

# CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR Jewish Education

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education is an international professional network of Directors, Coordinators and Administrators of Jewish special education services in Central Agencies for Jewish Education. Communities which do not have Central Agencies are represented by a designee of the local Jewish Federation.

The mission of the Consortium is to provide a structured forum that will enable professionals in special education to access and disseminate information and ideas on:

- Program models and development
- Specialized curriculum and technology
- Inclusion
- Professional development and support
- Advocacy and Legislation
- Community relations and awareness

Each year, a colloquium is held which provides opportunities for networking and professional growth. An annual newsletter highlights each community's achievements in Jewish special education and services. A listserv enables members of the Consortium to be in communication, share resources, and provide collegial support throughout the year.

The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education was co-founded by Rabbi Martin Schloss and Dr. Sara Rubinow Simon and is affiliated with JESNA. Marty is the former Executive Vice President of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. Sara is the former Director of the Special Needs Department for the Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington. The Consortium is currently chaired by Dr. Shana Erenberg, Chicago, IL and Becca Hornstein, Phoenix, AZ.

The Consortium Call for Action appears on page 28.

The Consortium encourages the North American Jewish community to use the Consortium as a resource. Additional copies of the Newsletter are available for task forces, lay leaders, professionals, and other community groups.

## NEW YORK HOSTS COLLOQUIUM

The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the annual Colloquium in New York – the site of the Consortium's original Colloquium. The anniversary Colloquium demonstrated that the notion of collaboration in Jewish Special Education is as meaningful and important today as it was in 1987. Highlights of the Colloquium included a video conference from MASADA with Israeli Government Officials on the new laws for the disabled; a consultation session with Ilana Trachman



regarding her new film, *Praying with Lior*; and sessions dealing with new legislation, litigation, and developments in the field of Jewish Special Education. Participants included Marlene Tewner, Debbie Gettes, Shana Erenberg, Becca Hornstein, Shana Hornstein, Blair Chipkin, Sandy Miller-Jacobs, Marty Schloss, Star Simon, Shayna Levine-Hefetz, Hope Bard, Lenore Layman, Cheryl Edelstein, Sara Seligson, Elliot Fix, Ken Schaeffler, Linda Zimmerman, Caren Levine, Ellen Fishman, Marsha Horovitz, Shelly Christensen, Phyllis Miller, and Steve Kraus.

## 21ST ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM OF THE CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Philadelphia and The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education are looking forward to hosting the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Colloquium of the Consortium of Special Educators. The Colloquium is scheduled to begin Monday, May 7 and end on Wednesday, May 9, 2007.

We will look at research that has been done in the field of Jewish Special Education and we will also create a universal survey that can be used by all cities. Consortium members have been quite busy conducting workshops and training all over the United States. At this Colloquium, workshops and the accompanying material will be presented for all to take home and use in their area.

Last year, the Consortium got to preview a part of the film, *Praying With Lior*. At this Colloquium we will have the opportunity to meet Lior and his family! New materials will be presented that will help teach Hebrew to our students. Interesting and entertaining events have been planned for the evenings. This Colloquium promises to be packed with special times from the beginning to the end!

**REFLECTIONS AND CONSORTIUM NEWS**
**REFLECTIONS**

Dr. Shana Erenberg & Becca Hornstein  
Consortium Chairpersons

It has been a busy and exciting year since we held our 20<sup>th</sup> annual meeting last year. As part of an intensive, collaborative effort, members of the Consortium drafted a mission statement that clearly defines the purpose and vision of the group. The mission statement honors the past, while providing the foundation upon which future Consortium initiatives will be based. It reflects the expertise and commitment of our esteemed members as we jointly craft a direction for the Consortium's future. We thank all of our colleagues for their input and insight, and we particularly want to acknowledge and thank Rabbi Marty Schloss and Dr. Sara Rubinow Simon, Chairpersons Emeritus, for their continued guidance and support. We also want to thank Steve Kraus, our liaison to JESNA for his help and participation over these past years. Steve is moving on to other projects within JESNA. We welcome Rachel Brumberg, who will serve as our JESNA contact and resource.

Members of the Consortium have been in regular contact throughout the year via the listserv. Through ongoing communication, members have been able to network with one another, providing professional advice, sharing ideas and practices, and providing useful solutions to a variety of issues. The listserv provides an expeditious means for members to stay in touch and facilitates the exchange of ideas that is so crucial for program growth and development.

In addition, the Consortium has begun to address the issues of membership in the group and outreach to unrepresented communities. While this matter is in its formative stage of discussion, the correspondence among the group reflects thoughtfulness and sensitivity, as well as true passion and vitality for the future of Jewish Special Education. As we explore the issues of membership and outreach, we are further refining the mission of the Consortium. These topics will be discussed at the annual colloquium hosted by Philadelphia's Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education with the intention of creating policies and strategies to enable the Consortium to engage in meaningful outreach to communities throughout the country.

**CONSORTIUM NEWS**
**ATLANTA, GA**

The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta established a Special Education Task Force in 2005 to address the issue of providing the most appropriate and least restrictive special education services in Atlanta's Jewish day schools. As in many of our cities, there is a growing need to address this issue as more children are being identified with disabilities and more families are seeking a Jewish day school education. While many of our day schools are providing a variety of services to children with special needs, as well as the Amit School Program, gaps exist in these services.

The mission of this task force is to provide a standardized approach for accommodating all students with special needs in the Atlanta Jewish community. This would include expanding special education services to Jewish children who attend public schools as well as expanding current services to congregational schools and preschools in our community. After reviewing numerous models in other cities, the Task Force is currently developing recommendations to Federation which will outline the current gaps in our system, areas that need expansion, and ways in which all schools can collaborate to share resources. This will provide information to families, technical assistance to schools, teacher training and staff development, and develop additional sources of funding. The advantage of centralizing these services will be to provide more coordinated and comprehensive services to schools as well as families at lower cost.

These recommendations are coming at a time when the current Center for Jewish Education & Experiences is also undergoing many changes which will result in the Amit Division of CJEE spinning off to become its own independent agency this summer. Amit will work closely with Federation to assist in the implementation of these recommendations.

The Atlanta Jewish community is fortunate to have many wonderful programs to meet the needs of people with disabilities and their families. Through our Coordinated Network for Persons with Disabilities, individuals and families can access

such services as independent living support, vocational training and placement, counseling, social and recreational programming, respite, and educational support.

The Amit Community School Program offers the following educational support:

**Day School Services**

**Amit Learning Labs** provide individualized and small group instruction to students with mild to moderate learning disabilities on-site at their school. Amit staff offer direct instruction as well as consultation with classroom teachers and after school homework assistance. This program is available to elementary, middle and high schools.

**Facilitation** services allow students with special needs to remain in the typical day school classroom for part or all of the school day. The facilitator shadows one or more students to ensure proper behavior and attention in the classroom.

**The Amit Gar'inim Program** is a modified self contained program for children with developmental disabilities and is housed at The Davis Academy, a Reform Jewish day school. Gar'inim currently serves students in kindergarten through fourth grade. Students receive individualized and small group instruction in academics and join with their peers in Davis Academy classrooms for all non-academic programming. When appropriate, students participate in academic subject areas as well. Speech/Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Social Skills Therapy are integrated into the school day. The program will continue to expand adding grade levels each year.

**Congregational School Services**

**Yad B'Yad** provides consultative support and resources to congregations in order for them to better serve students in their synagogues with learning differences.

**Madrichim** who work in the congregational schools participate in training sessions offered through CJEE and Amit to educate them on how to assist all children in the classroom.

**Preschool Services**

Amit currently offers consultative support to Jewish preschools and assists families in finding appropriate facilitators for their

child in order for the child to remain in the school. We are hoping to expand our preschool programming this summer by hiring additional staff who will train preschool teachers and directors on early identification and early intervention.

#### **Additional Services**

**AmitParentNetwork** is a virtual support group for families of children with special needs. This listserv acts as a support group for Jewish families in the Atlanta metropolitan area. With today's busy life styles it is difficult for parents to commit to a regular time and place to meet for a support group. At the suggestion of a parent, the AmitParentNetwork was formed as a way for parents to communicate on a regular basis with questions, concerns, advice, etc. From time to time the group meets in members' homes for coffee and face to face conversation.

**B'Yachad** is a youth program for teenagers with and without disabilities. This youth group meets monthly for social, educational and religious programming. The young adults stay in touch in-between gatherings by visiting, phone calls and email.

**Consultation** services are offered to the day schools, congregational schools, preschools, and families.

**The Taylor Family Foundation Parent Seminars** provide an opportunity for parents, teachers, and other professionals to come together monthly to network and hear speakers on topics related to raising children who learn differently.

**Professional Development** is offered routinely by the Center for Jewish Education & Experiences Amit for teachers and prospective teachers. Included in the many topics offered every year are courses related to child development and learning differently.

**Recruitment and training** of quality teaching and support staff is also an important task of CJEE and Amit. Amit not only looks for highly qualified special educators for its own programs, but also assists the schools to find appropriate staff for their programs.

**The Interfaith Disability Network** was formed 6 years ago to promote awareness and inclusion in faith communities.

This Network is sponsored by the Bobby Dodd Institute and is made up of a Board of Directors that is representative of the diversity of the Atlanta Metropolitan community. Linda Zimmerman, the Director of the Amit Division, is a past president and current board member of this Network.

**Advocacy** is intertwined in everything we do. In addition to the work we do in the Jewish community to promote inclusion of all people, Amit is involved on planning committees at the Greater Atlanta Jewish Federation, Day School Council, and community organizations.

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#### **BALTIMORE, MD**

The **Center for Jewish Education** provides services to individuals with special needs, their schools, families and the community.

**This year we were pleased to launch the following new initiatives:**

**Special Education Enhancement Project (SEEP)** grants, made possible through the generosity of the Charles Crane Family Foundation, funded \$100,000 of projects to increase the capacity to effectively integrate and serve students with a variety of special needs. The first year of implementation began this fall and includes four elementary schools, two congregational schools, two middle schools, a high school and a community program. Grants are used for curriculum and professional development, including researching and implementing established programs and educational technology to support students with special needs who cannot access the general education curriculum.

The new **Reach for the STARS Program**, providing Students Testing Assistance, Referrals, and Support, will launch in the spring. Made possible through the generosity of the Charles Crane Family Foundation, the goal of this program is to provide support to families and schools as they pursue assessments for suspected dis-

abilities as well as provide funding to ensure that families with financial need can have access to assessments that the school system does not provide. Our special education consultants will work with area school staff to help them implement testing recommendations.

CJE consultants are working collaboratively with staff at a local Jewish day school to develop an **informational packet** for parents of struggling students who are being referred to Child Find. This packet will inform parents how to start the referral process, what to expect when working with the public schools, and illustrate the variety of support programs available to their children through the school and community agencies. Once this project is complete, CJE staff will explore opportunities to create similar packets in other area schools.

**Jewish Special Educators Network** supports parents, related services professionals, and general classroom teachers – not only special educators! We held a three part workshop series, **When Yellow and Blue Make Green: Learning Disabilities and Giftedness**, attended by over 150 Jewish educators, professionals, and parents representing day, congregational, and pre-schools from across the Jewish ideological spectrum. Imagine for a moment that a learning disability is the color yellow and giftedness the color blue – “it isn't easy begin green,” a gifted child with learning disabilities. The first session, focusing on Learning Disabilities, featured *Ellen Fishman, M.Ed.*, veteran Jewish special educator and Executive Director of the Learning Disabilities Association of Cuyahoga County, OH. Participants explored the various forms of learning disabilities and their manifestations in the classroom. The second session, focusing on students who are gifted and talented, featured renowned author and presenter *Rosemary Callard-Szulgit, Ed.D.* Dr. Callard-Szulgit shared her nearly 40 years of experience working with and writing about gifted children. She presented practical strategies for inclusion in the mainstream classroom (which is the topic of one of her four books on the gifted). We were fortunate to have Dr. Callard-Szulgit return for our third session on gifted students with learning disabilities, the topic of her next book due out in December. Participants left each session thirsty for more knowledge about these impor-

**CONSORTIUM NEWS**

tant topics – so much so that we have trouble keeping the 50 new books on these topics on our resource center shelves! Our goal for the workshop series is to help participants adapt their teaching methods for use in an inclusive Jewish classroom. In addition, we continue to maintain our list-serve that enables workshop participants to connect between sessions.

Building on our successful workshop series, the annual **Spring Seminar Series** in May will allow participants to delve into two particular learning disabilities in greater depth. These hands on workshops will focus on **Dyslexia** and **Auditory Processing Disorders** and their manifestations in the classroom. Participants will learn practical strategies to allow for the meaningful inclusion of children with learning disabilities in their classrooms.

**Jewish Advocates for Deaf Education (JADE)** continues to maintain a list of interpreted synagogue services in the Greater Baltimore area on the CJE website and administers the CJE Interpreter Fund. While the Interpreter Fund is small at \$1000, it has big impact. By focusing its efforts on ensuring the participation of deaf parents in the education of their hearing children in three Baltimore area Jewish day schools, sign language interpreters have been available at all parent teacher conferences and school events.

**Our ongoing programs include:**

**Educational Consultation** Trained Special Education Consultants are available to area pre-school, day, and congregational schools. They are called upon to observe and give appropriate follow-up through meeting with teachers, parents, and administration as necessary. Additionally, our educational consultants take a proactive role through initiating correspondences with teachers and members of the administration.

**Gesher LaTorah**, our Sunday Jewish education program for children with severe special needs, continues to grow, with over 40 students enrolled. Our partnership with the JCC includes Sunday Funday, a full day of respite every other week for parents of our students. Gesher LaTorah includes the TAG program for adults who are interested in vocational and community service opportunities. TAG has a meaningful partnership with an Assisted

Living Facility, in which our students volunteer and learn Torah with seniors every week. New to Gesher LaTorah this year is a Family League Literacy Corner and the creation of the Lawrence Braverman Computer Lab, totaling \$22,000 in additional resources benefiting Gesher LaTorah students.

