which should ultimately redound to the benefit of Jewish schooling and the Jewish community.

* Before retirement, Dr. Gannes, a veteran Jewish educator, served for ten years as the Director of the W.Z.O. Department of Education and Culture - American Section.



8

Some Reflections on A TIME TO ACT

A. Harry Passow
Jacob H. Schiff Professor of Education
Teachers College, Columbia University
New York, New York 10027

As one who has been concerned with Jewish Education for more decades than I care to remember--as a parent, a chairman of a Conservative Temple supplementary school committee, a professional educator and educational researcher--I am both pleased and apprehensive with A Time to Act. I am pleased with the thoroughness, thoughtfulness, depth and balance with which the report has been prepared. I am apprehensive because of the sense of deja vu I have. So, I approach reading the report with the hope that maybe this time it will be different!

There is no question that the "Jewish community of North America is facing a crisis of major proportions," a crisis which has grown steadily, and that Jewish education is beset by a number of identifiable problems. I take the word of the Commission that "recent developments...indicate that a climate exists today for bringing about major improvements." My own admittedly peripheral impression is quite the opposite.

I think the Commission is on target in conceptualizing Jewish education for the entire community and for all age groups, not just for children and youth. In fact, on reflection, I believe that a major flaw in most of our past efforts has been that we have focused on Jewish education in day and supplementary schools and

simply exhorted parents of children in such schools to change their behavior so that they contribute to their children's nurturance. And, I believe the focus must be on present generations if "future generations of Jews [are to be] impelled to search for meaning through their own traditions and institutions." The future is, of course, the present.

In examining school reform reports over the years, I have argued that one must first ask whether the reformers "have the problem analysis right to begin with" so that their recommendations for change have a sound basis. I think that there are parallels between the difficulties facing Jewish education and the problems of education in general in North America and that, while we can derive insights into possible solutions from general secular education, there are many more serious and complex factors involved in creating a vibrant, viable Jewish education that will achieve the goals which the Commission has set.

For me, the most challenging problem is precisely that the "Jews of North America live in an open society that presents an unprecedented range of opportunities and choices." This "fact" poses a number of fundamental issues, not the least of which is whether the schism between orthodoxy and other "branches" of Judaism can be bridged.

I think the Commission has "things right" with respect to its analysis of the nature of the crisis and the realities of where Jewish education is today so that one can take seriously its proposals. True, the "five overall problems that affect the

system" are of a different order and the Commission did well' in focusing on the two problem areas of an undeveloped profession and inadequate community support.

I suppose that it is because of my long experience in the field of curriculum and teaching that I miss adequate attention to those areas in the Blueprint for the Future. Item 14 in the areas suggested for the Commission's agenda deals with "Curriculum and methods." I am not sure how a profession of Jewish education can be built without adequate attention to curriculum and methods. All these bright, educated, highly qualified Jewish educators who are to be recruited, educated, paid better salaries, etc. are not going to function very effectively unless they have access to better curriculum, better teaching strategies, and better instructional resources. Certainly they "need to be empowered to have an influence on curriculum, teaching methods, and the educational philosophy of the institutions in which they work," but to expect them to design curriculum from scratch is asking too much. They need to be empowered but they need to exercise this power and influence from a much stronger base than they currently have. I am convinced that curriculum and instruction merit greater attention, probably as a separate element but certainly as a fundamental aspect of building a stronger profession of Jewish education. Surely the Commission must have discussed this issue.

The proposals for building a profession of Jewish education are generally sound and use much the same language as has been used in the public education sector to develop as more effective

profession. A good deal of support for the steps suggested can be found in recommendations of the report of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy titled A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century. Clearly the strategies to be employed will have to be quite diverse in that the needs for professionals are so varied. I am not clear what the Commission included in its "current training institutions." There will have to be an enlargement of the full-time facilities and faculties but if the needs are to be met, I suspect that there will have to be new arrangements for joint training programs. My own institution, Teachers College, Columbia University, a graduate professional school of education, does have a joint program with the Jewish Theological Seminary for the preparation of educational leaders at various levels. Yes, salaries and benefits will have to be improved.

