

# The Role of Temple Boards in Congregational Education

## *A Discussion Guide*

By Keren Alpert



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UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS



# UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

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# HOW TO USE THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

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The discussion on the role of the Temple Board proposed in this guide has been structured in eleven sessions, each specifically created to assist the board in exploring various aspects of Jewish education within your congregation and religious school.

*The Role of Temple Boards in Congregational Education* has been designed to facilitate the conversation on a wide range of subjects, and, with its appendix materials, provides a methodology for selecting additional topics that may be of particular interest to your board and congregation. With the assistance of the congregation's educator and/or the Education Committee's chairperson, additional or alternative sessions may be planned for those topics not presented in this guide, such as curriculum review, communication with parents, or family programs. The UAHC regional educators and UAHC Department of Jewish Education are also available for consultation and assistance in the process of session planning.

Each session should last about twenty to thirty minutes, depending on your board's interest in the given topic and on time availability. The guided discussions can be used in several ways:

1. We recommend that discussion sessions be regularly run at the beginning of all Temple Board meetings throughout the year. This may require extending the length of the regular board meeting to accommodate discussion.
2. Sessions may also be clustered, so several of them can be completed at each evening meeting throughout the year.
3. The entire set of eleven sessions could be fully examined at a board retreat. In that case, it is advisable to schedule at least two full days for the discussion of all the topics presented.

With the exception of Session Seven ("Understanding the School Budget") and Session Eight ("Should Tuition Fees Fund Our Religious School?"), each session is self-contained and can be scheduled for discussion according to the board's priorities.

Since many (often divergent) opinions and ideas will be voiced during these sessions, the presence of a skilled facilitator will greatly help and enhance the quality and flow of the discussion. The facilitator can be a volunteer or a member of

your professional staff. Resource materials to focus the dialogue and to provide supplemental information to board members are included in this guide. Handouts can be distributed before, during, or after the discussions and, in some cases, they can turn into important benchmarks to evaluate your school and the role of education in your congregation.

# INTRODUCTION

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*A person who teaches Torah  
to his friend's child may be regarded,  
according to Scripture,  
as though the child had been born to him.*

B. Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 19b

The Jewish education of our children is the responsibility of every member of the synagogue community. As parents struggle to create and maintain a Jewish home in a context of diminished Jewish literacy and variable practice, our congregational schools have become increasingly important as the basic source of learning for Jewish living. As Jonathan Woocher, president of Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA), once noted, “There can be little doubt that for American Jews, the synagogue is the preeminent ‘educating institution.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

Until recently, the educational activities of the synagogue revolved almost exclusively around the religious school, generally with the support and oversight of a Religious School or Education Committee. However, it has become increasingly evident that Jewish education stands at the very heart of synagogue life. In order to prepare Jewish children for a lifelong commitment to Jewish living (and hopefully leadership), it is imperative to develop and implement a clear vision on how to achieve the desired outcome. The creation of such vision can only come from the synagogue’s board.

This book is intended to provide the congregational leadership with a focused, engaging means for putting Jewish education on their Temple Board’s standing agenda. The varied interactive sessions presented here will help the board members define and clarify important issues such as:

- The importance of Jewish education in the life of the congregation
- The goals of the congregation and religious school
- The decision-making process for the school programs

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Reimer, *Succeeding at Jewish Education* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), p. xiv.

Although the terms “Education Committee” and “Religious School Committee” are used interchangeably in this guide, the broader connotation that distinguishes the former makes it the preferable term in a congregational setting. The same is true for the words “educator” and “principal.”

## **Enduring Understanding**

The study, review, reflection, and interaction processes outlined in this guide have been designed to reinforce one fundamental proposition: Education is at the heart of synagogue life, and should therefore be an integral part of ongoing Temple Board deliberations.

Each session concludes with an “Evidence of Understanding” segment that allows the facilitator to review the key points of the session and to check that board members understand the connection between the materials presented and the overall enduring understanding.



# Session One

## WHY DO WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OUR RELIGIOUS SCHOOL?

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### **Instructions for the Facilitator**

Each Temple Board is constantly faced with multiple problems of all sorts—from leaking roofs to lack of membership growth. Although the director of education and the Religious School Committee are generally the ones directly involved in the various decision processes regarding the school, Jewish education is also a responsibility of the board, given education's centrality within synagogue life.

The Temple Board has the obligation to engage in ongoing dialogue regarding the religious school. Session One should therefore end with the development of a timetable for considering future issues. It is recommended that a minimum of four sessions be included on the agenda of each congregation.

Prior to a session, write each of the following scenarios on individual index cards. Divide your board into four groups of three or more people. (With smaller boards, you may want to do this exercise as one group.) Hand each group a card and ask them to respond to the given scenario as if it were a real situation they were called to solve.

### **❖ Scenario 1**

A potential temple member meets you at a community event and tells you he or she is interested in joining a congregation. This person would like to know how many days a week each religious school class meets, whether all the different age groups attend on the same days, and if the number of school days increases as the children grow. This person is also concerned about car pools and wants to keep life as simple as possible.

You could simply respond, “Call our school director to get all this information.” But you understand the importance of encouraging membership, and you want to act on this opportunity directly and immediately. Provide the potential member with the requested information about the school schedule and explain the reasons and advantages of having adopted it.

### ❖ Scenario 2

The expenses on the school budget seem to be increasing, and this results in an increase in dues and tuition fees. Why is the jump so high this year? Has it helped improve the school? A member with many children enrolled in the school asks why the participant fees are so much.

Think about your school budget. Have the school and tuition fees actually increased in recent years? If so, were they due to specific causes, such as the development of a computer lab or the purchase of new texts, or did they result from the hiring of new teaching personnel? How would you, as a board member, answer this question? Can you tell this congregant what his or her family should do if they have difficulty paying?

### ❖ Scenario 3

At a typical Friday night Shabbat service, a satisfactory number of adults attend, but very few children are present. At the *Oneg Shabbat* after the service, a congregant approaches you as a board member and asks why so few children attend services. He or she wants to know if the participation of children could increase the overall attendance at Friday evening services. Could it encourage our children to use their skills in this service environment? What is the rabbi's view on this issue? Is there a Religious Services Committee that has an influence on student involvement in the services? Are there other services children participate in more visibly and which they enjoy?

Respond to these questions, having in mind the policy and practice of your congregation with regard to children's participation in services.

### ❖ Scenario 4

Walking by your school, you notice that the side door is open. As a board member, you wonder why. You don't remember if there are separate security plans for the school and the temple. Before you talk to the executive director and the educator, where do you look to refresh your memory about security plans? How will you approach the executive director and the school educator? What questions will you ask them? What will you do if you find out that there is no security plan?

From each scenario, each group should generate a list of questions that board members should be able to answer about the congregational school. These questions should be shared with the entire group. Future sessions should provide the context for responding to all these questions. If, once you have finished this discussion guide, there still remain unanswered questions, you may wish to refer them to the Education Committee for further consideration, asking for a report back to the board.

Preview with participants the session topics proposed in this discussion guide:

1. Why do we need to know about our religious school?
2. The role of the community in educating Jewish children
3. The role of education in our lives
4. Our goals as a congregation and a school
5. Interacting with the Education Committee
6. What is the nature of our educational programs?
7. Understanding the school budget
8. Should tuition fees fund our religious school?
9. Who is teaching in our school?
10. Congregants as teachers
11. Planning: topics for future discussion

## **Evidence of Understanding**

Make a plan for placing Jewish education and the religious school on the agenda for the year. Options include:

1. Adding an education-related issue to your agenda for each meeting.
2. Scheduling three or four meetings dedicated solely to education, so that two or three topics can be included in each session.
3. Planning a retreat on the theme of education, during which numerous topics will be explored throughout a several-day period.