**MD S.N.A.P. (Special Needs Advocacy Project)** is a group of parents of children with special needs who have had extensive training in special education law. MD S.N.A.P. offers volunteer support and advocacy to families of children with special needs. This year MD S.N.A.P. is supporting over 100 families. Services offered include Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) preplanning, accompaniment to IEP and IFSP meetings, resources, information, and referrals. Due to the high demand for our services, we continue to train additional MD S.N.A.P. volunteer advocates on an ongoing basis.

In addition, MD S.N.A.P. offers ongoing workshops throughout the year for our advocates as well as others interested in the field. MD S.N.A.P. presented a collaborative workshop with Maryland Disability Law Center for parents and advocates regarding the reauthorization of IDEIA following the publication of the much-anticipated new federal regulations. MD S.N.A.P. has recently joined forces with Jewish Legal Services to provide pro-bono services to families invoking their due process rights.

**New Facility**

The Center for Jewish Education continues to thrive in our **new state-of-the-art facility**. Our expanded space has allowed our Special Education Collection to grow to over 400 books and videos, all available for free loan, with over 50 new purchases made this year alone. Our computer workstations have **Boardmaker** installed on them, allowing area Jewish educators to create materials for their classrooms. Additionally, our new resource center boasts complete accessibility including a wheelchair accessible computer workstation.

**Community Projects**

CJE is proud of our community collaborative projects. **Kulanu K'echad** is an inter-agency collaboration that includes Jewish Family Services, Jewish Vocational Ser-

vices, Jewish Big Brother/Big Sister League, JCC, and the Center for Jewish Education. The **Professional Advisory Committee on Special Needs of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore** includes these agencies as well as other community agencies that serve individuals with disabilities in the Jewish community. These groups are working hard to communicate and plan services for children with special needs and their families.

**Kodem Kol** is a collaborative partnership program that provides, through the Kennedy Krieger Institute, service coordination to over 60 Jewish families in the Baltimore City Infants and Toddlers System. The Kodem Kol Service Coordinators are valuable members of the CJE Special Education Services team and help their families take advantage of everything our new facility has to offer.

CJE continues to partner with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Baltimore Jewish Council to advocate for quality education for children in our community through the **PEN Project (Partnership for Educational Needs)**. The first stage of this project has been data collection to learn about the needs of the children in our community, many of which have been unserved or underserved. A liaison to the Jewish community was hired at MSDE to help coordinate the efforts to locate and identify children with disabilities in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. The PEN project had its first challenge when the changes mandated by IDEIA regarding parentally placed private school students went into effect. Nearly 90% of the children in our community receiving public school services in private schools are now under the jurisdiction of a different LEA (local educational agency). (They were previously being served by their county of residence and are now served by the county in which the school is located.) After much hard work, the PEN team was able to ensure that all of the service plans would be honored and the children would continue to receive Speech and Occupational Therapies on-site at their schools. This year, the PEN project expanded to include a self-contained general studies *Gold Class* for middle school boys with Learning Disabilities and Asperger's Syndrome and an Academic Support Initiative providing inclusion facilitation for general

studies for middle school girls. Both of these programs are housed in area Jewish day schools. The PEN project continues to work toward ensuring that culturally appropriate educational options are available to children with disabilities in our community and is hopeful that this initiative will continue to grow in its impact.

Seven years since the expansion of our special education services to the Baltimore community, we continue to grow and identify unmet needs. Through advocacy and parental and administrative support, we are pleased to see opportunities expand in our community for individuals with disabilities as well as their teachers and families. We continue to work with officials at the city, county and state levels to develop a full array of Jewish educational options for children with a variety of special needs in our community. We look forward to continuing from strength to strength.

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## **BOSTON, MA**

### **Community Programs**

This year we were able to offer four major community wide professional development and community awareness programs. Our Beyond the Ramp committee (comprised of special needs professionals in several agencies), under the leadership of the JCC, held an afternoon conference, "Genetics in the Jewish Community: A Personal Matter Needing Professional Guidance." The conference was co-sponsored by Genzyme. This cutting edge conference brought together leaders in the field of diseases to discuss genetic testing, carrier screening, pre-natal testing, counseling, research, treatment, and bioethical issues. The conference ended with a panel of individuals who shared their personal experiences living with genetic diseases.

The BJE sponsored two major speakers, Dr. Ross Greene and Rick Lavoie. Dr.

Greene's presentation, "Responding to the Explosive Child," was attended by approximately 100 parents and professionals. Dr. Greene explained that behaviors such as inflexibility, lack of frustration tolerance, and explosiveness are really problems in specific thinking skills. He discussed his collaborative problem solving approach to teach these thinking skills while bringing behaviors under control. Rick Lavoie will be speaking in May about his newest book, *It's So Much Work to be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success*. He will discuss the importance of social skills in bringing success and happiness to the child's life and the necessity of teaching these skills to students with learning disabilities. Additionally, Lavoie will spend a morning working with our administrators focusing on the important role they play in creating successful, inclusive schools.

At the last year's Colloquium in New York, we saw a trailer for the movie, "Praying with Lior," and met with the producer, Ilana Trachtman. This March, we rented out a local movie theatre and held a private screening of the movie, followed by a discussion with Trachtman. This event was a fundraiser for our *TeenAde* program.

We continue to provide Minyan Me'Y-OUchad, a monthly Shabbat service. The rabbi who led the service for the past two years has taken a new rabbinical position requiring us to transition to a new leader.

### **Day Schools**

We have expanded the programming for students with special needs through funds available from our federation's Initiative for Day School Excellence, formerly called the Peerless Excellence Project. Through this initiative, professionals and lay leaders are working closely to increase our schools' capacity for successfully including students with special needs.

**Staffing:** The initiative has enabled us to add staff with expertise in working with students with special needs to the day schools. Nine of our 14 schools now have additional part-time or full time professionals on their staff, paid through this funding stream. These professionals include those with master's degrees in special education or educational psychol-

ogy, some who are new to teaching and some who have years of experience. For some schools, these new hires are the first staff to work in the area of special needs. As the new staff work in the schools, they have begun to establish systems for referral by teachers and parents, parameters for student admissions, and deliver workshops for parents.

The Jewish Special Educational Collaborative, originally funded through a grant from the BJE, and Etgar L'Noar, a separate supplemental program for students with moderate to severe special needs, has merged. Gateways: Access to Jewish Education, provides direct services (e.g., speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, Judaic specialists) work in the day schools with students who need more intensive support than available at the school and offer coaching for differentiated instruction to teachers where students with special needs are included.

**Professional Development:** At this year's triennial day school conference, of the 96 sessions offered, 16 related to special education. Topics included: managing food allergies, differentiated instruction, language processing difficulties and its impact on second language learning, Asperger's syndrome, executive functioning, vocabulary building through imaging, assessment and its interpretation for the classroom, working with difficult behaviors, multi-sensory approach to teaching Hebrew, and admissions and students with special needs. Building on the success of this day, we (BJE, CJP, & Gateways) established a small taskforce and are developing a professional development program for next year, related to differentiated instruction.

The BJE continues to convene our day school special educators several times each year for network meetings. This year we met with the new federation staff person who heads the Initiative for Day School Excellence, reviewed the day school conference, and brainstormed ideas for professional development programs for next year. We also share information and current issues faced by our special educators.

**Federal and State Funding:** We continue to work with the Parent Alliance for Catholic Education, a non-profit, public policy

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and advocacy organization, to investigate ways to receive state and federal funding for our schools. Together with our Jewish Community Relations Council and the Parent Alliance for Catholic Education, we have hired legal counsel to determine our state's legal definition of a neutral site.

**Curriculum Innovations:** This year we are piloting two curriculum programs. One of our day schools is implementing the Wisnia-Kapp Reading Program (WKRK), developed by Sharon Weiss-Kapp, a speech-language pathologist and Clinical Assistant Professor in the Language Laboratory in the Graduate Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Massachusetts General Hospital. Created to support children with language-based learning problems, this program is a multi-sensory and rules-based reading program. The school's teachers were prepared in WKRK by a reading specialist who goes to the school on a monthly basis to coach the teachers, provide model lessons, and assess the children's reading progress. Two of our supplemental programs (one congregational and one community) are piloting a Hebrew reading program that is an adaptation of the WKRK program. Teachers in both schools were prepared in the multi-sensory Hebrew reading program by its developer, who provides ongoing coaching. The teachers find the program easy to implement and the children are responding well, learning to read Hebrew and remembering what they learned.

The BJE, Hebrew College, and Gateways are currently investigating the development of a professional development program on teaching Hebrew that includes assessment, accommodations, and instructional strategies for students with special needs. We are in contact with faculty at the University of Haifa about their work in this area.

#### **Congregational and Community Schools**

**Staffing:** We continue to provide grants to 17 individual schools and regional programs to initiate and expand their programming for students with special needs. The programs provide direct services to students as well as offering consultation and coaching to teachers about making accommodations. As the teachers become more comfortable with the specialists, they step forward to ask the specialist to observe specific students.

We find that as parents learn about the programs, they are more willing to share information about their children with the special education person.

**Professional Development:** The theme of this year's professional development is differentiated instruction. An initial workshop was held in September and the annual Sudbury Valley Jewish Special Education Initiative's Best Practices Conference used this theme as the focus of their conference. Towards spring, additional regionally based workshops will also be given on differentiated instruction. This has enabled us to focus on three aspects of differentiating instruction; content, process and product.

In addition, workshops are held throughout the year based on requests from education directors. This year, a program specifically for teens working in the schools was held at the beginning of the year about the kinds of problems they would be seeing from children with Asperger's syndrome and those with ADHD. Similarly, another school requested a program on accommodations for children with Asperger's syndrome. Another education director asked the BJE attend a faculty meeting to talk about differentiated instruction as it relates to students with behavior problems. At the second meeting teachers presented some case examples and asked for suggestions. As a result, the director said the staff would periodically meet to discuss specific students as a case study review.

This year we brought together the recipients of the grants to share information with the BJE Special Education Advisory Board. In the past the grantees were asked to tell about their program. Now that the board members are familiar with the various programs, we were able to focus the discussion, through the use of questions, to highlight trends in types of students seen, accommodations and instructional strategies needed, and challenges faced.

The BJE continues to meet with the specialists who work in the congregational/community schools in network meetings to exchange ideas and problem solve around specific situations.

#### **Pre-schools**

**Staffing:** More pre-schools have begun to

see that students enrolled have special needs and need more support than the schools currently provide. The schools enlist the help of psychologists, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists to help them better understand and serve these children. Our grants now support five pre-schools. The changes are apparent in the ways in which the pre-school directors discuss the children and the supports and strategies initiated (e.g., social stories, previewing, pictures indicating the routines, leaning centers).

**Professional Development:** The BJE meets with the pre-school directors who receive grants and who are interested, as a separate network, to deal with issues specific to pre-schools. The directors were asked to consider screening and assessment which became the focus of one of our meetings. We brought in a director of a public pre-school for special needs students to explore state and NAEYC certification guidelines and to examine several existing assessment devices. This group will continue to meet around topics generated by the network members.

#### **TeenAde**

Now in its fifth year, *TeenAde* has grown from the initial group of eight teens. We have now prepared 60 teens who have worked in 15 congregational schools with students with special learning needs. The program has been replicated with equal success in Philadelphia and Washington DC.

#### **Publications**

In June 2006, PEJE, in collaboration with the BJE of Greater Boston, published *Noteworthy Practices in Jewish Day School Education, Volume IV: Serving Diverse Learners in Jewish Day Schools*. When PEJE began a Community of Practice for Diverse Learners, the first call was based on the introduction to the publication and the guest presenter was Sandy Miller-Jacobs.

*Jewish Educational Leadership*, published by the Lookstein Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, presented a special issue in Fall, 2006, "Reaching All Students Through Differentiated Instruction." The articles, "Differentiated Instruction: A Primer," "A DI Lexicon," and "DI FAQ," were written by Sandy Miller-Jacobs.

“Creating a Culture of DI Through Professional Development” was co-authored by Evelyn Lang of South Area Solomon Schechter Day School and Julie Gordon of Gateways.

A new book by Torah Aura, *V'kol Banayikh: Jewish Education for All*, edited by the consortium's own Sara Rubinow Simon, includes two chapters by Sandy Miller-Jacobs. These chapters are “What’s the Buzz about Differentiated Instruction?” and “TeenAde.”

The BJE published a booklet, *Managing Food Allergies at our Jewish Schools*, to raise awareness about life threatening food allergies and to provide suggestions about how schools can respond in an inclusive manner when children with severe food allergies are in their schools. The booklet was written by a small group including parents, day and congregational school professionals, and a professional from the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of New England. Sent to every school (preschool, congregational and community and day school), the booklet contains forms, letters, and recipes that can be replicated. Copies may be purchased from the BJE.

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## **CHICAGO, IL**

Chicago continues to offer a variety of services for individuals with special needs and their families. Numerous agencies are involved in providing services in a variety of settings. While it is true that more children and families are served today than ever before, the need remains great. Affordable residential options, expanded educational and vocational services, increased recreational, and social opportunities are all priorities. Chicago agencies will continue to move forward in providing an outstanding array of high-quality services, so that the needs of all of our children can be met.

The following information was compiled from Central Agencies for Jewish Educa-

tion in Chicago, as well as through the program directors. If any programs were inadvertently omitted, please accept my apologies.

### **Needs Assessment**

The **Community Foundation for Jewish Education** and the **Board of Jewish Education** developed and implemented a needs assessment survey to evaluate services for students with special needs in the supplementary schools administered by these agencies. The survey examined the number of students with special needs currently enrolled in the various programs, as well as the nature of those needs. It also analyzed levels of teacher training and preparedness for providing appropriate instruction for students with special needs. The survey asked the congregations to identify and prioritize ways in which services for these students could be developed and enhanced.