As a Conservative Congregant, my experience for "mobilizing community support" has been primarily one of listening to sermons asserting the importance of Jewish education and urging parents to see that their children are enrolled in and attend supplementary schools. Occasionally, the sermon may deal with the importance of sending the child to a day school. The foci proposed for increasing community support for Jewish education appears to be more promising. I am sure the Commission discussed the issue of mobilizing broad community support for Jewish education while mobilizing essential support for Israel. We seem to have more visible "leaders" for the latter effort.

The entrance of strong private foundations into Jewish education is certainly an exciting new development but private foundations will never provide more than a fraction of the funds needed. The Commission does well in considering a variety of sources for community support, including fiscal support.

While I have no objection to establishing "Lead Communities," a procedure that is frequently used in the public education sector, I am sure the Commission is aware of all that is involved in disseminating the programs and developments which occur in those model situations. I would think that the dissemination process is especially tricky in Jewish education which, in many ways, lacks the structures of the public sector where, even with those avenues and mechanisms for diffusion, has found the process difficult.

Some years ago, under the auspices of JESNA, I chaired an effort to develop a research capability in Jewish education. On two occasions, in connection with a meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), we convened as many as two dozen researchers. In the end, the effort failed for a number of reasons. I understand that CAJE has had more success in such endeavors. I mention this only because efforts to develop a research capability ought to build on past endeavors and avoid earlier "mistakes."

The mandate for the proposed Council for Initiative in Jewish Education (~~CAJE~~) seems to be sufficiently clear and appropriate. Such a group is absolutely necessary in light of the nature and magnitude of the tasks to be accomplished.

The Commission appears to have concluded its two-year effort with a positive, hopeful view, "convinced that the will is there and that the time to act is now." On the basis of my own sporadic, erratic, intermittent involvement in the reform of Jewish Education, I believe that the Commission's Blueprint for the Future is indeed a hopeful blueprint--and now is the time to act.



March 1991

A RESPONSE TO THE REPORT ON
JEWISH EDUCATION: "A TIME TO ACT"

By Rabbi Yehiel E. Poupko
Director of Judaica
Jewish Community Centers of Chicago

The Report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America ended where it should have begun. It concludes in time honored Jewish manner with a quote from the Torah, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deut. 6:4-9). This verse describes, in specific terms the end product of Jewish study, namely, a learning Jew. Through constant study, one can become ontologically a learning Jew. There are, of course, other types of good Jews, the identifying Jew and the practicing Jew. It is, however, the learning Jew who sets the classic standard. This is the Jew who has moved from Jewish education to Torah learning.

Jewish education is that educational enterprise defined by any one of several Jewish sub-groups designed to transmit the basic data, ideas and behaviors necessary to be a good and functional member of that Jewish sub-group. Torah learning does not have a defined curriculum. The whole of the Jewish experience is its

never to be completed course of study. Torah learning is done for its own sake. It is a life long romance with the classics of Judaism. It is Torah learning that is described in the quote from Deuteronomy. And it is Torah learning that remains ever remote from the Report. That is to be expected. On the secular side of learning in late 20th century America, our children study for professional and vocational purposes, not because knowledge of Socrates or of the calculus will make them better people and deepen their understanding of the human experience. That day regrettably appears to be long gone.

Well then, if Torah learning is not to be the subject of this Report, what is and ought to be its subject? The verse from Deuteronomy spells out the successful profile of a Torah learner. Why doesn't the Report spell out the successful profile, the end product of Jewish education? What attitudes, beliefs and behaviors demonstrate for different sub-groups that at the end of the process Jewish educational success has been achieved? The Report doesn't do this. How can we know how to achieve something if we don't know what it is we want to achieve? The Report passionately describes current concern as it accurately sets forth the lamentable state of Jewish education. It provides an interesting summary of important data. Then it does the predictable. A new agency or Jewish bureaucracy is created. A research capability is planned, model communities are to be announced, key lay leadership are to be both cultivated and newly identified, and more staff, with better salaries, and hopefully better training are to be hired. After two

years, is that all there is? The promise of this Commission, which was so successful in mobilizing and recruiting so many valuable Jewish educational and communal resources, remains unfulfilled. The closing verse should have determined the nature of the Report rather than serve as its valedictory.