## Session Two

# THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN EDUCATING JEWISH CHILDREN

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### Instructions for the Facilitator

This session is an investigation of the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Bava Batra*. Explain to the group that the Babylonian Talmud is a compendium of opinions on Jewish law that followed the development of the Mishnah. The Mishnah and Talmud were developed after the destruction of the Second Temple—the center of Jewish worship and practice—when the Jews were exiled from Jerusalem. The Rabbis realized the need for a written judicial code that could be consulted in order to understand the meaning and application of the Jewish laws derived from the Torah. There are two versions of the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud and Jerusalem Talmud), both compiled between the third and sixth century C.E. The Talmud not only records the discussions of the Rabbis concerning judicial matters, but it also contains midrashic segments, stories about Jewish rituals, and numerous anecdotes.

Distribute copies of the *Bava Batra* text (see below) to board members and ask them to read it silently or aloud. Begin asking the questions in the order they appear on page 5, keeping close track of time to make sure that all questions are asked and answered. As many people as possible should be involved in the discussion.

### The Text

This section of the Babylonian Talmud entitled *Bava Batra* 21a contains a myriad of regulations and statements about the education of children within the school setting.

**Originally, if a child had a father, he would teach him Torah, but one who did not have a father would not learn Torah.**

**The sages enacted that teachers of children should be installed in Jerusalem, so that any youth could go there and be taught Torah. Which verse did they expound as a source for this arrangement?**

***Ki miTziyon teitzei Torah.***

**For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah.**

**If a child had a father, the father would take him up to Jerusalem and have him taught there. Whoever did not have a father would not go up to Jerusalem and study.**

**The Sages enacted that local authorities should install teachers in every province and they should bring in youths of ages sixteen or seventeen who lacked an education to be taught by these teachers.**

But even this solution was not enough. The *Bava Batra* continues:

**One may not take a child from his town to attend classes in another town on a daily basis, lest the child come to danger while on the road. Rather, the residents of the child's hometown are required to hire a teacher.**

It is evident that the Rabbis whose discussions are recorded in the Talmud already accepted as a given the proposition that all Jewish children must be educated. This in itself was revolutionary.

## **Questions for Discussion**

1. Why is Jewish education necessary?
2. Why were schools already necessary at the time the Talmud was compiled?
3. What about our life in 21st-century North America makes Jewish education important for our children? Describe any tensions that exist, being a minority culture, when some of our behaviors and practices are not in keeping with general North American culture. (For example, Friday night activities, Sukkot, Shavuot, and Pesach often conflict with the public school calendar.)

## **Evidence of Understanding**

This is the first Talmudic statement about the need for every community to have its own school. Ask the board members to respond to the question, “How does our religious school benefit our community?”

**NOTE:** The secretary or a board member should record the board’s responses for future reference.

## Session Three

# THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN OUR LIVES

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### Instructions for the Facilitator

Session Three focuses on a series of questions to help the Temple Board members reflect on the role of education in their lives. The text for this session is an article by Rabbi Jan Katzew, which appeared in *The Jewish Forward*, vol. CIV (19 Jan. 2001: 17), followed by some questions that should help generate an interesting discussion.

Be sure to watch your time carefully. The first question will ask all participants to discuss their educational background. If the board is quite large, ask members to share with the entire group one aspect of their educational experience.

Have someone read Katzew's article aloud. It is often easier to inject questions and make sure people are on task when reading is done aloud. The remainder of the exercise will ask board members to reflect on their own Jewish educational experiences and the role of Jewish education in their lives.

### The Text

#### How We Can Make Hebrew Schools Work Again

All Jewish schools are supplementary. In recounting the origins of Jewish schooling, the Babylonian Talmud (*Baba Batra* 21a) makes it clear that schools came into existence because parents could not fulfill their sacred obligation of teaching their children. "And you yourselves shall teach your children; a parent must teach his child." Then, as now, schools have a secondary function in rearing a generation of literate, competent and committed Jews. Parents have that primary task. If we expect a secondary institution to serve a primary function, we will be disillusioned. And so we are. We collectively lament the state of what we call 'supplementary' Jewish learning, which meets up to six hours per week. Rather than see supplementary schools as part of the problem of Jewish learning, we should learn to recognize them as part of the solution by responding to the question: What do these supplementary schools supplement?

“The traditional Jewish family served as a primary educational institution because of the role ascribed to it by society at large, because of the cultural values it was assigned, and because of its internal structure... The family became a bearer of religious values because it was the locus of certain religious ceremonies, especially at meal times: daily to the extent that the family dined together and recited the blessings before and the grace after meals; and then, of course, on Sabbath eve and at the Passover Seder.”

*Jacob Katz – Tradition and Crisis*

Jewish families still serve as the primary educational institution in the Jewish community. But, when the Judaism they live at home is dissonant with the Judaism students are supposed to learn at school, home wins, and consequently, too frequently, Judaism loses. This is true, to varying degrees, when students come home from day school, from camp, and from Israel. These other learning environments may be more intensive, more experiential, and more socially binding than the synagogue school. But, they are still essentially supplemental. Jewish learning is not a zero sum game defined by an either/or proposition. Rather, it is a both/and proposition that allows for and even asks for combining synagogue schooling with youth grouping, camping, and Israel experiences to supplement Jewish living at home.

Jewish ‘education’ is somewhat of a misnomer, since the operating assumption of education is that learning is a process of educate (drawing out) knowledge from the learner. *Hinukh*, the Hebrew word typically rendered ‘education’ is actually derived from dedication. The goal of Jewish learning is dedication to Jewish living. There is a world of difference between a Jewish studies major and a Jew; the former knows; the latter is.

More than 80 years ago, at the opening of the *Lehrhaus* in Frankfurt, Franz Rosenzweig said, “A new learning is about to be born – rather, it has been born. It is learning in reverse order. A learning that no longer starts from the Torah and leads into life, but the other way round: from life, from a world that knows nothing of the Law, or pretends to know nothing, back to the Torah... We know that in being Jewish we must not give up anything, not renounce anything, but lead everything back to Judaism.” The growth of adult Jewish learning and family learning are but two positive developments that respond to Rosenzweig’s challenge. Rather than act as though a few hours a week of learning can determine the rest of the week of living, we need to engage those families who are open, but not yet committed to living as Jews all the time in contrast to living as Jews from time to time.

In the *Guide to the Perplexed*, Maimonides wrote about ‘the inevitability of gradualness’. Despite the spate of transformational slogans and programs, there is timeless and timely wisdom in Maimonides’ admonition. According to the encyclopedic and incisive article by Jack Wertheimer in *The 1999 American Jewish Yearbook*, more than a quarter of a million children learn in synagogue schools. They constitute the majority of Jewish children studying Judaism in all formal and informal settings. In an entirely voluntaristic system, despite the justified critique, American Jews who are members of synagogues believe that Jewish schooling is worthy, if not holy. The fact that these schools are embedded in synagogues is most significant. Complemented by the



sanctuary, the boardroom, the social hall, the administrative and clergy offices, the school is an essential piece of the learning institution called a synagogue. It is myopic to see Jewish learning confined to the hours school meets, and I write that as someone who learned more at the dinner table than I did through high school.