Results of the survey were based on a greater than 50% response rate. The data indicated that there is a large group of students with a wide range of special needs in the supplementary schools. Several of the schools reported that they were providing adequate services for their students; however, the majority of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with their ability to provide services. Not surprisingly, the need for teacher training and support was found to be significant. There is much work to be done in the future to insure that all Jewish children receive an appropriate and meaningful religious school education, regardless of need or ability.

### **Professional Preparation**

The **Anne M. Blitstein Teachers Institute of Hebrew Theological College** continues to offer professional preparation programs that lead to Illinois State Teacher Certification in Elementary and Special Education. The programs are aligned to state standards for teacher education and exceed state requirements in terms of content and rigor. The programs combine intensive courses in Liberal Arts and Science, Judaic Studies, and Education with field and clinical experiences, and culminate with student teaching. Graduates of the program are uniquely qualified as certified educators, capable of teaching both Judaic and General studies. Special Education candidates are qualified to teach the full range of needs that fall

within the Learning Behavior Specialist I category including learning disabilities, behavior and emotional disorders, cognitive impairments, physical disabilities, and autistic spectrum disorders. The education programs offer a high faculty to student ratio and a challenging curriculum taught by experts in the field of education. Current teachers can also take courses to fulfill continuing education and NCLB requirements.

In addition to the education programs, Blitstein Institute offers a variety of second majors, including Psychology, English, Computers, and Business. Blitstein Institute also offers courses in preparation for graduate programs in Speech and Language Therapy, Nutrition, and a variety of other fields. Furthermore, the school has a strong commitment to serving students with special learning needs. The Writing and Math centers offer ongoing academic support, while the administration and faculty offer guidance and counseling. The Anne M. Blitstein Teachers Institute of Hebrew Theological College is dedicated to the success of all students and strives to help each one reach her fullest potential.

As part of its ongoing commitment to teacher education, **The Board of Jewish Education** has generously sponsored *Advanced Seminar – Topical Issues in Jewish Special Education*, a continuing professional development series for Day School teachers who have completed the *Beyond Stickers and Stars* program. The seminar, which covers a wide range of topics related to special needs in depth, is taught across eight weeks. *Beyond Stickers and Stars* is taught in fifteen-week semesters. A cadre of teachers at the Sager Solomon Schechter Day School in Northbrook and Skokie has completed three years of study. In addition, the BJE has sponsored on site professional consultation for teachers enrolled in *Beyond Stickers and Stars*. The consultations facilitate the application of content and theory into practice. The program has been very successful, with marked improvement in teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions noted.

In addition, The Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago has launched the Makor Or Center. Hebrew for “source of light”, Makor Or will address a significant need in the Chicago commu-

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nity: to provide a model of excellence in Jewish education for all students and to facilitate inclusion for students with special needs in Jewish educational settings. By providing innovative materials and support for religious and day school teachers, our hope is that students with special needs will receive the instruction they need to succeed. This exciting new endeavor will focus on best practices in universal design and differentiated instruction and house a collection of Jewish resources for teachers and families, including books, music, games and technology. A trained consultant on staff at the BJE/Marshall Jewish Learning Center will be available to advise both teachers and parents.

#### **P'tach**

P'TACH is a special education program for children with learning disabilities and emotional needs. It has two locations serving over 30 children. P'TACH offers self-contained classrooms with individualized instruction for children in first grades through eighth grades. The programs are housed in Arie Crown Hebrew Day School and Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov. Students are included in the regular classroom to the fullest possible extent. The staff is highly trained in special education in both Judaic and secular studies. The children have their academic as well as their social needs met on a daily basis. P'TACH is affiliated with the Associated Talmud Torahs.

#### **Elan**

ELAN is a network of services for children, their teachers, and parents. Some of these services include referrals to various outside professionals, including the local Jewish social service agencies, diagnostic services and referrals, and assorted consultations. ELAN consults with most of the Chicago area's day schools. In addition, ELAN is available to provide consultation and liaison services to families for children facing difficulties in school. ELAN is affiliated with the Associated Talmud Torahs.

#### **Keshet**

Founded in 1982, Keshet is a not-for-profit organization providing educational, recreational, and vocational programs for children and young adults with developmental disabilities. Keshet programs include the *Ariella Joy Frankel Keshet Day School - K-8th* and the *Irving A. Hokin*

*Keshet High School - 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>*, *Keshet Transition Program* for young adults ages 18 through 21, *The Cooperative Community-Based Program for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*, *Summer Camp programs*, *Jacqueline Besser Keshet Special Olympics*, and *Keshet Sunday School*. Keshet also hosts the *Leventhal Keshet Autism Training and Demonstration Center* and has become a TEACCH training site for the State of Illinois.

#### **Jewish Children's Bureau**

The Jewish Children's Bureau is a partner in serving our community, supported by the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation. The **Jewish Children's Bureau Yeshiva Day School** provides a therapeutic environment for students whose behavioral, social, and/or learning problems significantly interfere with their academic work and/or their classroom behavior at other day or public schools. The Yeshiva requires meaningful participation from parents, mental health professionals, the community, and the students themselves. JCB Yeshiva students live in their own homes and attend school with the involvement and approval of their home school districts. JCB Yeshiva integrates strong Judaic, secular, and vocational programs with an intensive clinical program of day treatment.

Founded in 1999, the **Center for Young Children with Autism** combines the latest innovative therapeutic methods with a strong family component. Serving children ages three to six, the Center is distinctive in its year-round program and full-day schedule of classroom activities and services. The Center for Young Children with Autism follows the TEACCH method, which aims to build a child's independence and communication abilities. School is in session year-round (215 days a year) and runs 5 hours a day, 5 days a week. There is a small student to teacher ratio, which encourages each child to reach his or her potential. In order to ensure that each child receives comprehensive integrated treatment, the staff includes a full-time speech language pathologist and a full-time occupational therapist. A social worker provides family support and a family liaison /educational consultant provides ongoing education to families, which allows them to generalize treatment methods from school to home. The Center offers assessment, child day treatment, family education and programs, as

well as speech, language, and occupational therapy.

The Jewish Children's Bureau also offers an Early Intervention program which provides comprehensive therapeutic services for children ages 0 to 3. Services include developmental therapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and developmental play groups. Auditory-Verbal Therapy, which uses specific methods of teaching, listening, and speaking skills, is offered for children with cochlear implants. The early intervention program includes social work and psychological services, nursing and nutrition, and home visits.

#### **Day School Services and Initiatives**

In addition to the aforementioned programs, most of the Jewish Day Schools in the Chicago area offer resource and social work services for students with learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral issues. At the elementary level, **Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School**, **Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov Elementary**, **Yeshivas Tiferes Tzvi**, **Yeshiva Shearis Yisroel: The Veitzener Cheder** and **Arie Crown Hebrew Day School** are among the schools that offer pull-out resource assistance. **Hillel Torah** also offers accelerated learning opportunities gifted students. **The Solomon Schechter Day School** system (Northbrook, Skokie, and Middle School) offers an array of pull out and in-class resource services. **The Sager Solomon Schechter Day School** is currently implementing and evaluating an early intervention model to serve young children with suspected learning issues, who might otherwise have "fallen through the cracks". The **Akiba-Schechter Day School** offers creative programming and levels for students with learning issues as well as for students who are gifted. At the high school level, the **Ida Crown Jewish Academy** and the **Hannah Sacks Girls School** offer resource services for students with special learning needs. **Gesher HaTorah** offers a self-contained therapeutic day school option for children with special needs.

#### **Otzar**

Otzar is a new nonprofit organization founded by a group of professionals with backgrounds in education, special education, developmental disabilities, mental health, medicine, adaptive technology, and law who are committed to the contin-

ual improvement of Jewish educational practices to meet the needs of each student. The organization's mission is to make it possible for each Jewish child, from birth through young adulthood, to learn joyfully to his or her full potential and receive a quality education within Jewish schools and programs in the greater Chicago metropolitan area. This mission is based on the goal of including individuals of different abilities and needs to the fullest extent in the activities of the Jewish community. Amongst Otzar's primary activities are education and guidance for families and professionals on behalf of children as well as collaboration with schools, organizations, and agencies on programs and projects that improve the educational services provided to children in Jewish educational settings.

#### **Jewish Education Leadership Institute (JELI)**

The Jewish Education Leadership Institute offers the following programs in conjunction with Loyola University:

**Master of Education in Administration and Supervision:** This program was developed by Loyola University as an accelerated graduate program for applicants seeking administration positions in the Jewish Day School system. Candidates who successfully complete this program will receive a Masters of Education (M.Ed.) degree in Administration and Supervision from Loyola University and a Day School/Yeshiva Principal Certificate from the Jewish Education Leadership Institute.

**Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction:** This is a special cohort program developed for the Jewish Educational Leadership Institute. The academic program comprises 30 hours (10 courses) of graduate courses over two years with intensive summer classes, on-line classes the first academic year and the final academic year involved in action research in the students' classrooms. Moreover, each course in the program is oriented to the special interest and needs of a Jewish day school teacher.

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### **CINCINNATI, OH**

Kesher, in Cincinnati, Ohio, inspires and supports the Jewish community in its efforts to include people with disabilities in the Jewish community.

We continue to make gains in educational inclusion for all ages. Much of the Federation sponsored adult education and some of the congregational adult education is accessible to persons with various disabilities. Sign language interpretation, large print program, and assistive listening devices are now the norm. Kesher has a role in providing this to various organizations, agencies, and congregations. We also consult in planning various programs in the Cincinnati Jewish Community.

Kesher is involved at our local campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in training Reform Rabbinical Students about inclusion and people with disabilities in the Jewish community. We are also helping the URJ to develop similar programs at the other campuses of HUC-JIR and to develop brochures about inclusion for congregations throughout the country.

Kesher has spoken at several sites throughout the Cincinnati area about inclusion in many settings. A strong emphasis this past year has been on training teachers and other school personnel about students with disabilities and their needs in both day and supplementary religious schools. We have also continued to provide classroom observations to assist teachers with inclusion of students with disabilities, especially in supplementary schools. We have met with the local Educator's Council to develop the most effective and cost-efficient way to assist local schools.

Kesher is helping both Big Brothers/Big Sisters Association of Cincinnati and Chabad to train mentors and locate children with disabilities to participate in their programs. The Big Brothers/Big Sisters program is called "Geshet", and matches children ages 7 to 22 with adult mentors. They are also initiating a program of group activities for children with disabilities that is facilitated by local Hillel students. The Chabad Friendship Circle matches typical teens with children with disabilities. Friendship Circle emphasizes

the development of friendship and the activities that typical kids do together. This program is just starting and has made 6 matches so far.

Kesher continues to assist congregations and agencies to obtain and design accommodations and modifications, print publications in alternate formats, and obtain and partially provide sign language interpreters for programs. Planning for the future new JCC has taken up much of Kesher's energy and time. We also have participated in several interfaith programs for people with various disabilities during this year. Kesher is heavily involved in writing and designing Advance Directives for people with disabilities for the Inclusion Network Religion Task Force. This effort will provide materials suitable for people with cognitive and language disabilities and will include some information about various religious groups thoughts on these forms. Kesher also is helping to stimulate people with disabilities within the Jewish community to vote, either from home or by accessible voting machines. This is also part of an interfaith effort.

We ended our fifth year by holding our Annual Inclusion Awards Breakfast in December 2006. We presented an award to our local Jewish Federation for making inclusion more visible in our community. We also awarded 3 generations of a family with individual honors for inspiring each other and our Jewish community to include people with disabilities. The program consisted of a Bell Choir from our local Jewish Nursing Home, Cedar Village, and speeches in sign language by 3 members of our Jewish community about the increase in inclusion.

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### **COLUMBUS, OH**

The Columbus Jewish Federation's Jewish Education and Identity (JEI) Department provides support for individuals and families with special needs. Founded in 1996, its programs currently serve more than 70 children and adults and their

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families. The department works with more than 200 teachers in thirteen schools and institutions in the Columbus Jewish Community.

The department provides a broad-based network of programs serving students in preschool, congregational, and day school settings as well as adults with special needs and their families. Programs are funded through The Federation's Annual Campaign with additional support from the Columbus Jewish Foundation and private donors.

Many programs have been implemented in cooperation with Jewish Family Services, Wexner Heritage House, Shalom House, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Columbus, Schottenstein Chabad House, Columbus Community Kollel, Columbus Speech and Hearing Center, and area congregations and their preschools.

#### New Programs

**Teen Tsimurim/Yachad:** Teenagers with a wide range of disabilities participate with typical peers in monthly social, educational, and recreational programs to become better acquainted with the Columbus Jewish Community. With funding provided by The Federation, the Stuart and Marilyn Cole Fund at The Columbus Jewish Foundation, and the National Jewish Council for the Disabled, the teens visit area synagogues, nursing homes, kosher markets, and catering establishments and will participate in community holiday events.

#### Ongoing Programs

**Services to the Deaf Community:** The Federation provides interpreting at High Holiday services and Friday evening services twice a month at Temple Israel and offers interpreting by request for Jewish educational classes and events throughout Central Ohio. Educational support is provided to several deaf and hearing-impaired students in local congregational schools.

**Keshet:** This program, providing support services in congregational religious schools to children with a wide range of disabilities, has expanded its services to include students with disabilities including hearing impairment, learning disabilities, emotional and behavior issues, and mild developmental disabilities. Each child is assigned an aide to provide indi-

vidualized support to enable the child to succeed in his/her religious school classroom. The number of students served increases each year. The program is funded through The Federation's Annual Campaign.

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah class:** In its seventh year, our class for students with more involved needs actively prepares middle school and high school students for participation in a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony that is meaningful and specifically designed for each child. Six students representing four congregations meet for two hours each Sunday morning at Congregation Tifereth Israel. Throughout the year, the students have opportunities to integrate with the mainstream religious school. Dedicated personnel with highly specialized training are available to help each student participate as fully as possible in a wide range of Jewish learning. The Federation coordinates and funds this program.