The Report axiomatically assumes that the current structures of Jewish education ought to stay the way they are. The Report describes the institutional side of Jewish education at a time when the American Jewish people have begun to behave like all consumers. In so doing, the American Jewish educational consumer has for the past decade been involved in reshaping Jewish education in America. What the American Jewish educational consumer has done is to distinguish between Jewish education and Jewish schooling. The latter is a largely pediatric process limited to the classroom and devoted almost exclusively to the acquisition of some synagogue skills and Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. It takes place primarily in Synagogues' Sunday, religious, or afternoon schools. The Report accurately notes the shortcomings of this segment of the Jewish educational diet. Jewish education, however, goes way beyond the classroom, and is conducted by a variety of Jewish institutions. The locus of Jewish education is Jewish life experience. And so the non-dayschool parent who represents 85 to 90% of American Jewish educational consumers has in his or her own wisdom developed over the years a diet, a regimen, a curriculum if you will of Jewish life experiences designed to begin the life long process of transmitting the received Jewish past. This regimen

looks something like this.

Age 3 to 5	Early Childhood Jewish Education
Age 6 to 8/9	Jewish Daycamp
Age 9 to 12/13	Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation
Age 15 -17	Overnight camp/Jewish travel/youth groups

Then the youngster who began this process in kindergarten or nursery school, hopefully returns at some point in the mid-twenties to one or another Jewish community, as yet unready to join a synagogue, committed to establishing him or herself professionally and accepting of the notion that marriage and parenting will be deferred for several years. It is at this point that a new phenomenon appears. Namely, that the period between 25-35 may well be the life stage when critical Jewish identity decisions are made. These are the people who are going to start the process all over again for their children with early childhood Jewish education. If this is so, then is it not possible that the priority for Jewish education and Jewish schooling in the North American Jewish community ought to shift from the 7-17 year old to the 25-40 year old? If, in fact, it is adults that set the culture and establish the tone of any community, then the key target for Jewish education ought to be adults of child bearing and child rearing age.

The Commission should have identified the critical Jewish life experiences in each stage of Jewish life, and should have then asked itself which types of Jewish educational agencies are best suited to meet the Jewish educational needs of that life stage. The Commission has not accepted the critical difference between

Jewish schooling and Jewish education. Therefore, the Commission focuses all too much attention on schooling and so-called formal education at the very moment when the American Jewish educational consumer has begun to do otherwise. In so doing, the American Jew has made the camp, the kindergarten, the JCC, the university, the stage, the screen and other cultural institutions Jewish venues of education and learning. The aforementioned institutions have responded in kind, and thus for at least a decade, have gone beyond the Report of the Commission.

To what end, for what population, and through which agencies, does the Commission seek to train educators, to engender community support and to recruit lay people? Maybe the failure until now has been the American Jewish community's inability, or unwillingness to define the criteria of success and then to pursue those criteria. If early childhood Jewish education is the starting point of the entire process for both children and adults, maybe the American Jewish community ought to invest its greatest resources in early childhood Jewish education, adult Jewish education and family education. If that is so, which institutions are best suited to the task? Why did the Commission and its Report assume that what is ought to be? The majority of members of Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform Synagogues are not there as the result of sophisticated, theological preference. Would that they were! As a variety of studies have shown when the Orthodox and the religiously serious Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist are set aside, we are left with the overwhelming majority of the