### **Synagogue schools can and do accomplish:**

- [Teach] Hebrew decoding and contextual understanding of Torah and Tefilla
- Habituate understanding and practice of Tikkun Olam (b'malchut Shaddai)
- Initiate Jewish learning as a lifelong process
- Provide community structure for moral and spiritual development
- Inspire conscious Jewish living

### **We can improve synagogue schools by:**

- Making the transition from Jewish Early Childhood Centers to synagogue schools seamless
- Blending learning and socializing, for adolescents especially
- Regarding parents, teachers, and families as learners in addition to children
- Concentrating on the positive celebratory aspects of Jewish memory and destiny
- Striving to create a balance between Talmud Torah, Avodah and Gemillut Chassadim (Jewish learning, Jewish living and Jewish caring)

As I write this article, we are reading this week from Parashat Va'yechi, the last weekly Torah portion in the Book of Genesis. Jacob was the first grandparent to wonder whether his grandchildren, Ephraim and Manasseh, will be Jews, whether their ascribed identity will become their chosen identity (Genesis 48). We still wonder. There are no guarantees. But, those grandparents whose grandchildren are learning in synagogue schools can find reason to hope, if not expect that they will perpetuate Judaism. Jewish learning may be necessary for Jewish living, but learning itself is insufficient. The success of Jewish schooling is not only how much the graduates know, or even how much they are able to do, but also how they choose to live. Synagogue schools can succeed, as the title of Joseph Reimer's *Succeeding at Jewish Education: How One Congregation Made it Work* (JPS 1997) demonstrated. A congregation that values Jewish learning will reflect that priority in its budget, in its selection of professional and volunteer leadership, and ultimately, in its membership. The synagogue school can only supplement the learning that is modeled in the rest of the synagogue and the living that is modeled at home. With realistic expectations, the synagogue school can indeed succeed, and at its best, it can be excellent. (Cf. A Vision for Excellence, JESNA 2000)

## Questions for Discussion

Select one or two of the following questions:

1. You serve on a board. How did you get here? Take a minute to write down the most influential experience that brought you to this conference table, using as few words as possible. (Consider your involvement as a child in congregational life, your pre-school experiences, your youth and camp experiences, any trips to Israel, your family involvement in Judaism or, if you are a Jew by choice, think about your new Jewish experiences.)
2. The author of the article states that all schools are supplemental. How much variance is there between what is taught in your congregation and what is practiced in people's homes?
3. Look at the bulleted section of the article. There is a list of what schools do and what they can do better. Does your congregation adequately perform any of the tasks listed? How do you know?

## Evidence of Understanding

Ask the board members to identify ways in which the congregation's educational programs could or do already create future Jewish leaders.

# Session Four

## OUR GOALS AS A CONGREGATION AND A SCHOOL

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### Instructions for the Facilitator

This session requires investigation of your congregational goals as they relate to Jewish education. It is important that you get to all of the questions in this session, saving at least twenty minutes for Question 3. Prior to this session, find out if the congregation and/or the school have a mission statement. If there are mission statements (even if they have not been revised), bring copies of those statements for the group.

Distribute copies of “Goals of Reform Jewish Education” (p. 13) or JESNA’s “Report on the Task Force on Congregational and Communal Jewish Education.”

### Questions for Discussion

1. Does your congregation have specific goals that relate to Jewish education? If so, hand out copies. If not, your congregation should consider developing goals that include your Jewish education objectives.

**NOTE:** If the congregation has precise written goals for Jewish education, the facilitator should hand out copies of these.

2. What are the goals of your school and Education Committee?

**NOTE:** If the Education Committee and/or school have a mission statement, the facilitator should pass those out. If not, pass out the “Goals of Reform Jewish Education.” Ask the board to consider whether these goals are consistent with the congregation’s educational goals.

3. How are the educational programs of the school helping to further the congregational goals? Where are they at odds? Do they intersect? Is the education program part of the congregational goals at all? If not, why not?
4. The following is a list of components of schools that are innovative and are considered “excellent.” This has been culled from the JESNA “Report on the Task Force on Congregational and Communal Jewish

Education” and represents the best of many schools.

Excellent schools do most of the following:

- Plan and implement programs for both adults and children
- Help parents to function as primary and active builders of their children’s Jewish identity
- Make the religious school a centerpiece of religious life
- Provide intensive professional development support for teachers in the form of seminars, monthly meetings and mentoring
- Provide new teachers with many resources including mentoring and help developing lesson plans
- Mandate periodic self-assessment and encourage strategic planning
- Provide innovative, thoughtful programming for post-b’nei mitzvah students, which encourages religious school retention and higher-level learning
- Allow all students regular access to Jewish professionals

## **Evidence of Understanding**

The board’s discussion about the following questions can serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of this session. The secretary or a board member should record the board’s responses for future reference:

1. Are the characteristics defined by JESNA appropriate for our education program? If so, then assess our congregation with regard to these characteristics of excellence.
2. What are possible areas of growth or improvement for our congregation in this regard?

# GOALS OF REFORM JEWISH EDUCATION

The UAHC Department of Education has set forth the goals listed below. These guidelines foster the deepening of the Jewish experience and knowledge for all Jews in order to strengthen faith in God, love of Torah, and identification with the Jewish people through involvement in the synagogue and participation in Jewish life. We believe that Judaism contains answers to the challenges and questions confronting us daily and that only a knowledgeable Jew can successfully discover these answers.

Linked to these goals, the programs of our religious schools embrace experience and learning activities, encouraging children, young people, and adults to become...

- Jews who affirm their Jewish identity and bind themselves inseparably to their people by word and deed
- Jews who bear witness to the *berit*, the “covenant” between God and the Jewish people through the practice of *mitzvot*, “commandments,” as studied in the Torah and the classic Jewish literature it has generated and as interpreted in light of historic development and contemporary liberal thought
- Jews who affirm their historic bond to *Eretz Yisrael*, the “Land of Israel”
- Jews who cherish and study Hebrew, the language of the Jewish people
- Jews who value and practice *tefilah*, “prayer”
- Jews who further the causes of justice, freedom and peace by pursuing *tzedek*, “righteousness”; *mishpat*, “justice”; and *chesed*, “loving deeds”
- Jews who celebrate Shabbat and the festivals and observe the Jewish ceremonies that mark the significant occasions in their lives
- Jews who esteem their own person and the person of others; their own family and the family of others; their own community and the community of others
- Jews who express kinship with *K'lal Yisrael* by actively seeking the welfare of Jews throughout the world
- Jews who support and participate in the life of the synagogue

## Session Five

# INTERACTING WITH THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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### Instructions for the Facilitator

There may be a staff member in charge of the religious school. This person is often charged with responsibility over curricula, special programs, enrollment, parent communication, teacher supervision, budget preparation/implementation and other tasks that in the public sector would be the responsibility of the principal. The Religious School Committee may function informally or in a more formal structure. (See *Rethinking Jewish Education: The Role of the Education Committee*, from the UAHC curriculum *Chai: Learning for Jewish Life*.)

In some congregations there is a tendency to delegate responsibilities to the Education Committee and the educator and to assume that all is going well. The Temple Board may not think of delegating authority, or distributing responsibilities, until a significant issue arises that might require such a solution. Each congregation has different ways of seeing to it that all the specific tasks are completed and school needs are met.

This discussion session is designed to look at the way a congregation divides responsibilities among the Temple Board, the Religious School Committee and the educator or principal.

### Activity

This activity involves having board members analyze the responsibilities of the Temple Board, the Education Committee and the director of education.

1. Divide the board into five groups.
2. Distribute a copy of the table on page 16, and ask participants to write a short sentence in each box describing the responsibilities of the Temple Board, the Religious School Committee and the educator/principal in each of the five areas listed on the left side of the table.
3. Have each group read their sentences for one of the five categories.
4. Discuss the responses to see what similarities and differences exist in the way members see the roles of each of the three responsible parties.
5. Distribute the “Religious School Responsibilities” list (p. 16), which shows a fairly standard del-

legation of authority. Where there are significant concerns, questions, or differences, the board may want to schedule a separate session to address these.

### **Evidence of Understanding**

The board's completion of the following exercise will serve as confirmation that the board has understood the principles of division of responsibility presented above. Board members should agree upon the distribution of responsibility and authority in each domain.

### **Activity Table**

The five categories listed on the left are to be considered necessary for the welfare of the school and the entire congregation.

Fill in the boxes, describing briefly the responsibilities that the Temple Board, Religious School Committee and the educator/principal have in each of the five areas listed on the left.