**Yachad:** This program, affiliated with the National Jewish Council for the Disabled, provides unique social, educational, and recreational mainstreamed programs for the developmentally disabled. Our Yachad chapter serves young adults with special challenges with programming that bring them into the mainstream of Jewish life. Activities include field trips to museums, community programs, and sports activities. Special events are planned around Jewish holiday themes. The Columbus chapter is sponsored by the national organization, The Federation, and Jewish Family Services. Additional funding is received from private donors.

**Synagogue Inclusion:** The JEdI Department provides consultation to area synagogues to support inclusion of individuals with disabilities in ritual services. Two modified Shabbat services were held to accommodate children and adults with developmental disabilities among the typical congregants. Local synagogues continue to explore ways to be inclusive of individuals with disabilities.

**Friendship Circle:** The JEdI Department partners with the Schottenstein Chabad House and Jewish Family Services to provide training for volunteers to become "buddies" with children with disabilities. The Friendship Circle program engages students from 12 to 20 years old and coordinates weekly visits to homes of

children with special needs. Volunteers receive training in disability awareness, medical and safety concerns, behavior management, and meaningful play. Licensed professionals lead all training workshops.

**Resource Collection:** The Special Education Department at The Federation provides teachers, volunteers, and parents with up-to-date and pertinent professional articles, books, videos, and computer software. Some materials are circulated through the Educational Directors at each institution and others can be borrowed through the Jewish Teacher Resource Center. A current bibliography is available.

**Professional Development:** Each year the Special Education Department offers a series of staff-development opportunities related to special education. Some are held at local institutions and congregations and all are open to teachers and Madrichim in any Jewish setting. The topics of these classes have included background on the educational and behavioral needs of students and strategies to meet those needs. Through these and other staff development offerings, the department endeavors to strengthen teachers' understanding of and ability to support the range of students in the classroom.

**Consultation to Schools:** Working with individual religious schools, the JEdI Department provides support services for children, from pre-school through Bar/Bat Mitzvah, with a broad range of special needs. These students are served in inclusive settings. Services include individual consultation with administrators, teachers and parents, including observations and assessment of individual student needs, home visits, and curriculum support.

A special education consultant is assigned to each of Columbus' religious schools for several hours each month based on enrollment. The consultant, working with the education director, observes classes, identifies children having learning and behavioral difficulties, provides educational strategies to teachers, and consults with parents. The Federation funds this program.

The department also provides curricular

materials on disability awareness and sensitivity training to congregational schools.

**Information and Referral Service:** The Special Education Department provides information and referrals in response to inquiries about educational services for persons with disabilities. The department networks with several programs in the community.

The Special Education Coordinator meets with parents and administrators in private conferences to determine the best ways of meeting the special needs of their child. The coordinator works with parents to identify educational objectives and helps all members of the educational team to address each family's concerns.

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## **DETROIT, MI**

"For every closed door...there is one that is opened" Helen Keller

As we begin our eleventh year of operation, our Opening the Doors Partnership Program of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit's Alliance for Jewish Education continues to "open the doors of opportunity" for children with special needs in our community. This past year we helped close to 800 children in our 23 partnership schools with our team of 18 Special Education Teachers. Our partners are Early Childhood Schools, Day Schools, and Congregational Schools across the full denominational spectrum—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Humanistic Judaism. Each partnership school receives funding from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit to provide for the hiring of our Special Educators (with Masters' Degrees or Post Graduate Special Education Certification) to implement supplementary services on site. Each school model of service delivery is specialized to fit the needs and philosophy of each school.

Our full range of services includes: recruitment, placement, indirect supervision of

Special Educators, teacher conferences, direct instruction, consultation, lunch and learn workshops, and resource. Our Special Education Department consists of: Ellen Maiseloff, Associate Director; Helene Weiss Kohn, Program Assistant; and Haviva Ferrier, Support Staff; and our 18 Special Education Teachers. We appreciate and recognize the support of our Alliance Director, Rabbi Judah Isaacs.

### **Doors to the Future**

We are grateful to be the recipients of a new two-year grant from the **Mandell L. and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation** for this early childhood inclusion program. We are now in the second year of the grant. This grant enables us to continue to provide early intervention that will help preschool children have a successful early childhood experience. It provides one-on-one assistance to preschoolers who need temporary intervention to help them function successfully in the classroom. We serve about 20 children each year that may be considered at risk for school or may have learning difficulties. We place three Para educators into seven early childhood partner schools. We provide our Para educators with formal coursework at Oakland Schools to obtain Para educator certification. Our Para educator Coordinator, Helene Weiss Kohn (with a Masters' Degree in Special Education and experience in Early Childhood Development) supervises them. Formal evaluation results from parents, classroom teachers, and directors have all indicated that this service is highly beneficial and a valuable resource. We extend our gratitude to the Berman Foundation for their confidence and commitment to our program—and in enabling us to make a real difference in the lives of our young children!

### **Special Educators Network**

Our team of 18 Opening the Doors Special Education teachers, meet quarterly throughout the year to discuss relevant issues and to share current thoughts, methodology and experiences. The upcoming speakers for our network meeting are Dr. Roger Lauer Ph.D. and Dr. Isabelle Beaulieu Ph.D., of Center for Neuropsychology and Learning, P.C., Ann Arbor, Michigan. They will speak on the topic, *Who's Running the Ship? Executive Functioning in Students: What They Are, and How Can We Help?*

### **Efshar Sunday School**

Our Efshar program, under the capable

direction of Robyn Glickman, continues to meet the needs of children with more involved needs. Individualized instruction reflecting the needs of learning, development, and behavioral challenges contribute to a meaningful Judaic curriculum. Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, music, crafts, holiday celebrations, drama, and family programs are integral components of the Efshar program.

### **Specialist Series**

This year we planned a series of six exceptional speakers on specific special education topics, as requested by our Early Childhood Directors:

**Nancy Kaufman**, Speech and Language Pathologist and Director of Kaufman's Children Center. Her topic was: *Apraxia of Speech*. Nancy is a national speaker and author of the Kaufman Speech Praxis Kit 1 and 2, plus the accompanying workbook, and co-author of *the K&K Sign and Say Program For Children With Autism*. The Directors were impressed and appreciative of Nancy's expertise, experience and ability to offer concrete suggestions and guidance.

**Angela Telfer**, Autism Program Coordinator, for the Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency. Her topic was: *Young Children with Autism*. Her organized and thorough presentation offered characteristics, strategies and tips for working with children with autism.

**Dr. Daniel Klein**, Psychologist, Child and Family Solutions Center. His topic was *Childhood Aggression: Why does it happen? What Can We Do?* The response to Dr. Klein's presentation on aggression was overwhelming. By popular demand, he was asked to present the same topic to teachers of 5 nursery schools.

**Dr. Roger Lauer Ph.D., and Dr. Isabelle Beaulieu Ph.D.**, Center for Neuropsychology & Learning. Their topic will be: *Who's Running the Ship? Executive Functioning in Students: What They Are, and How Can We Help.*

**Jill Guz**, Occupational Therapist and Abilities Center Director. Her topic will be: *Weaving Sensory Motor Strategies into the Classroom: Tools for the Teachers.*

### **Para Ed Day School Pilot Program**

We have expanded our Doors to the Future program this year to service our three local day schools as well. Our Para educator rotates to the three schools on a 3-month basis. She provides short-term individualized intervention to the pre

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school children, thus reducing behavioral, social, and learning difficulties while these children are still young. We were also able to provide a Special Education teacher to assist with strategies and recommendations for the teachers in the three-day school nursery school classrooms.

**Special Education Committee Creates "Anti-bullying Policy"**

The Federation's Special Education Committee comprised of professionals, Special Education teachers and Federation laity have gathered together to craft an "Anti-Bullying Policy", which will begin to address the methods of confronting and correcting the problems of bullying and harassment. This code of conduct was based on handbooks from the Michigan State Board of Education and local school policies. The directors of each local school have agreed to adopt this draft as a universal policy or adjust it to fit their particular school's needs. The "Anti Bullying Policy" will be implemented in all Nursery Schools, Day Schools, and Congregational Schools. Other institutions such as the JCC and the Fresh Air Society (a residential camp) are reviewing this policy too. It is our goal that this Bullying Policy will be a way for our community to address the serious issue of bullying, teasing, and harassment between children and adolescents.

**Tallit Program**

This year we have implemented a new pilot project – Special Needs Tallit Program. This project is to create an individualized hand-woven Bar/Bat mitzvah Tallit with Special Needs pre-Bar/Bat Mitzvah children in the congregational schools.

We will instruct 6<sup>th</sup> grade Special Needs students in how to use the floor-loom as well as explain the history of the Tallit and the Jewish symbolism of the garment. The Tallit will be designed and woven by the students, along with their parents. The students will then learn how to tie Tzitzit on the four corners and practice their Tallit blessing with their clergy and tutors. At the conclusion of the project, each of the children will have had a successful experience and have a beautifully designed and executed, hand-woven Tallit for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, that truly was made with their own hands. In fact, some of the students talk about this unique experience in their Dvar Torah at their

Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

**Disabilities Awareness**

We offered a two-pronged approach for our students this year. Two original storybooks with guided discussion questions were offered for our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Each book was written and illustrated by Julie Schwartz, a Covenant intern and made possible by a generous grant from the Covenant Foundation. These original books entitled Hanukah Fever and Birth-day Blowup were written to sensitize children to the needs of their peers with special needs and to promote friendships and discussions on how to include these children in social settings. Volunteer members of our Alliance's special education committee and our special education teachers present them to children in our congregational schools.

This year we made available a "lending library" of several children's books dealing with disabilities for classroom teachers to use with students in their classrooms. They ranged from books on Autism to Learning Disabilities to Hearing Impairments, etc. Several special educators also read them to students to increase sensitivity and respect for differences.

**Day school Support**

We continue to work with day schools to support their state-mandated services for children with special needs. To supplement the public school services, a clinical psychologist is hired by us to provide psycho-educational evaluations for those in need.

**Day School Conference 2006**

On Monday, November 7, about 200 day school teachers gathered at the BPS Conference Center for an afternoon professional development program. Our 11<sup>th</sup> annual conference continues to be the only opportunity for all of our four local day schools to come together for a day of learning. Our conference featured a Judaic session and a secular session. Our secular session featured outstanding educational consultant, Dr. Beverly Johns. Dr. Johns is a learning and behavioral consultant in Illinois and spoke on the topic, *Let's Get Reasonable: Reasonable Accommodations*. She brought in many teaching tools and visual aids and offered various teaching strategies useful for the classroom. Many of the teachers present at the conference implemented

her tips and classroom tactics the next day. The Judaic session featured **Rabbi Hillel Mandel**, who spoke on the topic, *Seven Habits of Good Classroom Managers*. Rabbi Mandel also included organized and clear information, strategies for building positive teacher/student relationships, suggestions for classroom management, and ideas for building each child's self confidence.

**Family Circle 2006**

Believing that bullying is a serious issue, we had a major speaker discuss this topic at two of our separate programs. Our keynote speaker was educational consultant, Barbara Coloroso, author of The Bully, The Bullied and The Bystander, who was back by popular demand. She characterized the deadly triad: bullies who terrorize, the bullied who are afraid to tell, and the bystanders who participate or stand idly by. She also taught us about a new phenomenon, Cyber bullies. Bullies are now using high tech tools to threaten, stalk, ridicule, humiliate, taunt, and spread rumors about their targets-world wide.

On Sunday night, November 12, she addressed these issues for parents, teachers, school directors, and professionals at our annual Family Circle Program. Over 200 people attended and were mesmerized by her presentation and gained a deeper understanding of the roles each person plays and the serious consequences of inaction. We all learned that "it is a life and death issue that we ignore at our children's peril—thinking it's a normal part of childhood". It was a phenomenal program!

Our next Family Circle Program will be on November 11, 2007. Our keynote speaker will be Dr. Max Wiznitzer—staff physician at Rainbow Babies and Children's hospitals and Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Neurology and International Health at Case Western University, Cleveland, Ohio. The presentation will cover the topics of Aspergers Syndrome, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Mood Disorders and Anxiety, and Tourette's Syndrome. He will also give advice and strategies to use with children with different disabilities, so that they may more successfully function in the classroom, in social situations, and in the family. Dr. Wiznitzer will also have a private parent session following the keynote presentation.

Our Family Circle program is now called *The Robert and Anita Naftaly Family Circle Program*, due to the generous donation of the Naftaly family, in honor of Anita's retirement. Anita was a leader, mentor, and superior professional tuned to the needs of the special children in our community. Through the founding of her Opening the Doors Program and the intervention and support of our Special Educators, hundreds of children with learning disabilities and other special needs have been helped academically, behaviorally, and socially. These children and adolescents have been able to receive a quality Jewish Education, and lead richer lives, as part of our community. We look forward to continuing the work of Anita's vision.

As we enter our 12<sup>th</sup> year of operation, we are proud of serving our community. We continue to be committed to providing quality service and meeting the ever-changing needs in our Jewish school system. We will continue our work...with our eyes and hearts focused on our Jewish children.

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## **HOUSTON, TX**

The Bureau of Jewish Education in Houston Texas has finally made some terrific strides forward. It all began last February when the BJE sent out an on-line special needs survey to a random sampling of families in the Jewish communities. Of the approximately 1000 surveys that went out on-line, 75 responses were received. Though I was personally hoping for more feedback, that which we received was the stimulus and confirmation we needed to move ahead.

1. With the information from the survey regarding the young adult population and older, the BJE approached Jewish Family Service in the hopes of them helping to meet some needs of the adult community.