American Jewish Community that belongs to a Judaism that is neither Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform or Orthodox. It is just American Judaism. Regrettably, this American Judaism may best be described by sociologists rather than theologians. But that is the reality in which we live. If that is so, then should we affirm this American Judaism or should we fight it? It seems to me that the best strategy for fighting it in order to produce more religiously serious American Jews, is to support it based on the notion that if we accept the Jewish reality of any American Jew, we create opportunity for learning, and invariably whenever learning takes place, growth and movement take place. However the Report does none of the above. The Report assumes that we should merely try to enhance the instrumentalities that currently exist which means directing more and more dollars, lay leaders and staff towards Jewish schooling that is synagogue based, and aims at Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. Furthermore the Report does not take into account vast differences that exist from one Jewish community to another. One can hardly talk about Jewish education in the traditional, well organized communities of the Midwest in the same breath that one talks about them in California. The patterns of Jewish affiliation, identification and behavior are so very different as are the intermarriage rates. What may well be a successful profile of a properly educated Jew in Chicago may not be the same for Marin County.

There is one additional area that the Report appears to omit. Is the goal of Jewish education proper ethnic participation or is

it religious behavior and belief? Are we educating for Judaism or for Jewishness? For religion or for ethnicity? Is the source of knowledge and the authority system God or the Jewish people? On the one hand, the Commission may have been wise in avoiding this difficult issue. On the other hand, it appears, on the basis of a number of recent studies, that the majority of American Jews have opted for Jewishness rather than Judaism. In what ways does such a set of attitudes condition the description of an ethnic, but nevertheless Jewish profile.

To end where I began, I fear that if the American Jewish community cannot describe an authoritative set of expected outcomes in attitude, behavior and belief for Jewish education, we will never have a standard against which to measure our efforts and results. Indeed, something curious is happening now in the American Jewish community which may be a source of enlightenment. The American Jewish community has begun to invest tens of millions of dollars in Soviet Jewish acculturation and education. In so doing a number of American Jewish communities have begun to define the components of a profile of a successfully, acculturated Soviet Jew and Jewish family and, as one can imagine, this profile includes attitudes and beliefs that relate to calendar, life cycle, participation in community life, and home symbols and behaviors. An odd thing begins to happen in this process. Once completed, many American Jewish leaders and professionals take a look at the profile and say, does the average American Jew measure up to it? It could be that the Soviet Jewish immigration to the United States

will force us to ask and answer these questions for the first time. Namely, if this is what we expect as the return for our investment in Soviet Jews, should we not be making the same set of demands of ourselves and other American Jews for the return on the investment in Jewish education. Until we specify what we want the return to be in very specific terms, as specific standards of the religious demoninations and of American Judaism, we will, I fear, not know what our goals are.



A TIME TO ACT:

The Challenge to Bureaus of Jewish Education

A Response to the Report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America

by

**Howard Gelberd
Executive Director
Bureau of Jewish Education of San Francisco,
the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties**

The report of the commission will provide a landmark contribution only to those central agencies for Jewish education which are preparing to seriously impact the Jewish educational enterprise in the coming decade. Bureaus with forward-thinking lay leaders and professionals will recognize that the report is the most insightful and concise encapsulation of our current condition and vision for the future we have seen.

It will, however, mark the current accelerated decline of Jewish life in America if it is read and parked on our bookshelves. Most appropriately titled "A Time to Act," the report must bring with it a suspension of:

- needs assessments
- lofty pronouncements
- historical analyses
- philosophical debates.

The commissioners, through the report, have provided a sufficient foundation for ACTION. Its specificity and clarity skillfully provide veteran as well as novice lay and professional leaders with a level of information and inspiration which should enable them to begin (for some, once again).

A shift in vocabulary, tone, and reference will serve as a good starting point. The shift is away from:

crisis	assimilation
failures	indifference
deficiencies	unwillingness
dangers	limitations
strain	impossibility
shortages	reluctance
decline	difficulties
diminishment	

and toward:

motivation	exploration	fascination
risk	diversity	questioning
relevance	success	encouragement
involvement	innovation	commitment
change	inspiration	possibility
potential	vitality	effectiveness
improvement	creativity	empowerment
spending	demonstration	investment
opportunity	thinking	options
energy	initiation	irresistibility

To skeptics and nay-sayers I say:

- There is tremendous brain-power out there available to be harnessed.