	<b>Temple Board</b>	<b>Religious School Committee</b>	<b>Educator/Principle</b>
<b>Budget</b>			
<b>Policy</b>			
<b>Personnel</b>			
<b>Physical Plant</b>			
<b>Goals/Mission</b>			

## **Religious School Responsibilities**

### **1. Budget**

- The board understands and approves the budget, based on the needs and priorities of the Religious School Committee and the congregation.
- The Religious School Committee develops and presents the budget to the board Finance Committee.
- The educator proposes the budget, based on the enrollment data and the needs of the school, to the Religious School Committee.



## 2. Policies

- The board understands the school policies, agrees with the policies and is able to communicate those policies to the congregations.
- The Education Committee, together with the education director, writes, reviews, and recommends to the Board of Directors school policies on a regular basis.
- The educator makes recommendations for school policies based on real-life situations that arise during the course of the school year.

## 3. Personnel

- The board understands the employment practices and provides appropriate personnel recognition.
- The educator is usually responsible for recruitment, contracting, negotiating, supervision/evaluation, and recognition of teachers. In some cases, the Education Committee becomes involved with negotiation and recognition of teachers.

## 4. Physical Plant

- The Temple Board requests facility information regarding space usage and maintenance.
- The Education Committee, with the educator and executive director, plans for facility use and an ongoing plan for maintenance. It completes long-term plans and assures a safe, clean environment for children and teachers.

## 5. Goals and Mission

- The board reviews the goals and mission of the school and ensures that they are in tune with the synagogue's goals.
- Upon the board's approval, the Education Committee writes and annually revisits the school mission to see how it fits in with scheduling, materials and faculty in-service.
- The educator discusses the goals and mission of the school with the Religious School Committee and is responsible for implementing them on a daily basis, through curriculum, teacher education, etc.

# Session Six

## WHAT IS THE NATURE OF OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS?

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### Instructions for the Facilitator

Session Six asks both objective and subjective questions. Please be sure to have copies of the congregational and school budgets on hand for reference.

Prior to the session, distribute copies of “Questions for Discussion” (see following page) to board members. (See “Possible Answers to Questions for Discussion,” p. 19, intended for the facilitator only.) In this way, board members will have the time to look through their information and give the most informed response.

As members answer the questions, the facilitator should record all responses on easels, giant Post-it notes or poster board, since some of the information provided during this session will be needed again in Session Seven.

**NOTE:** The facilitator should present a list that shows what programs exist and the number of participants. Begin with the enrollment report of the school for each grade. Present the number of other special events and the number of participants in those programs. Include adult education programs, family education programs and youth programs.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What learning programs does our congregation offer?
2. What is the goal of our learning programs?
3. Is one of the goals to create a community of lifelong learners (i.e., programs for children of pre-school age through senior citizens)? If not, why not?

4. Why do we have a religious school?
5. Do we have underserved populations and program gaps? Create a list of programs that could enrich the education of the entire congregation in your community of learners.

### **Possible Answers to Questions for Discussion (For facilitators only)**

**Question 1.** Possible answers to this question may include informal youth programming, and adult education programs that are offered by Sisterhood or Brotherhood. Sometimes the board will not include the religious school as a learning program! If they do not, the facilitator should add that to the list.

**Question 2.** Answers may vary.

**Question 3.** One possible answer to this question may be that the educational goal of the school is to prepare our children for b'nei mitzvah. In that case, the facilitator should remind participants that this may be a result of our educational program, but it should not be the only goal of the program.

**Question 4.** Answers may vary.

**Question 5.** Possible answers to this question may include: Parent education; Jewish parenting; preschool programs; programs for the aging; family education programs; youth programming; programming for special-needs people; Shabbat family programming; programs in the Jewish arts; book groups; outreach programs.

### **Evidence of Understanding**

Ask board members to consider the nature of the congregation's current educational programs, and decide how future programming for underserved groups should be prioritized. This may lead to a plan for reallocating human and financial resources.

## Session Seven

# UNDERSTANDING THE SCHOOL BUDGET

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### Instructions for the Facilitator

The purpose of this session is to create an awareness of the resources needed to run the religious school. Record the responses on easels, giant Post-it notes or poster board, and save them for future use. At this point the board should examine how the congregation supports the educational program.

### Questions for Discussion

**1. What are the human resources of the school?**

List all the people who contribute to the school, including Jewish professional support, teachers, administrative staff, volunteers, and parents. Add up the number of people involved.

**2. What does it cost to operate the school?**

Provide a copy of the budget to each board member. Ask the director of education to explain what goes into each line item. Generate a list of other costs that do not appear in that specific budget but that are involved in running a school. That could include portions of some salaries, such as for the rabbi, the cantor, youth worker, or custodian. It could also include materials purchased for the entire congregation, and the costs of maintenance for the facility, such as heat.

Write these numbers on an easel and have one of the board members add them up.

**3. What is the financial contribution of the congregation to the school?**

This question aims at examining what the congregation pays for (as opposed to tuition paid by parents, for example). Compare the revenue generated by tuition fees to the total school expenses.

**4. What percentage of the temple budget pays for the school?**

Have your calculator-wielding board member divide the total operating costs of the school by the total expenses of the temple to get this figure.

**5. How do we compare ourselves to other congregations of similar size in terms of our educational expenses?**

For this question, use *Portraits of Schooling: A Survey and an Analysis of Supplementary Schooling in Congregations*, by Samuel K. Joseph (New York: UAHC Press, 1997), p. 19, in Appendix D.

### **Evidence of Understanding**

Ask the board members how this session has changed their understanding of the board's role in financing the educational programs of the congregation. Future board decisions regarding education funding should take into account what the board has learned at this session about the culture of the congregation.

## Session Eight

# SHOULD TUITION FEES FUND OUR RELIGIOUS SCHOOL?

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### Instructions for the Facilitator

Session Eight deals with the responsibility of a community to pay for its religious school. It is the responsibility of all congregants, whether or not they have (or ever had) children in the school, to contribute to the education of the next generation.

You will need to have copies of the congregation and school budget. Specifically, you need to know the tuition fees for religious school (Sunday school and mid-week Hebrew school), the total costs of the school, the percentage contributed by parents through tuition, and the percentage contributed by the temple.

**NOTE:** Make sure to have enough time so that all questions in this session are addressed. Question 6 may require a 10-minute discussion, being the crux of the matter. The data regarding Questions 1–3 should have been determined during the previous session. Have them available at this session as well.

### Questions for Discussion

1. How much does our congregation pay for religious school?
2. How much do our parents pay for religious school?
3. What percentage of the religious school budget is paid for by tuition fees?
4. Do you believe that parents should carry the largest burden for religious education?

5. Do we charge a fee for adult education programs? For Torah study?
6. What message is our congregation sending by charging a fee for religious school?

### **Evidence of Understanding**

Ask board members to articulate any change in their attitude about the balance between congregational support and user-fee support for education. What would they recommend to our Budget Committee in light of their deliberations?

## Session Nine

# WHO IS TEACHING IN OUR SCHOOL?

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### **Instructions for the Facilitator**

One of the problems facing religious schools is the recruitment and retention of quality teachers. Credentials and tenure are important attributes to look for in your teaching staff; a positive attitude and a commitment to Jewish education are equally valuable. Teacher availability is influenced by the location of the school. Staff development opportunities and plans for supervision influence teachers' quality. Congregational membership status of teachers may have an impact on both teacher supervision and dedication to the school. The length of service of our teachers has an impact on school program stability. Length of teacher's service may have an impact on budget. Teachers can have a great impact on the amount of learning taking place and on student/parent satisfaction with the program.

Prior to the session, get the actual statistics about your faculty from the education director, and be ready to share them with the board only after the members have completed the following exercise.

This discussion is meant to raise awareness on the part of the board members about the quality and character of the teaching faculty. Provide members with the number of teachers on your faculty (indicating the specialty of these teachers; e.g., tutors, Hebrew teachers, or Judaic studies teachers).