2. The suggestion of a Special Needs Resource Directory was immediately embraced by Linda Burger, director of JFS. She appointed a chair, Sandy Block, who now heads a committee of 13 volunteers to get the on-line Special Needs Resource Directory up and running. It's due to come out the beginning of February, 2007. There will be links to the Jewish Federation and all the Congregations as well.
3. Linda Burger also embraced the need for living arrangements for our adults who cannot live independently. We have both teamed together to have Focus Groups to hear the needs of the community in more detail than a survey.
4. Linda Burger is also organizing her staff to help our adults with job placement, mentoring help, and coaching. My thanks to JFS for also seeing the needs of our community and moving forward with some constructive plans.
5. With positive comments about children joining special programs at the Jewish Community Center, as reported in the survey, several other positive happenings have occurred.
  - a. The JCC is opening its Maccabi Games to those special needs children who would like to participate.
  - b. The JCC is beginning to have workshops for their staff members regarding working with special needs children. Gila Arnoni, director of Crossroads School in Houston, presented information to help the staff understand the needs of special needs children and ways to help them.
  - c. The JCC has also started a TOP Soccer program for special needs children. With plenty of volunteers, the program is off to a great start.
  - d. A new social program for our children met for the first time at the JCC on January 21, 2007. Eleven children came with parents and plenty of volunteers to help. It was a great beginning.
  - e. Existing programs in our Jewish Community still include the STARS program, a pre-K program for children in the PDD spectrum; the Friendship Circle, run by Chabad Rabbi David Goldstein; and the Nite Owls, a social program for special needs adults. This is held at the JCC. And Club Shalom continues at JFS for those adults with emotional

issues.

- f. We at the BJE, will continue to work closely with each agency to help promote programs for all of our children and adults.

In the area of education for our special needs children, the Keshet Sunday School program continues to grow and be included in many of the programs occurring at its host synagogue. This year, I have two teachers plus one aide for the eight children who attend this class. The principal of Congregation Brith Shalom, Joy Rosenberg, continues to include our children in all the holiday programs, picnics, and outings. We have also increased the time for the older children from a two hour session to a three hour session.

The Jewish Network of Special Educators continues to meet with me to share information about current and needed support services for our students on the various campuses.

All year long we promote various workshops in the area of special needs for all our teachers to attend. Attendance is usually very good and indicative, to me, of the interest in our teachers to approach our children with confidence and knowledge. We will continue to assess the needs of our schools and the support services they may need.

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## **LOS ANGELES, CA**

### **Volunteers/Tutor-Mentors**

The BJELA's Lomed LA Program has continued to recruit, train, and match volunteers in Jewish day schools and Yeshivot to work with students who require extra help in order to succeed in school. A manual entitled "How to Create a Volunteer Tutor/Mentor Program in a Jewish Day School" was developed and is on the BJE's website ([bjela.org](http://bjela.org)) as well as the PEJE website.

### **Disability Awareness Program**

Kids on the Block has been an ongoing

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program for 20 years utilizing life-sized puppets including some with disabilities and others that are more typical children. In a series of skits discussing various disabilities, our volunteer troupe has performed for thousands of students in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Included in this performance is a speaker with a disability to answer all questions the children ask. In conjunction with our halachically-based disability curriculum, "Justice, Justice for All", Kids on the Block has sensitized our students to understand that in spite of disability differences we are all the same. The troupe performs yearly at Jewish schools, public schools, and non-religious private schools where they help dispel some of the discomfort attached to people with disabilities.

#### Seminar Series

We have continued to have seven lectures in this series designed to provide parents and professionals with the latest information on problems facing our children. The series is entitled "Helping Children with Special Needs/Helping Children with Life Issues. During the year 2005/2006 the two and a half hour seminars were entitled:

- Understanding Your Gifted Child
- Your Child's School Recommends a Psycho-educational Assessment. Who Do You Go To? What Should the Test Battery Focus On and What Sort of Information Should You Expect from the Results That Will Aid Your Child's Education?
- What's The New IDEA? What You Need to Know for Your Child's Next IEP?
- Perfectionism, OCD, TICS, ADHD, and Tourette Syndrome: Genetic Findings and Cutting Edge Treatments from Around the World.
- A Comprehensive Approach to Autism: Medical Management, Therapeutic Interventions, Impact on the Family.
- Connecting Language and Behavior: A Whole Language Approach for Individuals with Autism Fosters Communication Skills Development.
- How to Recognize and Deal with the Possibility of Childhood or Teenage Depression: Why are Children Becoming Depressed at Earlier Ages?

#### Task Force on Jewish Education for Children with Special Needs

In mid 2005, we initiated a community-

based Task Force to re-examine the services offered by our agency and their alignment with the Jewish educational needs of the children with special needs in the LA Jewish community. The vast range of needs and possible responses necessitated devising a study process that helps the BJE to focus its attention where it is needed most. A three-part process was put in place to provide direction for our planning.

The three research components of the study are:

1. Community-wide Needs Survey to hear from parents about what they perceive as being of greatest help to them as they seek better access a quality Jewish education for their child with special needs.
2. Environmental Scan surveying BJE affiliated schools and other related institutions to determine the specific services, programs, and accommodations that are currently being offered.
3. Review of existing models across the continent to help us to consider new approaches through an examination of the work being done in other communities.

It is expected that the Task Force will be finished with its work in the fall of 2006.

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#### METROWEST, NJ

"Oh God, may all created in Your image recognize that they are kin, so that in one spirit and in one friendship, they may be forever united before you." Traditional Liturgy

#### Yaldeinu

Studies show that inclusion is beneficial to the atypical and typical child particularly in the early stages of life and seventy percent of what children learn, they learn from their peers. For the typically developing child, learning and playing with their atypical peers will greatly enrich their lives, teaching sensitivity and Jewish values. The Yaldeinu Program, a program for

developmentally challenged children ages three to fourteen (located at the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy in Livingston, NJ), is embarking on an exciting venture. For the first time in 23 years the children of Yaldeinu will have the benefit of inclusion for children ages five to six. A successful secular school model in the Montville Public School system entitled "The Sister School Initiative" is being replicated for the Yaldeinu program. Seven of the youngest developmentally challenged young children on the autistic spectrum will benefit from this program. The faculty of Yaldeinu, Montville Public School Special Services, Rabbi Avi Friedman of Summit Jewish Community Center, Central Hebrew High School buddies, and select families of typical preschoolers are working together to create this new opportunity. Plans are in the making for a sensitization workshop for the participating typical preschoolers and the high school buddies. Future programs will encompass the development of a Yaldeinu Shabbat Service program hosted by Summit Jewish Community Center in Summit, NJ, where Yaldeinu students will have the opportunity to daven with their new found friends. The long term goal beyond the pilot program is inclusion for all Yaldeinu classes.

#### Shadow Training Program

In the spirit of inclusion, The Center for Special Education is continuing the "Project Sekui" Shadow Program for MetroWest preschoolers with special learning needs. The program is now in its second year of funding from The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey. Currently nine students representing four Jewish early childhood programs are benefiting from the support of a trained shadow assistant. Shadows participate in monthly training sessions with a school psychologist who serves as consultant to the project. Additional support is offered to schools and shadows through team meetings that include the parents of the children involved, workshops for teachers and directors of participating schools, and onsite visits to each classroom. Shadows are reporting exciting progress amongst their children including improvement in play and social skills! It is hoped that several of the children who are ready to transition to kindergarten next year will do so without the necessity of one-on-one support.

### Teacher Workshops

The Center for Special Education presented three teacher workshops in conjunction with an agency-wide early childhood conference held in October 2006. The workshops complimented the work of "Project Sekui" by offering directors, teachers, and assistants techniques to benefit all children in the classroom. Over 250 teachers attended at least one of the special education workshops and many attended two. Topics included "Cooperative Discipline", "Fine Motor Activities for the Early Childhood Classroom", and "Is It Sensory or Behavioral?". Presenters included community occupational therapists as well as a school psychologist who serves as the Shadow Program consultant. Follow-up evaluations indicate that teachers incorporated many of the strategies learned at the workshops into their classrooms.

### Parent Workshops

Parent Workshops are now an integral part of the Center's Parent Support Group Program. A clinical psychologist is giving a series of four workshops to benefit parents. Topics include: "Positive Discipline and Self-Esteem in Special and Typical Needs Children", "So We Have a Diagnosis: What Does It Mean in Our Lives?", "Siblings of Special Needs Children Are Special Too", and "Building Self-Esteem and Compassion: How to Increase Empathy and Decrease Bullying". Over 40 parents attended the first two workshops presented in the fall.

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### **MINNEAPOLIS, MN**

The Minneapolis Jewish Community Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities is our community's innovative response to cultivating awareness and facilitating support for Jews with disabilities, family members, synagogues, schools, and

agencies. The Inclusion Program is a model for faith communities across North America, teaching others how to build collaborative partnerships that strengthen institutional commitment to inclusion.

In 2006, we took our responsibility to raise awareness and guide Jewish organizations to a new level with the introduction of the Community Inclusion Guide. We are strongly encouraged by the results of the pilot program. This is a unique approach to the challenges faced by Jewish organizations.

### Community Inclusion Guide

The Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities encourages each Jewish organization to develop their own inclusion committee. Inclusion committees focus on all aspects of organizational life in terms of removing barriers to participation and serve as the organization's resource on inclusion. All of the committees have been searching for ways to increase participation and circumvent barriers of attitude, communication, and architecture. The Liaisons wanted to develop their own concrete plan to help navigate the numerous issues that came to their attention as the institutions themselves became more aware of the needs of people with disabilities.

The Inclusion Program's response was to invite the Liaisons to join us to develop the Community Inclusion Guide—a guidebook that provides direction to each institution. The Community Inclusion Guide (CIG) will give each institution instruction on how to evaluate and assess needs, set priorities, develop goals and objectives, and create a unique work plan. Ideas, suggestions, and resources are included in the Community Inclusion Guide and address areas of need identified in the evaluation and assessment.

The CIG process is supported by the Inclusion Program and we work directly with the Inclusion Committees to provide guidance and support. The CIG addresses most areas of community life: worship, organizational, recreation, youth groups, social opportunities, preschool/day/religious/adult education, and *b'nai mitzvah*. Evaluation questions were designed to help the organizations focus on the current level of physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers. Results guide the goal setting and prioritization processes

to increase awareness and meaningful inclusion.

The Community Inclusion Guide offers practical strategies and solutions to many of the most common challenges faced by Jewish organizations. In addition, two disability awareness training chapters are included that can be used for teaching adults as well as teens and children. A chapter on the experiences of parenting a child with a disability can provide insight for clergy, educators, therapists, and others who will benefit from knowing about that journey.

Creating the CIG has been a two and a half year project. As our program has evolved, so has the CIG. Our pilot program is testing the usability of the CIG to very positive results. The CIG will be available to other organizations in early summer 2007.

The CIG is receiving a warm welcome from community institutions and is another strategy in developing collaborative and creative solutions to inclusion. Four synagogues and Jewish Family and Children's Service are creating unique models for inclusion.

### Camp Training

The three Twin Cities Jewish day camps all reported the difficulties they encountered when parents did not disclose their child has special needs. In the first collaboration of its kind, the camps joined with the Inclusion Program to develop strategies that would encourage parents to provide good information about their child. The camps were also committed to increasing the number of campers with special needs; thus their marketing materials also needed attention. Finally, we worked with all three camps to develop a menu of training items for camp staff and we facilitated the camp training sessions. Camp directors acknowledged that training was of a higher caliber than in years past and more effective. Our plans are to continue this collaboration with Sabes JCC Camp Olami, St. Paul JCC Camp Butwin, and Temple Israel Camp TEKO.

### Online Resource Guide

Since the beginning of the Inclusion Program, professionals in our community have asked us for a web-based resource guide. We launched the Disability Online Resource Guide in May, 2006. The Guide

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contains web listings for Jewish and secular disability resources as well as specific disability links. The Guide has been very helpful to the organizations as they seek information about specific disabilities and organizations. Check it out on the web at [www.jfcsmpls.org.inclusionresources.html](http://www.jfcsmpls.org.inclusionresources.html)

**Israel Trip.** In January, 2006 we sent three young adults to Israel on the special needs Birthright Program sponsored by Yachad. This was the first time that the Minneapolis community sent participants on this program. The three young adults who went came back with a love of Israel, increased independence and cannot wait to return to Eretz Yisrael!

#### Disability Awareness Training for Teens

Several synagogues invited the Inclusion Program to provide disability awareness training. One temple school had all madrichim attend the training. The special needs madrichim attended with the classroom madrichim and it made for a fun and thought provoking training. We used several scenarios, presented once from the perspective of a madrich and once from the perspective of their young student. We also provided hands-on learning so they would understand how having a disability can be a barrier to participation. The madrichim responded to the training by improved support of students with disabilities. Several of them were moved to create a Chanukah candle sale fundraiser that raised money for the inclusion program in their religious school. Another group of seventh and eighth grade students at another synagogue participated in disability awareness training for a special unit on disabilities. Several weeks later they hosted a bowling party for our Caring Connections adults, all of whom have a developmental disability. The bowling party has become an annual event that is a highlight for our clients as well as for the young people who host it.

#### Inclusion Events and Programs

Our synagogues and schools keep us busy with a number of events and special programs that focus on inclusion. One of the most successful programs at Adath Jeshurun Congregation included a Shabbat morning sermon on inclusion before the entire congregation. Following services, the synagogue's Inclusion Committee hosted a lunch and learn with the Inclusion Program Manager. Shir Tikvah hosted a parent program on inclusion. Bet

Shalom invited the entire community to their thrice yearly Inclusion Havdallah program. Parents and their young and adult children regularly attend. The program begins with activity stations. Parents can either participate with their child or meet with other parents. A Havdallah service follows in which everyone sits or stands in a circle and shares the beauty of this special time of the week. Everyone then enjoys a pizza and salad dinner. One of the benefits of these types of specific programming is that Jews with disabilities and their families find connection with others through the synagogue. Friendships have developed and some of the younger children have even started attending religious school.