- The commitment to a quality Jewish future through quality Jewish education can move and engage phenomenal individuals in each of our communities.
- There is money out there waiting to be excited and liberated by the issues highlighted in the report.

The challenges to central agencies which are seriously considering a response to the report are the following:

1. Leadership development;
2. Coalition building;
3. Programs and services for results.

1. Leadership Development

- a) Boards and committees should be broad-based, reflecting all degrees of commitment, identification and involvement, and all family patterns (single, married, divorced, intermarried, old, young, affluent, struggling, etc.).
- b) Issues considered must be packaged and communicated in such ways that they can be: understood by all, relevant, meaningful, and inspiring/motivating.

2. Coalition Building

The report bemoans the lack of community support for Jewish education. In addition to focusing on the two previous points, I have also found many individuals who have simply *never been asked*. Commitment, support, and advocacy will develop only from the openness that invites and encourages participation and involvement. *Ask!* You will be

surprised how attractive our field can be if it is perceived as a serious endeavor.

The real issue is not community involvement, but the quality of what you do after the community gets involved. The report emphasizes partnership. Institutional egos can stand some deflating. There is enough work ahead to keep *all* of us busy. Let us simply get together and decide who does what best.

Central agencies can initiate or participate in interagency coalitions. Where trust, chemistry, and good faith are in evidence, bureaus, day schools, synagogue and supplementary schools, federations, family services and other agencies can be convened. Where fences are "high" the report may present a unique opportunity for bureaus to take some risks, creating a new climate and forum.

3. Programs and Services for Results

This will take some courage: Discarding what *does not* work and replacing it with what *does*. If the two prior challenges are met, a variety of program ideas will emerge. The following areas should be particularly fertile:

- media
- family
- informal education
- Israel as an educational laboratory for students, families, teachers
- personnel (attracting, training, retaining, compensating)
- new approaches to supplementary education

Our federation endowment fund has provided our agency with seed grants for pilot programs. When they're controlled and well-implemented,

successful pilots develop advocates and attract future funding. Our Family History Video Project for sixth grades in supplementary schools is a good example. It was built on a concept developed "together" by Bureau lay individuals and professional educators. Today it reaches hundreds of students and families nationally, involving bureaus, synagogues, students, parents, and extended families, utilizing video, teacher training, and curriculum development. It is close to home, relevant, fun, and has a strong content base.

The report, justifiably, is concerned with standards and content. Some of the brightest members of our communities, for whatever reasons (family history, negative experiences), are intimidated by content-dominated discussions. Many are reluctant to become involved, feeling that they may be labeled "less Jewish" due to their limited Judaic knowledge. We have lost their potentially valuable contributions in ideas, strategies, outreach, and subsequent funding. Serious commitment to this report will require that the response/implementation forums be inviting, comfortable, accepting and nurturing for the interested, but heretofore uninvolved, marginally affiliated, or totally unaffiliated physicians, advertising executives, developers, bankers, teachers, homemakers, laborers, orthodontists, etc. These members of the community care about Jewish kids. They have ideas and money. They will most surely develop a hunger for content through exposure to others and to experiences throughout the process.

The lead communities and local laboratories referred to in the report should be excellent jumping-off points for this "new" generation. The "mystery . . . romance . . . insights . . . drama . . . power . . . and fascination" that Professor Twersky refers to should not only be reflected in the goals of Jewish education, but should become ingredients of the process we are undertaking. We need results.

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A Time To Act

A Reaction by Dr. Mordecai Schnaidman

A Time To Act, the report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, is an historic document. It presents the results of the meetings of 44 prestigious leaders, convened over a two year period, who examined the question of how Jewish education can better ensure Jewish continuity. The vision that emerges -- a plan to impact positively and meaningfully on the largest Jewish community in the world today -- is exhilarating in scope and daring. Concluding with the establishment of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE), which the Commission charged with implementing the report, there is bright promise that the theoretical beginnings will be translated into reality.