## ACTIVITY

Below you will find a variety of categories that may apply to our teachers. Without checking precise data, try to draw a portrait of the school faculty.

<b>Reform</b>	
<b>Conservative</b>	
<b>Orthodox</b>	
<b>Reconstructionist</b>	
<b>College students</b>	
<b>Less than 3 years of service in our school</b>	
<b>Between 3 and 10 years of service in our school</b>	
<b>More than 10 years of service in our school</b>	
<b>More than 20 years of service in our school</b>	
<b>Male</b>	
<b>Female</b>	
<b>Members of our congregation</b>	
<b>Bachelors degree</b>	
<b>Masters degree</b>	
<b>Ph.D. or <i>Smichah</i> (ordination)</b>	
<b>Any degrees in Jewish Education or Judaic Studies</b>	

Distribute copies of Appendix E to offer a baseline for dialogue regarding your teaching staff.

## **Evidence of Understanding**

To determine evidence of understanding, conclude this session with a discussion of the following questions:

1. Were the actual statistics surprising to you in any way?
2. What did we learn about our faculty?
3. How can our Education Committee and education director help us understand the teacher-training needs in our school so that we can best support their efforts?
4. How does this knowledge impact our budgetary responsibility for staff development and staff recognition?

# Session Ten

## CONGREGANTS AS TEACHERS

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### Instructions for the Facilitator

Session Ten explores the use of congregants as teachers—a practice on which many congregations still rely. The use of congregants as teachers may be part of a specific strategy, or it may be a natural consequence of teacher shortage. The Temple Board should address some of the central issues associated with using congregants as faculty.

The education director and/or the Education Committee chairperson should attend this session. It is important that they are given this session's questions to read prior to the meeting, so that they will be prepared to answer the board members' questions.

Remind the board members that having these sessions will help in creating a leadership more knowledgeable about the issues regarding your education programs. Although some of the following questions may be difficult to answer, remind them that they touch upon a crucial issue for the congregational school.

Again, you may want to hand out these questions prior to the discussion so that the board members can do research on their own to determine the answers.

### Questions for Discussion

1. How many of our religious school teachers are congregants?
2. How are congregant faculty hired?  
Are they interviewed, and are references checked? Who officially hires them—the education director or the committee chair? Do they fill out contracts?
3. How do we train our teachers? Is our congregation doing any of the following:
  - Mentoring—assigning mentors to the new teachers so that they can better develop their lesson plans
  - Providing regular seminars
  - Scheduling regular in-services to foster collegiality and deal with the business of the school

If these are offered, how successful are they? Does there need to be more? Are we compensating teachers for attending? Providing a meal? Providing childcare?

4. How are teaching congregants supervised and evaluated? What happens if their work is not meeting the standards of the school? Is a system in place for prescriptive programs for all faculty, including the congregant faculty?
5. What happens if a congregant is performing unsatisfactorily as a teacher? Can he or she be fired? Who would do this? What if the teacher is an important donor (or relative of a donor) or a board member?
6. What are the benefits of having faculty who are members of the congregation?

(Answers may include: They are familiar with our worship services, our programs, our personnel; they are a part of our community; they are positive role models for their children and for other members of the congregation.)

### **Evidence of Understanding**

Ask the board to consider whether the benefits of having congregant faculty members outweigh the potential pitfalls. If so, how can we encourage more congregants to teach?

# Session Eleven

## PLANNING: TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

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### **Instructions for the Facilitator**

The purpose of this session is to identify some of the topics board members would like to discuss and learn about at future meetings. On page 30 you will find a list of topics that may be of interest to your board members. It is also a good idea to have the educator and the chair of the Education Committee contribute their input to your list of possible topics.

Hand out the list to all board members. Ask them to take five minutes to choose the topics they deem important for their congregation and to prioritize the chosen list of subjects. Collect the list and use the information to set topics for discussion at future sessions.

# LET'S TALK ABOUT...

## *A List Of Possible Session Topics*

Which of these subjects would you like to discuss in future sessions? Choose as many as you want and put them in order of importance for you.

- ☐ Special Events – How does the school interact with Holiday and Ritual Committees in creating school congregational events?
- ☐ Evaluation – How do we evaluate our school and the progress that students are making?
- ☐ Capital Expenditures – How do we plan for the maintenance and updating of expensive furniture and materials?
- ☐ Staff Evaluation – What is the system in place for the review of teachers and educators?
- ☐ Special Populations – How does our school serve the needs of children with special needs at both ends of the spectrum?
- ☐ Programs and Costs – Review of family education programs and costs
- ☐ Library Resources – What do we have, and what would we like to have?
- ☐ Comparing Our School to the Community:
  - a. Requirements
  - b. Fees
  - c. Staffing Teacher-Pupil Ratio
  - d. Class Size
  - e. School Schedule
- ☐ More Budget Information
- ☐ More Information on School Policies
- ☐ School/Parent Communication: A Congregational PR Tool
- ☐ More Parent Education Programs
- ☐ More Committee and Board Programs

**Evidence of Understanding**

Develop a plan for addressing the board's educational priorities, beginning with those goals that are both highly desirable and highly feasible to achieve.

## APPENDIX A

The following piece, written by Rabbi Eric H. Yoffee, and published in *Portraits of Schooling* (New York: UAHC Press, 1995), was selected to help broaden the discussion on the theme of Session One, "Why We Need to Know About Our Religious School."

Two thousand years ago, after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders revolutionized Jewish life by democratizing Jewish education. The rabbis said: "If God will no longer speak to us in visible ways, if the Temple in Jerusalem will no longer be an awesome presence for the average person, then we will have to educate every single Jew." And they did. From Second Temple times until the last century, universal Jewish literacy was the commitment of every Jewish community.

As Jews entered the modern world, however, this commitment began to erode. In many instances individual Jews devoted all their energies to integrating themselves into the general society. Enticed by secular studies, they failed to grasp the message taught by the early leaders of Reform Judaism that Jewish learning and secular learning were fully compatible—that one need not be abandoned to preserve the other. In recent times Jewish literacy has diminished to a depressingly low level among much of the Jewish population.

But for a variety of reasons, the Jewish community of North America has awakened to the need for renewing its traditional educational commitments, and Reform Judaism has played a leading role in this renewal. As I have previously noted, Reform Jews in large numbers are coming home to Torah. They are reestablishing education as the cornerstone of Reform Jewish life, asserting that the teaching of sacred texts is our first duty and greatest joy and that study must once again become the Jew's burning, incandescent passion.

Certain themes have guided the Reform Jewish awakening. First and foremost, Reform Jews affirm the democratic character of Jewish education. While we indeed honor the scholar, the *talmid chacham*, we are also guided by the teaching in the Talmud (*Berachot* 25b) which tells us that the Torah was not "given to the ministering angels"; and so we insist on Torah for all. We also understand that while there are many kinds of authentic Jews—less traditional and more traditional, activist and contemplative, believing and unbelieving—we must all be competent Jews, and we must do the work that competence requires. We have no way of knowing if our children will ultimately join us in the grand adventure of Jewish learning and Jewish life, but surely we must give them the keys to the mansion, whether or not they choose to enter.



We advance Jewish education through a variety of institutions and programs, camps, day schools, residential retreats, youth groups, high schools, Israel programs, family education, *kallot*, bar and bat mitzvah for adolescents and adults, Jewish studies on the college campus, and more. Still, if we are serious about promoting Jewish literacy among the Jews of North America, our starting point must be the synagogue. Since the synagogue is the one institution that touches the lives of the great majority of Jews, our first and greatest challenge is to make the synagogue into an educating congregation—one that emphasizes Jewish learning by putting Torah at the center of all its endeavors.