#### Autism Class

Bet Shalom Congregation had a number of requests from parents to provide meaningful participation in religious school for their children who have autism. The Inclusion Committee advocated on behalf of these parents who wrote two grants to the Minneapolis Jewish Federation to fund a class. Two classes actually resulted from this grant. One grant provided funds for class materials, while the other provides additional funding over tuition for the class. One class is for younger children and the other is for post b'nai mitzvah students. The class is open to any community child who has autism. Children attend Sunday afternoons when the religious school is over. The environment is calming and students are attentive and enjoy learning about holidays, the synagogue, and Israel. They are becoming familiar with Judaism in ways that are unique and meaningful to each of them.

For more information on the Community Inclusion Guide or any of the programs mentioned, please contact:

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### NEW YORK, NY

The mission of BJE's Special Education Department is to maximize the opportunities of persons with special needs for a meaningful and productive life in the global Jewish and general communities. Towards this mission, the Department, through creative programming continues to advocate, collaborate, coordinate, create, negotiate, evaluate, and educate on behalf of persons with special needs and their families. Below is a listing of new and ongoing developments in conjunction with BJE's Special Education Department. Currently, Rabbi Marty Schloss serves as BJE's Executive Vice-President and CEO and Dr. Jed Luchow serves as the Director of the Special Education Department.

#### Government Contracts (Sara Seligson and Judy Oppenheim)

The Board of Jewish Education of greater New York has recently received two contracts from the New York City Department of Education for the implementation of two major Federal initiatives. These contracts recognize BJE as a legitimate and quality provider of professional growth for the City of New York. Needless to say this is a remarkable achievement with profound implications for future developments

#### PROJECT SERV II (Coordinated by Jeanette Sassoon)

The New York City Department of Education awarded BJE a contract to enhance school personnel's understanding of the psychological issues confronting children. This includes helping school personnel recognize the indicators of stress, trauma, abuse, neglect, eating disorders, substance abuse, and other conditions. The training includes legal mandates and protocols and community resources to turn to for assistance. The goal of this effort is to empower school personnel as legitimate partners in creating a supportive and nurturing environment for children. The grant is a Federal Program responding to the impact of September 11th on children.

#### Title IIA (Coordinated by Judy Oppenheim and Sara Seligson)

The New York Department of Education also awarded BJE a contract to provide Professional Development training for Nonpublic Schools in the

areas of Language Arts, Science, Math, Social Studies, Quality Assessment, and Curriculum Development. BJE's Project SIR (see below) is also a prominent area in this initiative. Title IIA is part of the broad federal legislation entitled, No Child Left Behind.

**Yeshivot and Day School Needs and Efficacy Survey** (Coordinated by Dr. Joel Dickstein, Dr. Jed Luchow and Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd)

UJA/Federation of Greater New York and the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York have joined forces and collaborated on ascertaining what is working and what continues to be needed to effectively educate children with special needs in Yeshivot and day schools. The project predicated on the early work of Independent School Management (ISM) includes surveys and interviews with persons involved with Jewish day school education. The informants include administrators/principals, teachers, parents, students, and other key members of the Jewish community. The project will result in the production of a report that will serve as an ingredient for Jewish Communal planning and investment in the area of special education in Jewish day schools. To help guide the project, an advisory committee was created whose members represent Jewish education, general education, special education, day school administration, and university teacher preparation.

**BJE Resource Room Council** (Coordinated by Dr. Jed Luchow & Phyllis Miller)

The BJE Resource Room Council represents an initiative to enhance the efficacy of resource room programs in Yeshivot and Jewish day schools. The Council members share best practices, conduct special educational seminars and workshops, and collaboratively address educational issues of common concern. In the past, the Council met with New York State and City Government officials to better understand new legislative developments and their implications for resource programming in Jewish day schools as well as met with university professors to learn about the latest research and directions in resource room instruction.

**Project SIR: Success in Reading** (Directed by Dr. Jed Luchow)

Based on twenty years of special education research, BJE's Special Education Department in conjunction with BJE's

Early Childhood Center and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFC) initiated a reading disability prevention project aimed at kindergarten and pre-1A youngsters in Jewish day schools. The project, a five-year longitudinal assessment and enrichment program, replicates the federally funded research of Drs. Frank Vellutino and Donna Scanlon. Vellutino and Scanlon developed an assessment tool and intervention program designed to detect and correct potential pre-reading problems in youngsters. In a journal article reviewing their research, Vellutino and Scanlon demonstrated that as many as 50 percent of students classified in fourth grade as having learning disabilities in the area of reading actually had no real disabilities other than, perhaps, poor instruction. Currently, Vellutino and Scanlon along with Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd and Dr. Abraham Tannenbaum, both formally of Columbia University, serve as the project consultants. The project is directed by Dr. Jed Luchow, BJE's recently appointed Director of Special Education and former Assistant Professor at the College of Staten Island/CUNY.

To promote the state of the art reading instruction, Project SIR also sponsors Reading Summits, incorporating the latest research in the field of reading instruction and special education. On November 20<sup>th</sup> of 2003, Project SIR presented its Project's first *Summit on Reading*. The presenters were Drs. Sally and Bennet Shaywitz of Yale University's Center for the Study of Learning and Attention. The husband and wife team presented their latest research on reading which validated and supported the activities of Project SIR. Drs. Margaret Jo Shepherd of Columbia University and Joanna Uhry of Fordham University served as presentation respondents as well as the coordinators of the question and answer period. Signed copies of Dr. Sally Shaywitz's new book on reading, *Overcoming Dyslexia*, were made available to the more than 250 participants of the event.

On November 17<sup>th</sup> of 2004, the second Summit featured Dr. Joseph K. Torgesen of Florida State University who is one of the world's leading researchers in Reading and special education. Dr. Torgesen reviewed his latest data and that of the field of reading as well. The panel of respondents included Dr. Joanna Uhry, Dr.

Jed Luchow and Dr. Eileen Marzola of the New York City Department of Education.

On January 11, 2006, Dr. Joanna Williams of Teacher's College, Columbia University, began the next chapter in the Project SIR programming by going beyond decoding to the beginnings of reading comprehension.

On January 17, 2006, BJE premiered its Project SIR film, *The Case for Early Literacy Intervention*. The film is an outgrowth of Project SIR's achievements (see Ongoing Programs), supported by the Butler Family Foundation and the Ariel Educational Fund of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. The video demonstrates the importance of quality preschool education in the area of phonemic awareness and language development as well as understanding the importance of evaluating student development in light of NY State Benchmarks. The unique element of this effort is the focus on Jewish schools. It is expected that by using educational scenarios under Jewish auspice coupled with administrators, teachers, and students visibly Jewish, identification with the film's message will be enhanced. With this goal in mind, the Department was fortunate to procure Dr. Menachem Daum to produce the film. Among Dr. Daum's credits are numerous films including *Stranger Among Us* and *Hiding and Seeking* which have been nominated for screen awards.

On November 13, 2006, Project SIR's "Reading at the Summit" annual conference featured Dr. Margaret G. McKeown, Research Scientist from the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Along with Dr. Isabel Beck, Dr. McKeown has co-authored, *Building Vocabulary: Developing robust vocabulary instruction*, the leading text in the field for classroom teachers.

The goal of Project SIR is to maximize the ability to read for our Yeshivot and Day school students for greater opportunities in the educational experience and successful life occupation choices. Noteworthy is the fact that Project SIR is currently under contract with the New York City Department of Education to provide its three-day Project SIR training program for teachers of kindergartens, grade one, and resource room support personnel for all

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non-public school teachers.

#### **The Sulam Project** (Rabbi Arnold Samlan, Contact)

The Sulam Project is a Congregational education initiative that addresses special education services in Congregational settings in Long Island. Based on a community coalition, a number of Congregations collaborated with BJE, the Federation Employment and Guidance Service (FEGS), and the National Council of Jewish Women on a joint regional program. The project began by receiving a planning grant from the Long Island regional offices of New York's UJA/Federation. This provided ample time to hire a special educator, who, together with an advisory committee, assessed the needs of the community and created a consortia-based program. The program focuses on serving a population of children who have various forms of autism and related conditions. The project is currently being monitored and evaluated for replication in other communities.

#### **Child Abuse Prevention Program [Be'ad Haya'eled]** (coordinated by Janette Sasson)

The BJE Special Education Department and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCS) are now in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of their joint Child Abuse Prevention Program, *Be'ad Haya'eled* for the Jewish community. The ongoing program provides educators and administrators with critical information regarding child abuse and reporting procedures and protocols. To accomplish this goal, the program presents conferences, seminars, and workshops on topics including indicators of abuse, legal mandates, Jewish and general community resources, and Halachic considerations. To date, the program has reached thousands of educators in over 170 settings spanning the Jewish ideological continuum. In addition, the program provides in-service and pre-service courses in child abuse prevention, which meet New York State certificate requirements for all human service providers. The program also seeks to prevent child abuse through the development of healthy family living. Towards this end, the program sponsors community seminars dealing with communication skills, conflict resolution, and danger signs within the family. These seminars have now been expanded to include students in college and Jewish teacher's seminars. Another aspect of the pro-

gram is the creation of an educational curriculum and resource center to assist teachers in helping their students recognize and respond to inappropriate relationships.

#### **The Substance Abuse Prevention Program** (coordinated by Dr. Paul Levitz)

Fifteen years ago, through a grant from UJA/Federation, BJE created a substance abuse prevention program for Jewish educational settings. The program included workshops, on-site staff development, and publications. The publications included curriculum guidelines for early childhood, middle school, and high school aged children. The curriculum guidelines contained the New York State education syllabi for substance abuse prevention as well as Judaic resources and programmatic recommendations for religious education teachers. Presently, BJE is seeking to update and upgrade the current curriculum guidelines. Copies of the original curriculum guidelines are still available through the Department of Student Health Services.

#### **Child and Family Advocacy Program** (Coordinated by Phyllis Miller)

Through a grant of the Butler Family Foundation, BJE's Special Education Department in conjunction with the New York UJA/Federation Task Force on Disabilities runs an advocacy program serving persons with special needs and their families. The program provides a comprehensive communal network of information and resources for persons with disabilities. The goal of the program is to provide up to date quality information regarding services and resources for persons with special needs. In addition, the family advocate is positioned to provide critical information for communal planning agencies regarding existing gaps in service for the purpose of identifying future initiatives. BJE joins the Westchester Jewish Community Services and the Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) in serving as lead agencies for this project.

The Advocacy program utilizes the latest technology to enhance timely responses for those in need. Valuable information is available on the BJE website ([www.bjeny.org](http://www.bjeny.org)) which provides a 24-hour information service. To date, the program has responded to over 4,000 requests for assistance.

#### **Association of Jewish Special Educators** (Coordinated by Dr. Jed Luchow and Phyllis Miller)

The Association of Jewish Special Educators (AJSE) is beginning its 27th year. The AJSE brings together persons with disabilities, parents, teachers, human service providers, and other interested parties for the purpose of sharing valuable information regarding special education. During the past 26 years, the AJSE has sponsored numerous conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposia for over 16,000 participants. It published a newsletter entitled *Special Edition* and a professional journal entitled *The Jewish Special Educator*. AJSE maintains a distribution list for dissemination of valuable information to its membership and is currently working on an online newsletter. Five conferences are planned each year by the AJSE Advisory Committee. Topics for these conferences have included: Autism Spectrum Disorders; classroom management; more effective strategies for general education and Judaic studies classrooms.

#### **Guidance and Consultation** (Special Education Center Staff)

The Special Education Department provides ongoing help to organizations, schools, administrators, teachers, parents, and persons with special needs. The Department provides assistance to day and supplementary schools in starting various special education programs, to parents seeking appropriate schooling for their children with special needs, to educators looking for positions, and to government agencies and organizations in their special education initiatives. The Department regularly assists graduate school students in their quest for a doctorate or master's degree in special education. It has also assisted in the creation of a private college's department of special education.

#### **Volunteers in Special Education** (Coordinated by Dr. Jed P. Luchow)

Volunteers in Special Education (VSE) is funded through a grant by the Butler Family Foundation. High school VSE volunteers have selected special education as their future career. Some have pursued graduate studies and become special education teachers. VSE is planning the development of a manual of its volunteer program so that other communities can replicate VSE's success.

### **The Parent Education Program** (Coordinated by Phyllis Miller)

The Parent Education Program (PEP), funded through a grant from the Butler Family Foundation, is beginning its 14<sup>th</sup> year. PEP is designed to heighten parent knowledge, understanding and involvement in special education. PEP continues to sponsor and co-sponsor ongoing parent workshops, seminars, and conferences. PEP, in conjunction with the Jewish Parent Advocate Coalition, sponsors an annual Parent Empowerment Conference and Resource Fair to help parents access important and necessary services for their children. Presentations focused on a variety of behavior management programs in home and school, guardianships and trusts, and advocacy skills for parents. Last year's PEC featured Dr. Celine Saulnier from the Child Study Center at Yale University who presented current research findings on autism.

### **The Vocational Preparation Program** (Coordinated by Dr. Paul Levitz)

The Vocational Preparation Program (VPP), now in its 22<sup>nd</sup> year, continues to assist disabled and non-disabled individuals in planning viable and meaningful occupational careers. Although the program has a particular focus of providing a smooth transition from high school to the world of work, VPP is open to people of all ages. VPP networks with government, federation, and private agencies to provide a most comprehensive array of potential vocational opportunities. To date, VPP has served over 2,400 individuals.

Additionally, VPP offers periodic career aptitude tests with follow-up consultation throughout the school year. The aptitude tests seek to provide individuals with important information regarding their skills and abilities for realistic and successful employment.