All who took part in the process, from initiation to conclusion, especially Mr. Morton L. Mandel and his family, merit the fullest appreciation of the Jewish community and its educational fraternity. A fitting tribute is to react ^{to} the report with the same sort of highmindedness and seriousness with which it was conceived and developed. When done in the mode of "arguments for he sake of heaven," it becomes an affirmation of the genuine motives and sincere aims of all of the conveners and commissioners.

It is useful to begin by noting what the report does. A Time to Act dramatically raises consciousness about Jewish education, understood in the broadest sense, and projects it to the forefront of the communal agenda. It offers some excellent ideas for advancing Jewish education, placing the greatest emphasis for change on recruiting more of the "best and the brightest" to enter the field. It hopes to provide these new educators with community support, which translated into practical terms means

communal receptivity to change, increased remuneration, and a broader range of opportunities. The report also calls for sophisticated educational research which, among other objectives, will develop better data about Jewish education (the absence of which hampered the work of the Commission itself). These are indisputable and, indeed, priority goals. Time, effort and the experience of CIJE will determine the degree to which they are achieved.

Interestingly enough, and confirmation of its integrity, the report itself questions one of its major tenets. It asks whether or not Jewish education is the optimum vehicle for achieving greater attachment to Jewish values (p. 73). This is a difficult and important question. Educational observers generally believe that education can reinforce attitudes and beliefs, or shape them when the student is well motivated, or even change them when family or community have transferred "authority" to educators. The report places great hope on the charismatic personalities of the new corps of educators. As noted, the report also looks to community support for these educators as a vital element in effecting change. Can such special people be found in sufficient numbers to make the difference that the report envisions? The report makes reference to an as yet unpublished paper that it has commissioned to address this issue (p. 88). This monograph is eagerly awaited.

Although it is concerned with many issues, the report deletes much of what must have been interesting deliberation. It does not explain, for example, why the commissioners chose to focus on the two areas of personnel and community support out of the 23 that were suggested for their agenda (p. 48). The reader can only speculate. Were they motivated by the fact that these embrace many more areas than any of the others; or, because these two are more likely to result in the overall change that they were

seeking? Did they choose them because these two have greater chances for implementation, or because they could more readily capture the imagination of the Jewish community? The reader is left feeling that the reasons would have been instructive and useful.

Furthermore, the list of 23 areas is presented without any apparent scheme and with a degree of repetition. Some items are very general, e.g. "The Supplementary School," "The Day School" (Nos. 9 and 10); while others are very specific, e.g. "Integrated Programs of Formal and Informal Education" (No. 13). Numbers 2 and 3 focus on age groups (elementary and secondary), while 10 and 11 look at school types (supplementary and day school) -- with obvious overlap. Numbers 19, 20 and 23 relate to finances and facilities, and again there is redundancy. A rational organization of the list into general areas and sub-headings would have greatly enhanced the educational value of the report. Perhaps the presentation of the list is a reflection of the make-up of the Commission, in which only 12 of the Commissioners appear to be professional educators.

The absence of educational clarity is manifested in several other sections of the report as well. In noting the huge drop in enrollment in Jewish schools in the last quarter century, reference is made to the decline in the birth rate and in interest in Jewish schooling (p. 38). While hard data supporting any definite conclusions about the decline of interest may not be available, the issue has been previously addressed and there are informed opinions. In a report dedicated to setting forth a program for educational change, it would appear that some sort of analysis of the disaffection with Jewish education is in order. Conclusions may not have been affected, but they would not have the appearance of sheer assertion if some discussion of this matter had been offered.

In another unsubstantiated claim, the report states that, with respect to personnel, "dealing with single elements has not met with success" (p. 50). This is a very important point for the whole study since it serves as a rationale for the report's conclusion that any attempts at change in personnel issues must be comprehensive. Evidence for this statement, therefore, goes to the very heart of the program that the report seeks to develop. More attention to validation from research was called for in this instance.