From the inception of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1873 to the present, among our foremost concerns has been educational excellence within the synagogue. And, since 1886, when our Department of Education was founded, some of the foremost talents of our movement have served as directors of that department—Emanuel Gamoran, Eugene B. Borowitz, Alexander M. Schindler, Abraham Segal, and Daniel B. Syme, to name but a few.

Our dedication to Jewish education was even further evinced by the establishment of the Commission on Reform Jewish Education, a body comprised jointly of educational leaders from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the National Association of Temple Educators, and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. A unified entity, the commission has influenced all arms of the Reform movement, becoming the central address for formal Jewish education. By creating guidelines for Jewish study, texts for Jewish schools, and training programs for Jewish teachers and educators, both the Department of Education and the Commission on Reform Jewish Education have effectively guided the educational efforts of our 850 congregations. Nowhere is this more evident than in the influence the movement has had over the education of the nearly 120,000 young people who enroll in our congregational schools each year.

As the Reform movement has expanded dramatically in recent years, our desire and need for Jewish literacy and spirituality has grown accordingly, and our educational endeavors have become more and more complex. A few examples should suffice. For example, a growing number of our synagogues have hired full-time educational personnel. Our educational infrastructure has been enhanced by additional classrooms and libraries. And the number of our teachers—both professional and volunteer—has risen considerably.

This expansion and our renewed dedication to the centrality of teaching traditional texts call for a reevaluation of our entire approach to formal education.

## APPENDIX B

Following is a section of a paper by Isa Aron, "From the Congregational School to the Learning Congregation—Are We Ready for a Paradigm Shift?" published in *A Congregation of Learners* (New York: UAHC Press, 1995), p. 69. This text was selected because it poses interesting thoughts when looking at the function and goals of Jewish education for our school and our entire congregation.

Some years ago (Aron 1989) I contrasted the paradigm of "instruction," as practiced in the public schools, with that of "enculturation," a term borrowed from the Christian educator John Westerhoff (1976). I argued then that the instructional paradigm is successful if and only if it is buttressed by a variety of external motivations: laws that compel children to attend school, societal expectations that schooling correlates positively with one's earning potential, and competition for college entrance. Lacking these sources of motivation, the Jewish school has suffered from the comparison with public school; Judaic studies, even in day schools, continue to be seen as less important than general studies. I suggested that rather than adhering to the instructional model, the congregational school ought to conceive of its educational task in different terms, as one of enculturation. In so doing, it could offer its students something that instruction alone cannot, a loving induction into the Jewish culture and the Jewish community.

In the ensuing years I have begun to see the issue in terms that are broader and more radical, involving the totality of congregational life, rather than being limited to the congregational school as a self-contained entity.<sup>11</sup> What would it look like if education were seen as the concern of the entire congregation rather than being relegated to its school(s)? Who would be the learner? Who would be the teacher? In what settings and through what modalities might synagogue members learn about being Jewish? These questions cannot be answered by an outsider looking in or by a theoretician or philosopher looking down. Each and every congregation must answer them for itself. These answers would best be arrived at through a series of conversations among

congregants themselves and between congregants and professionals. If the conversations were to yield educational structures and programs that are both responsive to the needs of the "folk" and worthy of the highest aspirations of the "elite," they would have to be carefully orchestrated. Some of the other articles in this volume have much to suggest about the best ways in which these conversations can be structured.

In the remainder of this paper, I would like to raise some of the issues that would have to be considered in any attempt to create new paradigms of congregational education. While I have not hesitated to express my own opinions, I have tried to frame the questions in an open way, giving voice to opposing views and making it clear that many of these issues are far from being resolved, even in my own mind.

(1) *What is the function of Jewish education? Is it preparation for life or an integral part of the process of living?* One's answers to these questions will have a direct bearing on one's conception of who the students are. The immigrant parents of the turn of the century were too preoccupied with learning what they needed to learn in order to succeed in America to worry much about *Jewish* learning for themselves. The "child-centered" parents of the '40s and '50s (Gans 1951) were too focused on their children to think much about their own religious needs or values. In our own time, however, the concept of lifelong learning has become commonplace. Given the rapid pace of technological and social change, continued occupational training (or, for a different class of workers, professional development) is considered a necessity. Given the increase in leisure time of many adults, "continuing education" has become the equivalent of skiing and theatergoing. In our society schooling may be limited to the first decades of one's life, but education is increasingly seen as continuing for the duration.

If we embrace the concept of lifelong learning, the obvious implication is that congregational education is for *everyone* at *every* age. But this raises a number of serious questions: Is lifelong *Jewish* learning qualitatively different from professional development and adult education? Can lifelong Jewish learning become an accepted norm? What modifications to current institutional arrangements will be required if congregational education is to become a lifelong process?

(2) *What constitutes lifelong Jewish learning?* How is lifelong Jewish learning different from its secular counterparts, professional development and adult education? For one thing, it

will never be as utilitarian as professional development. Should it consist of a series of optional programs on a wide range of topics?

Some argue that the adult education model is too individualistic to be an appropriate model. According to the tradition, Jewish learning is necessary not because it helps one perform better on the job or because it leads to self-improvement but because it engages one's spiritual and moral sensibilities. And the traditional mode of Jewish learning is, by definition, communal. In the process of learning, the Jewish community is re-created and reinvigorated.

On the other hand, the contemporary synagogue is far from a traditional community. And the ideology of Reform Judaism centers on informed *choice*. Do we value Jewish learning because it is a vehicle for self-awareness and growth, because it is a communal endeavor or—to state the case most extremely—because it is a communal obligation? Is it possible to promote both the individual and communal perspectives, or must we choose between them?

(3) *Are members of congregations ready to embrace Jewish learning as a lifelong endeavor?* The jargon of demographers has so permeated our discourse that we routinely speak of congregations as organizations with which one is affiliated, as though they were the equivalent of the Auto Club. One joins the Auto Club for convenience, drawing on its services as needed, but one's membership in that organization hardly impinges on one's sense of self. To the majority of its members, the synagogue is a similar service organization, essential for life-cycle events and major holidays but superfluous during times in between. Charles Liebman has argued that Judaism itself is viewed by many in similar terms. Citing a 1965 study of Jewish adolescents by Bernard Rosen, Liebman draws an analogy between their attitudes toward Judaism and their attitudes toward dental hygiene. "One has to do it, one might even enjoy it, and if one doesn't do it others may find out.... It is hardly an activity which engages one's mind, energy, or attention the rest of the day, however." (Liebman 1973, p. 129) Let's not forget that the adolescents of 1963 are the adults of today and the parents of the children in today's synagogue schools.

For those of us on whom the Jewish tradition has left a deeper and more powerful impression, the "affiliation" mentality poses a great challenge. How, we ask ourselves, can the tradition become a meaningful part of people's lives? We who have been moved by prayer and ritual and have resonated with the insights of the Bible and Midrash wonder how we might make these available to others.

How can we broker a meeting between the resources of the tradition and the average American Jew?

Following Kaplan, Arnold Eisen has argued that congregations must start their "in-reach" by catering to people's physical, psychological, and social needs—their needs for community, child care, and support groups of various sorts. The success of a number of synagogue centers and of the within-synagogue *chavurah* movement attests to the value of this approach.

Mixed in with these physical and psychological needs are spiritual ones—a need for prayer, for a sense of purpose, for an ethical touchstone. Eisen's suggestion presumes that members who initially come to a synagogue for child care or a support group will eventually get in touch with their spiritual needs and find an outlet for these needs in the synagogue. However, in attempting to infuse Jewish values and concepts into the lives of synagogue members, we face a great challenge. Although the Jewish tradition is rich in resources to meet these needs, its resources are too often alien and inaccessible. To feel comforted by rituals and prayers, one must feel comfortable with them. To find meaning in traditional sources, one must know how to find, decode, and interpret them. The question is, What kind of Jewish learning will help "affiliates" become active enthusiasts?