### **BJE/Chai Lifeline Telecommunications Network** (Coordinated by Sara Seligson)

BJE and the Chai Lifeline organization administrate a technology-based communications program linking hospitalized and homebound children with their schools, tutors, families, and/or friends. The program uses video telephones, the Internet, and other technology to provide children with cancer and/or other critical illness the opportunity to maintain ongoing education, remedial, and social activities. The technology prevents the loss of

an academic school year while the child is recuperating from a bone marrow transplant or other forms of treatment. From the hospital room or bed at home, the child is in sight and sound of the classroom where he/she can fully participate in school activities. The program also maximizes the use of tutors for homebound children. Instead of working with three to four students a day and having to spend substantial time in traveling, the homebound teachers can double his/her tutoring load without moving from his chair. The motto of the program is, "Your classroom is only as far away as your telephone". The videophones can be attached to large TV monitors as well as camcorders for varied educational use. To date, close to 60 youngsters have benefited from the program. The program was the subject of a Ch. 12 Long Island Cable News report.

### **The Jewish Heritage Program** (BJE Program Spin-off)

The Jewish Heritage Program (JHP) is beginning its 26<sup>th</sup> year. Originally created by BJE, the JHP is currently independently administrated in Jewish community centers throughout the greater New York area, serving approximately 100 developmentally disabled individuals. In addition to the ongoing Sunday school program, JHP has conducted annual Pesach Model Sedorim and other special events. JHP has published special materials including a Siddur and Haggadah for its students so they will be successful in joining in Jewish communal ceremonies and celebrations. JHP is currently developing a Jewish Holiday Cycle Curriculum Guide for use in Congregational schools and informal special education programs for individuals with developmental disabilities.

### **Government Relation** (Coordinated by Marty Schloss, Sara Seligson & Judy Oppenheim)

BJE staff serves on federal, state, and city government councils and task forces representing Jewish education programs, issues, and concerns. BJE advocates for Jewish education interests on the federal level in the US Department of Education's Office on Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and National Leadership in Private Education. The Department contributed to the development of the regulations associated with Public Law 105-17 (IDEA). On the New York State level, BJE serves as a member

of the NY State Education Department's Advisory Panel on Special Education Services and as chairperson for the NY State Education Department's Commissioners Advisory Council on Non-public Education, the NY State Taskforce on Educational Technology as well as on the NY State Board of Practitioners which reviews all innovative programming to meet the new regulations of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. These roles allow BJE to play a significant role in advocating for the needs of the Jewish day schools. This past year, BJE joined Agudath Israel and the Catholic Conference in rewriting NY State legislation as it related to special education services for children with special needs enrolled in private schools at parent choice.

BJE staff also serves on the NY City Committee of Non-Public School Officials. The Government Relations Team participates in developing regulations, distributing government funds and services and advocating on behalf of schools, teachers, students, and families. For this past school year, BJE's government relations' team was able leverage five and a half million dollars of services for the Yeshivot and day schools in New York City. This included allocations from Title IIA, IID, III and V among other federal and state entitlements. In addition to leveraging the entitlements, Ms. Oppenheim and Ms. Seligson procure state of the art services in staff development, programs, materials and technology. This includes working with Research for Better teaching (RBT), Aussie (a Language program) and Plato (an educational technology company).

### **Instructional Technology** (Coordinated by Sara Seligson)

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York is committed to enhancing learning through the use of technology. Research conducted by the New York City Department of Education indicates that the use of technology can improve learning for those children with learning and other disabilities. Included among the many activities that BJE runs are: pre-and in-service educational training programs (see Master's Program in Instructional Technology with NYIT); distance learning programs; guidance to Judaic and general studies educators in educational hardware and software; consultations with program developers and distributors of Judaic and general studies software; ad-

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vocating for government funds and services; assisting NYC Board of Education in selecting and distributing educational software; evaluating education technology grant proposals for the NY State Education Department; collaboration with organizations and companies in the development of educational software and programs.

Also, through the use of the internet and BJE's website, BJE has developed a robust communication system allowing schools to receive important information immediately. The BJE website also runs a job opportunities section which has been responsible for placing special education teachers in appropriate educational settings.

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**PHILADELPHIA, PA**
**Community School Classrooms**

This is the sixth year of the community special needs classrooms. It continues to be a wonderful program with children attending from Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform synagogues. It is a wonderful example of a community working together to meet the needs of children who would be excluded from a typical classroom. The Jewish Federation continues to be dedicated to funding this program. The students have made continual progress. Several are now beginning to prepare for a bar or bat mitzvah in their home synagogue. The parent's wishes for their children to become part of a community have actually happened.

**Speaker Program**

This year Robert Brooks, author of *Raising Resilient Children*, will be speaking on March 11th. He will speak on the "Power of Mindsets: Nurturing, Motivation, Self-Discipline, and Resilience in Children." He will teach how to help children and adolescents deal more effectively with the stress and pressure of life. He will also conduct a program for preschool, religious school, and day school directors to help them have resilient staffs.

Dr. Brooks has done a great deal of train-

ing with a variety of Jewish Education organization including the National NATE meeting.

**Teen Training Program**

Our teen assistant program, TAP, trained a third cohort of 15 teens to work with children who have special needs. We currently have about 65 teens working in our synagogue schools. The reputation of the TAP program is now out in the community. Parents and teens call to find out how to become a part of the program before the announcements for the program have been made. After the week of training, the TAP teens continue to learn about working with children who have special needs in the monthly seminars. The parents of the children who have special needs are delighted that their child has a child who has been trained so well.

**Special Needs Surveys**

In the spring of 2006, the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education sent a special needs survey to 59 synagogue school directors and one community school program in the Philadelphia five county area. Thirty-four schools responded to the survey. Of the approximately 11,000 students in the synagogue schools, 879 students have been identified as having special needs.

- 10 to 15 percent of the general population has some type of special needs.
- The synagogue religious schools of Philadelphia five county area have the same percentage of children with special needs in their schools.
- The 34 schools that replied to the survey serve 8,383 students.
- 879 special needs students represent 11 percent of their population.

In the spring of 2006, the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education sent a survey to 46 early childhood congregational programs of the Philadelphia five county area, including Federation Early Learning Services.

- Thirty two early childhood programs responded to the survey.
- This represents 64 percent of the schools in the five county area.
- There are approximately 3,775 students in early childhood programs.
- There are 2,303 students in the schools that returned the survey, repre-

senting 64 percent of the enrolled early childhood population.

- 195 students have been identified as having special needs, representing 8 percent of the early childhood school population.

As a result of the surveys, special needs education has surfaced in the Philadelphia community. Directors are more aware of the needs of their teachers and the requests for training and workshops have increased exponentially. The doors are finally opened and almost all children are welcome to attend the religious schools and preschool programs. Unfortunately the number of trained special needs teachers is quite small. We are working to develop more training for the schools. Because of the information garnered from the surveys additional funding is being given to the Philadelphia Metropolitan area for Jewish Special Education.

**Grants**

Federation continues to fund grants for special education. This year, six schools received grants. We were also able to use proceeds from our speaker programs to add additional funds to the grants. Our advisory committee is actively involved with reviewing the grants, making determination of the grant amounts and also of observing the programs that received grant money. Teams of two observe the programs. The teams then report back to the committee after the observation with an oral and written report.

**Advisory Committee**

The Special Needs Advisory Committee is very active and involved with all of the special needs program. In addition to the work on the grants as described in the previous paragraph, the advisory committee was instrumental in creating the surveys previously mentioned. They have helped analyze the data received from the surveys. They are an extremely dedicated and hard working group of individuals.

**OROT**

OROT, the special needs initiative in Philly's Jewish day schools, continues to grow and mold itself to the special needs of its five host schools. Many OROT classes remain self contained in the younger grades but as the child matures and strengths become evident, more mainstreaming occurs. This year, OROT joined the Diverse Learners Community of

Practice, sponsored by PEJE, where we participate in a monthly teleconference. In November 2006, OROT was one of four programs that was invited to present its model to that month's participants. In January 2007, OROT's Educational Director was invited to go to Israel to observe the programs sponsored by IsraelElwyn, an organization that services the needs of over 1700 developmentally disabled people throughout the country. This year's staff development program focused on social skills. OROT teachers attended after school workshops to learn various strategies that could be implemented in their classrooms. A recently obtained grant will allow OROT to add an OT and speech therapist to its staff. Finally, planning is underway for the gala event to be held May 9, 2007.

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## **PHOENIX, AZ**

THE COUNCIL FOR JEWS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS in Scottsdale, Arizona began in 1985. The agency provides resources and support to children and adults who have a variety of disabling conditions to enable their full participation in the activities of the Jewish community. With the Council's support, all local Jewish preschools, day schools, congregational schools, camps and recreation programs, and youth groups receive observation, consultation, and teacher training to facilitate meaningful and successful inclusion. In 2005-06, we conducted a pilot project to provide individualized training in individual preschools for a four-week period. The Council's Preschool Inclusion Consultant offered specialized training in the classroom to meet the unique needs that are identified and provide strategies to promote successful inclusion.

Adults and teens with special needs come together twice a month for social clubs and Jewish studies classes led by special education teachers. The Yad B'Yad Adult Studies class held a group b'nai mitzvah in 2003. The two groups, Yad B'Yad and Keshet, have become popular volunteer opportunities for typical teens and adults.

These groups have a large number of community volunteers (teens through adults who enjoy the friendships they develop in Yad B'Yad and Keshet activities.

Families receive assistance through support groups for grandparents, parents, and siblings. In 2005, we created a new group for adults who have a sibling with a disability. This group seeks to prepare those adult siblings for the responsibilities they will inherit when their parents can no longer oversee the needs of the adult son or daughter who has a disability. The group listens to presentations on topics such as guardianship, conservatorship, special needs trusts, residential options, government resources, grief counseling, and end-of-life decisions.

The Council also ran its first Social Skills Training program. In 2006, the first six-week training addressed the needs of high school students who have learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, and emotional disorders. The students' parents spent time with a counselor while the students engage in their training session. The Council's sibling support groups have led to a collaborative effort to develop more sibling groups in the community.

In 2005, the Council began offering an annual Jewish genetic diseases education and screening event for the first time in over 25 years. An aggressive fundraising campaign yielded sufficient funds to subsidize and make affordable the costly tests for Tay-Sachs, Canavan, Cystic Fibrosis, and Familial Dysautonomia diseases carrier status. The event drew over 200 participants; 134 people were screened for being carriers of the most prevalent Jewish genetic diseases; 16 percent of the individuals tested positive as carriers of Jewish genetic diseases; one person tested positive as a carrier of two Jewish genetic diseases. A similar event held in April 2006 tested 74 young adults; 19 percent of the individuals tested positive as carriers of Jewish genetic diseases. The next screening event is scheduled for March 11, 2007 and will offer affordable tests for nine diseases. The project has become an limited liability corporation and filed for non-profit status with the IRS. Efforts are underway to establish a large endowment fund to eventually support the cost of subsidizing affordable

testing in the future. This project received the 2006 Belle Latchman Community Service Award from the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix.

The Council maintains the only database of agencies and organizations that provide resources to Jewish individuals who have disabilities. The agency publishes the *North American Disability Resources Directory of Jewish Agencies, Schools, Camps, etc.* and was updated in January, 2006 to include over 200 entries from the US and Canada. Sign language and oral interpreters are available for Jewish programs and events. Disability awareness workshops and a speaker's bureau are provided upon request.

The Council's website continues to draw numerous e-mail inquiries from metropolitan Phoenix as well as outside of Arizona and the US. A newsletter is printed three times a year and distributed throughout the Jewish community.

In 2001, the Council opened its first supervised Jewish residence, Shalom House. It presently has three adult men who have autism or developmental disabilities living there. Shalom House is also the meeting place for the adult social club and adult Jewish studies class every month. It has become the adults' central gathering place for holidays and Shabbat events. Five other families are planning future residences based on the Shalom House model to open in 2007 and 2009.

The Council receives a small allocation from Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix but raises most of its operating budget through fundraisers, a membership drive and private donations. There are three full time staff members and a dozen part time employees.

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## **ROCHESTER, NY**

The Jewish Community Federation of Rochester, New York underwrites programming in the community for people with developmental disabilities. Among

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these opportunities is a "Jewish Living" class which is both educational and inclusionary in its programming services. Elliot Fix is the Federation's special needs consultant and the instructor/coordinator for the program. According to Judy Azoff, Assistant Executive Director for Planning and Administration, "Elliot provides socialization and Jewish cultural experiences. He arranges for the participants to join in community wide programs and synagogue events." The curriculum is both creative and interactive where adult learners develop practical skills to become more committed Jews. Guest presenters from the community such as a cantor, Israeli dance instructor, and craft specialist augment the resources available to the course. The class meets in its co-sponsor synagogue, Temple Brith Kodesh.

Now in its ninth year, the "Jewish Living" program has become a mainstay in the lives of adults with developmental disabilities living in group homes and independent living situations throughout the Rochester area. The connection to Jewish life and the Jewish community has become very important to the ever growing number of participants.

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#### **SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

The Special Education program at the Bureau of Jewish Education, now in its nineteenth year, continues to address the needs of children with disabilities, their teachers, principals, families, and other members of the community. It is funded primarily by a grant from the Jewish Community Federation Endowment Kohn Fund and receives additional grants for the weekend camp programs.

Special education has become an integral part of the congregational and day schools. Many sites have special education teachers on staff that teach a self-contained class, administer pull-out programs, or provide in-class support to students with mild disabilities. The special

education consultant spends a significant amount of time providing consultations to parents, teachers, and principals who are seeking out the best solutions for successful educational experiences for their children. The special education consultant also collaborates with individuals in other programs and agencies to provide referrals and other information.

As part of the BJE's professional development opportunities in the congregational schools, the special education consultant is offering a five-part series entitled "Meeting the Special Needs in Your Class". This course covers general techniques and also delves deeply into the specific topics of ADD/ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Learning Disabilities, and Teaching Hebrew. The teachers enrolled in this course will become resources at their schools, addressing the needs of their own students and assisting the other teachers. The special education consultant also goes to congregational schools and provides workshops tailored to the needs of the particular site.