It is commendable that the report offers a multiplicity of suggestions for implementation. It leaves CIJE to sift and choose those which carry greater intrinsic merit and prospects for success. The comments and reactions of educational observers to the suggestions in the report will be helpful to CIJE. For example, among the ideas offered in the section on "Developing New Sources of Personnel" (57-59), reference is made to the recruitment of outstanding, young, Jewish, academics and professionals in the humanities and social sciences who would bring "their expertise to the field of Jewish education in areas such as curriculum, teaching methods, and the media." Those who have dealt with in-service know that such a project is doomed to failure unless educators are involved from the outset in the process of selecting and choosing advisory personnel. Educators will not be amenable to suggestions for change unless they believe that "outsiders" understand the field for which they are consulting. Professionals resist ideas and advice which ignore established and proven practice. If it is to have any prospect of success, the direction of any such program must be done in close consultation with educators who can provide the briefings and orientation to overcome the gaps in knowledge of advisors from without.

The Jewish Education Corps is another idea which appears to be

attractive, but may be problematic. This program, geared to encouraging young volunteers to take time off before starting on their careers, requires an enormous investment in staff and time for recruitment, selection, training, and placement. Will the results be worth the effort? Will such a program make that much of a difference? Are the results of the Peace Corps of the United States cost effective or are there political considerations for its continuation? There is in fact, a recently established model in the field of general education, the "Teach for America" Program. Preliminary indicators are that the inexperience of the volunteers and the problem of drop-outs raise questions about the program (N.Y. Times, 12/5/91). These factors should be considered before establishing a costly Jewish Education Corps project.

A crucial element in the report is the development of Lead Communities to serve as models for implementation. The thinking is that by beginning on a smaller scale, in diverse communal settings and in different geographic locations, CIJE can develop experience which can then be applied widely. How such communities will be chosen is left for the future (p. 68). There are hints that those communities which demonstrate a desire to be involved by developing local commissions similar to that of the original prototype, and which succeed in enlisting the cooperation of the broadest range of outstanding communal leaders, will be given priority consideration (ibid)

The merit of the ideas of Lead Communities is tied to the question of what a community is expected to achieve: Is it to create a climate of receptivity to change, or, to develop a consensus with respect to a detailed educational plan for the community? Community involvement as a way of creating receptivity to change can be achieved. If, however, the

aim is one of forging consensus, then the idea of a Lead Community becomes problematic. The Jewish community is much too diverse to expect agreement on institutional and programmatic specifics. Often the most successful institutions and programs are the ones which demur the most from consensus moves requiring revisions that blur the differences that are hallmarks of uniqueness. Seeking unity may absorb all available communal energies and displace the central purposes of the Lead Community concept, namely, the enhancement of educational institutions and programs in their diversity.

Indeed, the report itself is evidence for this kind of wariness of a tight unity. The major concern of the report is the overarching goal of advancing Jewish commitment and the ways in which it can be done. It is left to CIJE and others to determine the choice of specific educational values, ideas and practices. The Commissioners, themselves a very diverse group, did not attempt to reach agreement on specifics. Similarly, such agreement cannot be expected to develop in any given community. What can be expected, at most, is a recognition of the merits of the programs of the denominational and communal groups, allowing each to pursue its own aims within an overall scheme that calls for general standards in goal setting, administrative professionalism, and evaluations.

In light of this consideration of unity, perhaps the focus ought to shift to outstanding institutions and programs. Such pockets of excellence, to which reference is made in passing (p. 26), may provide an answer to the report's goal: the enhancement of the educational enterprise. By placing greater emphasis on institutions and programs, and less on community unity, educational advancement may be more readily achievable. CIJE, as the successor to the Commission, may be well advised, therefore, to consider the idea of giving as much focus to institutions and programs as to communities.

Attention has been given above to those aspects of the report which require qualification or re-thinking. The report as a whole, however, is a document which stands as an inspiration to educators and lay people. Unfortunately, it is being published at a time when the Jewish community is concentrating on Operation Exodus and the absorption of Russian immigrants. It would be remiss if either of these priorities will inhibit the implementation of the report's program. If, however, the supporters of the report continue their efforts to lead and inspire, Jewish communities will be encouraged to move together to enact the goals of the report without untoward delay. As the report correctly argues, what is at stake is no less a concern than the future of the Jewish community.