(4) *Is our goal knowledge or empowerment?* As it is currently constituted, Jewish learning, both for children or adults, focuses primarily on transmitting as much subject matter as possible. But Jews in America are a highly literate and accomplished group, accustomed to taking the initiative in a variety of social and political endeavors. This suggests that over and above any specific content, our goal might be to empower congregants to learn on their own.

In recent years the literature on reform and renewal in a range of fields has highlighted the importance of empowerment as both a proximal and ultimate goal. Workers who participate in decision making and who are knowledgeable about all aspects of their workplace have been found to be both more satisfied and more productive. Patients who are informed about and active in their medical treatment recover more quickly. By extension, many have argued, learners who are empowered to direct the course of their learning are more motivated to learn and are better able to integrate what they have learned into their daily life.

The goal of empowerment is not, however, unproblematic. Do congregants really want to be empowered? Perhaps only a minority will be willing or able to invest the time and energy required for active learning of a complicated and rarefied tradition. What happens when some congregants become empowered while others remain more passive and dependent? Does this polarization become divisive to the life of the community?

An entirely different set of problems arrives from a view of Jewish life that regards some subjects and/or content areas to be more essential than others. Is it not the role of experts to make these choices? And does focusing more on the tools of learning mean that we are focusing less on its content? <sup>12</sup>

(5) *What standards are appropriate for congregational education?* In modeling Jewish education on public education, earlier generations of Jewish educators believed in the importance of maintaining high standards, at least in theory, for teachers and for the curriculum.\*As I have tried to demonstrate, these standards were rarely achieved since they depended on a series of motivating factors that didn't exist.

The classical Jewish notion of *Torah Lishma* is based on an entirely different conception of motivation—that study is its own reward.<sup>13</sup> For halachic Jews who have a more explicit worldview (to borrow Rosenak's [1987] term), the study of Torah (both written and oral) is a *mitzvah*. For liberal Jews the rewards must be found in the domain of the implicit, the realm of personal meaning. If we accept the concept of *Torah Lishma*, our goal is for learners to value the study of Torah (construed more broadly) as a vital activity because it serves to enrich their spiritual and communal lives.

Can one devise a curriculum for *Torah Lishma*? Is the language of requirements and objectives appropriate to *liberal* Jewish education? If we find them inappropriate, can we devise alternative standards and alternative modes of evaluation that are more in keeping with our goals?

Congregational schools have already acknowledged *de facto* that accommodating people's problems and needs is more important than standardizing instruction.<sup>14</sup> Children who have scheduling conflicts of one kind or another (either because their parents are divorced or because their own outside activities are too numerous) are already accommodated, albeit begrudgingly. Can congregational education incorporate even greater and more purposeful flexibility? Can a synagogue become a place that facilitates

learning whenever and wherever people are available, without polarizing its membership and without reducing a venerable tradition of serious learning to a laundry list of activities?

If congregational education is to diversify, becoming more responsive to people's interests and needs, the meaning of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony and its use as a motivating goal will have to be reconsidered. It would seem reasonable to require that becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah signifies the acquisition of knowledge and/or skills, both in preparation for the ceremony itself and in order to function as a full member of the Jewish community. But would the knowledge attained by one thirteen-year-old have to be the same as, or equivalent to, that of his or her peers?

(6) *What modalities will enable congregations to become more flexible in their educational offerings?* Good congregational schools already incorporate a range of old and new educational modalities, from learning in *chavrutah* (pairs) to learning through inquiry, and from the reading of traditional *midrashim* to the creation of one's own *midrashim* through art, drama, and storytelling. But if lifelong Jewish learning is to be adapted to suit the lives of contemporary children and adults, a range of new modalities will need to be explored, including interactive computer games, materials for group text study, and individualized learning packets. Experimentation with many of these has been going on in a number of congregations throughout North America, which raises certain questions: Which of these modalities work best with which learners under what conditions? Will it be possible to integrate what are now isolated programs into a coherent framework that is both flexible and thoughtful, acknowledging the priorities of traditional learning but allowing for individual choice?

# APPENDIX C

## OTHER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Adult Hebrew classes and holiday workshops are the most frequent additional educational programs offered by UAHC congregations. They are closely followed by weekly Torah study. Adult bar/bat mitzvah is also offered quite often. (See Table 29: Other Education Programs Offered.)

**Table 29: Other Education Programs Offered**

PERCENTAGES BY REGION, CONGREGATION SIZE, AND EDUCATOR'S STATUS

	Total	Canadian	Great Lakes/Chicago	Mid-Atlantic	Mid-West	New Jersey/North Hudson	New York	Northeast	Northeast Lakes/Detroit	Northern California	Pacific Northwest	Pacific Southwest	Pennsylvania/Philadelphia	Southeast/South Florida	Southwest
Holiday Workshops	34.8	80.0	76.0	72.0	68.2	82.4	66.7	83.3	57.9	100.0	80.0	87.0	100.0	82.4	52.9
Social action program with education component	59.2	70.0	56.0	64.0	45.5	58.8	53.3	80.0	51.9	62.5	70.0	65.2	83.3	47.1	35.3
Weekly Torah study	70.2	88.8	84.0	86.0	77.3	82.4	70.0	70.0	68.4	87.5	88.0	82.6	86.7	78.9	84.7
Film series	19.8	28.0	36.0	38.0	9.1	9.8	16.7	23.3	18.5	12.5	19.0	26.1	16.7	11.8	35.3
Jewish texts study group	55.7	78.0	84.0	84.0	59.1	35.3	38.9	73.3	73.7	87.5	49.0	60.9	33.3	29.4	52.9
Adult bar/bat mitzvah	48.8	90.0	84.0	68.0	54.5	82.4	83.3	73.3	52.6	87.5	90.0	78.3	83.3	64.7	70.6
Jewish parenting classes	22.7	10.0	28.0	28.0	22.7	17.8	28.0	23.3	21.1	82.5	6.0	38.4	18.7	35.3	29.4
Classes for conversion	56.9	60.0	72.0	64.0	68.2	47.1	33.3	53.3	47.4	75.0	60.0	47.8	58.0	76.5	64.7
Book reviews	42.4	40.0	48.0	34.0	36.4	35.3	38.0	48.7	57.9	87.5	48.0	52.2	68.7	38.3	41.2
Jewish current events discussions	29	50.0	36.0	28.0	27.3	23.5	16.7	38.0	31.6	62.5	16.0	38.1	16.7	35.3	29.4
Sunday morning brunch series	38.2	40.0	24.0	50.0	31.8	29.4	40.0	53.3	47.4	25.0	38.0	35.1	50.0	35.3	17.8
Adult Hebrew classes	78.6	100.0	86.0	72.0	58.1	84.1	76.7	76.7	78.9	82.5	98.0	82.6	100.0	78.6	78.6
Other	27.1	28.0	24.0	32.0	38.4	23.5	36.7	16.7	21.1	50.0	38.0	26.1	50.0	35.3	5.9
Don't know/NA	3.8	-	4.8	4.8	4.5	-	6.7	3.3	18.5	-	-	-	-	5.9	5.9

	1-100 families	101-200 families	201-300 families	301-400 families	401-500 families	501-600 families	601-700 families	701-800 families	801-900 families	901+ families	With full-time education/principal	With part-time education/principal
Holiday workshops	49.3	82.1	86.8	97.1	86.7						89.3	85.5
Social action program with education component	32.8	56.4	72.4	73.5	88.8						68.6	52.7
Weekly Torah study	47.8	76.9	75.0	82.4	89.3						82.6	82.7
Film series	11.9	20.5	27.6	14.7	38.0						28.1	11.8
Jewish texts study group	38.8	51.3	63.2	61.8	73.3						68.4	46.4
Adult bar/bat mitzvah	28.8	68.2	82.9	91.2	96.7						87.6	52.6
Jewish parenting classes	4.5	19.4	26.3	38.2	53.3						~38.6	13.6
Classes for conversion	27.3	52.8	64.6	67.6	76.7						66.1	58.0
Book reviews	25.4	41.8	48.7	55.9	60.0						58.2	31.8
Jewish current events discussions	26.9	28.2	28.9	44.1	30.8						28.9	27.3
Sunday morning brunch series	17.8	23.3	48.7	52.9	46.7						43.0	35.5
Adult Hebrew classes	61.2	79.5	88.2	91.2	98.8						91.7	86.2
Other	22.4	17.9	27.8	41.2	38.7						34.7	23.6
Don't know/NA	18.4	2.6	-	-	-						-	5.5



# APPENDIX D

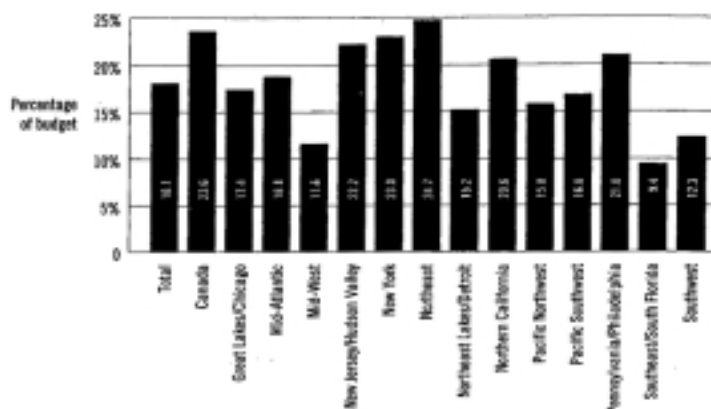
## SCHOOL BUDGET AS A PERCENTAGE OF CONGREGATION BUDGET

On average, UAHC congregations spend 18% of the congregation's budget on their schooling needs.

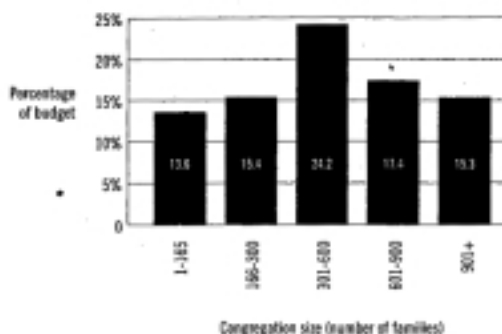
Again, the variables of region, size of congregation, and full-time versus part-time educator affect the percentages. The Northeast region's congregations average 25% of their total budget, while the Southeast-South Florida region's compare at 9%. Congregations of 301–600 family units average the largest percentage, 24%, and it is apparent from the data that schools with full-time educators are funded with a greater percentage of the total congregation budget than those with part-time educators. (See Table 9: The Religious School/Hebrew School Budget as a Percentage of Total Congregation Budget.)

**Table 9: Religious School/Hebrew School Budget as a Percentage of Total Congregation Budget**

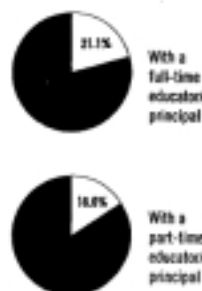
### BREAKDOWN BY REGION



### BREAKDOWN BY CONGREGATION SIZE



### BREAKDOWN BY STATUS OF EDUCATOR/PRINCIPAL



## APPENDIX E

The following is an excerpt from *Portraits of Schooling*, by Samuel K. Joseph (New York: UAHC Press, 1997), pp. 22–31.

### THE TEACHER/EDUCATOR

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The second “common place” of education is the teacher. All educational systems include the teacher somewhere in the process. The survey’s data about teachers working in UAHC congregation schools is highly valuable since the teachers frequently form the core of the school.

#### TEACHER PROFILE

There are almost 5,000 teachers represented in the sample. On average, about 77% of these teachers are female. Of the total number of teachers working in UAHC schools, 65% are full-time educators. More teachers work in congregations of 301–600 family units than in congregations of any other size. And, on average, more than twice as many teachers work for full-time compared to part-time educators.

Schools are always looking for high-quality teachers. Every year, many UAHC schools face the task of looking for teaching staff right up to the opening of school. Data from the survey reveal teachers’ background and experience.

Throughout the movement—crossing regional and congregation-size lines—approximately half of all teachers have a B.A. or B.S. degree as their highest credential, although there are also teachers with graduate degrees (M.A. or higher) working in almost every school.

Congregation schools have about a 40% chance of employing at least one teacher with a degree in Jewish studies. The Mid-Atlantic region averages the highest number of teachers with Jewish studies degrees, while the Canadian Council and the Southeast-South Florida region employ the fewest.

Schools also attract those who are or were teachers in secular educational settings. From the smallest to largest congregations, approximately one-third of all teachers are or were secular school teachers. (See Tables 12.1 and 12.2: Teachers’ Credentials.)

More than 70% of the teachers movementwide consider themselves Reform Jews.

There is also a very strong chance that a teacher will belong to the congregation where he or she teaches. Movementwide, 66% of all teachers are members of the congregation where they teach. Such teachers are fewest in the New York Federation and most numerous in the Southwest Council, the Pacific Northwest Council, and the Northeast Lakes Council. The smaller the congregation, the more likely that the teacher will be a member of the congregation. Part-time educators employ about 25% more congregation members as teachers than do full-time educators.

Each school was asked to give their teachers' age range (question II.5, page 3 of the questionnaire). In analyzing the data by age range, region, and congregation size, it is apparent that the figures add up to more than 100%. This is probably because respondents gave impressionistic answers rather than precise information. Nevertheless, the survey does reveal the age range for a majority of teachers. Congregations of 1–165 and 166–300 family units tend to hire a few more teachers in the 16- to 21-year-old age bracket than do the larger congregations. However, about 66% of all teachers are from 31 to 50 years of age. As this age bracket is the same as that of many students' parents, educators might be wise to check class lists for parents who could be potential teachers.

The idea of parents as a pool of potential teachers seems to match the data concerning the teacher recruitment process, with 72% of the schools reporting that they recruit teachers from referrals—and the next highest recruitment is from parents: The survey indicates that 52% of schools actively recruit parents as teachers.

## TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

To support parents and others in their development as classroom teachers, most schools offer workshops for teachers during the year. There is no specific definition of a teacher workshop in the survey. For some schools it may mean one or two hours after school with a facilitator, whereas for others it may mean an all-day program while regular classes are canceled. Schools tended to report a combination of both formats. On average, congregation schools offer their teachers three workshops per year. Usually, the smaller the congregation, the fewer workshops (2–4) per year.

Approximately half the schools pay teachers to attend workshops and half do not, the practice varying by region and congregation size. In the Canadian Council, 70% of congregations do not pay teachers to attend workshops. On the other hand, 75% of Northern California region congregations do pay their teachers to attend. The larger the congregation, the more likely for teachers to be paid to attend workshops. The same is true of teachers working for full-time rather than part-time educators.

The most commonly addressed workshop topic is "classroom management." Almost 81% of the responses listed this topic. The second most frequent topic is "creating lesson plans," listed by 68% of congregations.

A related question is who leads these workshops. The congregations list the educator/principal as "always" or "usually" being the workshop leader—close to 50% of the time. The rabbi is listed as "sometimes" being the workshop leader by about 50% of the congregations, as are outside consultants.

## LENGTH OF SERVICE

Continuity of the teaching staff is important to a school, because it means that new teachers need not constantly be recruited and trained. Veteran teachers, after years of experience, have a more thorough knowledge of their subject matter; they know the culture of the school; and they know their students and their

*"Religious school is the key that opens the door  
to the grand adventure of Jewish learning and  
Jewish life. We will not rest until our schools are  
a place where our children hear God's voice  
and see Torah as a tree of life."*

— Rabbi Eric Yoffie, UAHC Biennial Boston 2001



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