The Bureau of Jewish Education's *Handbook for Special Education Programs in the Synagogue Schools* continues to be available at no charge. It contains policy statements, procedures for setting up or maintaining a special education program, and forms that can be copied and/or adapted for use by individual schools. To receive a copy, please contact Flora Kupferman or visit [www.bjesf.org](http://www.bjesf.org).

The most popular program we run is the Shabbat Weekend for Children with Disabilities and Their Families. For the first time, in 2007, we are very pleased to have the opportunity to offer two weekends, one in May and one in August. The weekends will be held at a local URJ camp and approximately 30 families will attend each one.

Structured like a typical Jewish family camp, the weekend features recreation, "no-shush" family Shabbat services, Havdallah, Israeli folk dancing, singing, arts and crafts, hiking, swimming, paddle boating, campfire, talent show, yoga, and more. Counselors and specialists come from many parts of the community and include special educators, people with disabilities, and interns from the psychology department of a nearby university. Many people feel so strongly about this

program that they volunteer their services. Our campers, who have Autism, Fragile X, Cerebral Palsy, Bipolar Disorder, Down Syndrome, and a variety of other developmental disabilities, flourish in the relaxed, accepting, and encouraging environment. Their siblings love not only the camp activities, but also the sibling groups we schedule. They are thrilled to spend time with others who share the unique experience of being Jewish and having a disabled sibling. Discussion and play groups have blossomed into lasting friendships. In the camp setting, the parents have found their peer group and they have so much to share. Structured discussion/support groups, led by therapists or other specialists, have become the highlight for many of the adults. Over the past five years, they have formed a large extended family who eagerly looks forward to seeing each other again and who warmly embrace newcomers. In 2006, one of our campers became Bar Mitzvah in a very moving ceremony. His example has encouraged another family to mark this life cycle event for their son in May. Every year we try something new and this year we are offering parent and parent/child trainings on personal safety and advocacy led by Kid Power.

The 2006-2007 year is turning out to be the busiest and most productive year we have had and we're very excited about all the opportunities to touch the lives of children and families who are often on the fringes of the Jewish community.

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#### **TORONTO, ON**

Through the UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education, Tikun Chaim, Special Educational Services is committed to strengthening the educational support services available to Jewish children living within the local boundaries of Greater Toronto, so that all children, regardless of exceptionality, can benefit and achieve their greatest potential.

Tikun Chaim, funded and functioning under the auspices of UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education Toronto, is an initiative designed to help develop and organize a centralized and comprehensive network of professional special educational services for the community. The mandate for Tikun Chaim was outlined in a UJA Federation BJE research report entitled, "Isn't Every Child Special?" (February 2001).

Now in its fifth year, Tikun Chaim has become a core unit within the Board of Jewish Education, embracing the notion that every child is special and that as educators, we are committed to providing a Jewish educational experience to all students in our community's schools/programs. We address multiple needs and learning styles (from individual teacher interventions at the classroom level to school level support initiatives and specialized educational programs) through a continuum of support services. The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the initiatives implemented and the outcomes achieved during the past year.

#### Programs

**Senior Special Needs Consultant** (full time position): The role of the Hebrew Special Education consultant quickly expanded to providing consultation and professional development to both general and Judaic studies teachers. In this way it has been possible to offer more holistic and integrated training opportunities for staff.

Four schools participated in workshops developed for teachers on:

- Developing individual education plans and holistic intervention
- Developing remedial Hebrew reading
- When and how to use differentiated instruction
- Incorporating learning about Israel into the programming for children with special needs

As well, the Consultant developed and facilitated a new BJE Midrasha Program in Special Education for Judaic studies teachers.

#### Outcomes:

- A greater demand for services due to success that has resulted in the difficulty to respond to all requests quickly

- A need to form a network for Judaic studies and Special Education teachers to address specific challenges in working with children with exceptionalities in a second language
- Expansion of the consultation model to include process and student-specific problem solving to compliment school team meetings
- Expansion of resources, information technology, and Hebrew services
- Extend teacher professional development to include educational leaders such as Mel Levine
- A need to initiate leadership programs
- A need to develop and facilitate special education training for administrators and department heads

**York University/ UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education, Tikun Chaim Certificate in Special Education:** The outstanding success of this Ontario Ministry of Education approved program is demonstrated through the professional impact the forty-seven graduates have on the daily life of their respective schools. They apply their knowledge above and beyond their own classrooms and contribute to pedagogical changes in their schools. This is part of an on-going process as all graduates continue to be coached and mentored by the Senior Special Education Consultant to maximize the effectiveness of their new skills and build the leadership capacity of Certificate graduates.

Graduates of Part One and Two have been promoted to:

- Jewish studies support in middle school
- Head of the Judaic studies
- Coordinator of Special Education
- Twenty graduates are continuing their studies in Part Three portion of the program
- Four graduates were accepted into York University's Graduate Studies Programs in Education

#### **UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education, Tikun Chaim Special Education Missions to Israel, July 2005 and July 2006:**

As a culmination of the issues studied and discussed during both cohorts of the York University Special Education Certificate program, Special Education Missions were initiated by Debbie Gladstone, Director of Tikun Chaim, and developed by Dafna Ross (UJA), Rabbi Natan Kandler

(Jewish Agency), and Jewish Agency staff in Israel. The sponsors were The Jewish Agency, Jewish National Fund, and Partnership 2000. A total of 45 teachers participated and were enlightened by these extremely successful Missions.

#### *The Goals of these Missions*

- To learn about and become inspired by demonstrated spiritual, theoretical, and practical innovations of the Israeli spirit in its response to special education
- To cultivate an educational and meaningful partnership that will yield a network of mutual opportunities and educational products
- To immerse Mission participants in an extraordinary professional development environment in order to inspire, equip, and broaden their ability to educate students successfully
- To strengthen ties with Israel, its people, and ways of education via a mutual "give and take" process and concrete connections
- To accomplish the above through:
  - Learning about and from various communities including UJA Toronto's twinned city of Eilat
  - Learning about ourselves and the Jewish community in Toronto
  - Reciprocity - giving back to the sources we learned from
  - Developing and cultivating engaging educational products

#### **Early Years Consultation** (full time position)

**Early Intervention Program:** Research has demonstrated that Kindergarten children who are screened early for learning problems and then receive appropriate interventions are more able to achieve their full academic potential due to enhanced self-esteem, better work habits, and less disaffection toward learning and school. Tikun Chaim's Early Intervention program began as a pilot project in 2003 with seventy-one students from three Senior Kindergarten (SK) classes in two schools. Each subsequent year, additional SK classes from affiliated schools were included.

During the 2006 - 2007 academic year, five schools are involved and 256 Senior Kindergarten students in thirteen classes were screened. Approximately 67 percent (172) of the students screened will re-

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ceive some intervention in at least one of the developmental skill areas of Pre-reading, Pre-writing and/or Numeration. The intervention groups are designed to be fluid, therefore some children will work in a group only once or twice until they acquire a specific skill, while others may continue with support throughout the year.

#### Outcomes:

- The Early Intervention Program has been positively received by teachers and administrators. They recognize the benefits of screening Kindergarten children in small groups at the beginning of the year, then providing regular intervention to identified students in skill areas that need developing, and in the spring re-screening students with whom teachers still have concerns
- Additional schools have expressed interest in participating in this program
- Program evaluations are very positive, in particular, regarding what teachers learn about their students and what they learn about how to appropriately support them
- It has been determined that less than a third of the children who received intervention during the year required re-screening in the spring. These students are scheduled for continued follow-up and support with the grade one teachers

**Early Years Consultation:** The Consultant facilitates on-going professional development and consultation for Early Years teachers in the community's affiliated day schools. The Consultant is available to school administrators and teachers regarding issues involving young students, their placements, and programming.

Consultation and professional development focused on the concept of learning centers and small group intervention in Grade One classrooms is being promoted. Professional development programs based on recent research are planned and programs that use community educational experts are being offered.

In response to the clear importance of parental involvement in a child's development early on in their schooling, the Consultant is designing parent-focused early intervention packages and parent workshops.

#### Outcomes:

- Early Intervention Coordinators from participating schools were brought together in November, 2006 to share ideas, materials, successes and concerns. They discussed ways to make the screening tool currently in use more succinct while at the same time being careful to maintain the integrity of the evaluations
- The School Coordinators will meet with the Consultant as a team again at the beginning of March, 2007 and then at the end of the academic year
- There will be Professional Development (PD) for SK and Grade One teachers and their teaching assistants on the importance of early intervention and how to keep track of children through Grade One will be on-going
- Teachers are increasingly interested in continued professional development addressing additional intervention strategies and assessments

#### Supplementary School Consultation:

(two staff collectively works 3 days/week) Upon request, two part-time Consultants work directly with teachers and administrators in affiliated supplementary schools. They respond to the different needs and approaches that are required in this setting. In the 2006-2007 period, thirteen school-based programs are being supported on a consultative basis and eighty-eight students have been observed and/or discussed. Support is provided on-site at programs, via e-mail, and by phone.

The most common presenting challenge in schools serviced by this Tikun Chaim team continues to be children with either the label or characteristics of ADD/ADHD, followed by behavioural problems often resulting from family issues and/or teacher or school limitations. There has been a rise in children on the Autism spectrum and related developmental disorders, particularly in the synagogue schools as more parents seek to have their children with developmental disabilities included in their communities.

Professional development was developed and facilitated by the two consultants in the following areas:

- Creating Community Inclusion in Supplementary Classrooms – 12 participants (teachers and principals), Num-

ber of schools/programs represented: 6

- Creating Community (2) – 40 participants (student teachers, teachers, principals, rabbi), Number of schools/programs represented: 8
- Professional Development Sessions for Specific Schools: Multi session workshops – Topics: Inclusion, accommodations and strategies, behaviour management, Participants: 10- 15, Number of schools represented: 2

**Inclusion Facilitators Program (Pilot):** This program was developed and initiated this academic year. The rationale for the program is to provide additional support for Supplementary Programs in Special Education and Consultation through providing individualized training and mentoring to potential Special Education staff. This is in response to the need within the Supplementary Schools/Programs to increase the capacity of well-honed Special Education facilitators who are able to provide consistency in delivering more timely support to students, teachers, and principals.

There are three Inclusion Facilitators in training. Each works up to eight hours per month on an as-needed basis. From the Consultants in Special Education, they receive individualized training and mentoring in special education pedagogy as well as instruction on how to provide professional consultation services to teachers and administrators. Their field work is closely monitored. The Facilitators are currently supporting three to four additional school-based programs and consulting with four to six teachers.

#### Outcomes:

- Teachers are asking for more professional development opportunities, not in content areas, but pedagogy
- Consultants recognize the need to launch a Tikun Chaim Teachers Network Dialogue. This would aid Supplementary teachers to make the philosophical shift and commitment to inclusion and differentiated instruction. This in turn would lead to more positive experiences in the classroom
- Increasingly teachers and administrators see the need for regularly scheduled Special Education consultation and hands-on support but time is limited for both the teachers and Consultants
- The development of positive ap-

proaches has lead to increased individual teaching and student learning strategies

- Teachers now more often share student concerns and their own observations with the Consultants in order to develop support to students
- There is a need to create material for resource kits and learning strategies for teachers to use
- There is a call for facilitating professional development sessions customized for individual schools
- With more students with exceptionalities in the Supplementary Programs there is a salient need to acquire funding for shadows and teaching assistants

**Gifted Education Consultation** (on call basis): Through targeted teacher training, workshops, and consultation in the area of gifted education, the consultant helps educators plan and implement programming adaptations for high-ability learners. The Consultant works to clarify the understanding of gifted-level development, and to ensure that suitable learning opportunities are put into place – educational experiences that are flexible, challenging, and designed to effectively meet individual students’ needs, learning profiles, interests, and strengths. The Consultant also works with administrators to facilitate resource access in schools. The Consultant acts as a liaison and is accessible as a community resource and professional contact, positioned to write about and offer expertise (on-site, on-line, or by phone) in the area of gifted education—for parents, school resource personnel, and administrators. In this way, the Consultant finds ways to heighten awareness about practical resources and support mechanisms available to the gifted student population, their parents, and teachers and to encourage their use so as to foster children’s high-level development.

#### **Programs Receiving Funding Through Tikun Chaim**

**Temple Sinai - Jewish Education for All Children:** (Dr. Ira Schweitzer, Director of Education): This supplementary school program, through its support program in Religious School and Hebrew Lab, provides Judaic and religious education for sixty children with a range of exceptionalities, excluding medical issues. The spec-

trum of support includes: a review of student profiles, developing Individual Education Plans, one-to-one assistants, observation, extra classroom teachers (training for teachers including special education professional support), on-site monitoring, parent support, and a self-contained classroom (7 children).

**Bnei Akiva Schools: English as a Second Language (Pilot) Program:** Tikun Chaim has granted funding to the Bnei Akiva Schools for ESL program that will operate from February to June 2007. This initiative is to provide instruction to six to eight students whose first language is not English. These students require a better understanding of Academic English in order to understand and be able to respond to curricular demands as well as increase their ability to integrate socially with their new found friends.

The ESL teacher will work directly with these students, liaise with all of the students’ teachers, integrate needs observed in the students’ classes along with teacher expectations, keep classroom teachers updated as to students’ progress, and maintain on-going, timely communication with the parents of these students and school support staff from JF&CS and JVS.

Based on ESL Ontario Ministry curriculum and assessment procedures, the teacher will provide regular formal written reports to students, parents, the school principal, and Tikun Chaim.

#### **Support to Teachers, Parents, and Community Agencies**

**Tikun Chaim Specialists’ Forum:** This is a venue for administrators and senior Special Education staff who represent the full religious and cultural spectrum of day schools in our community to meet on an on-going basis for professional development and networking. Attendance has been growing so that there are approximately 25 participants at any given session. The Tikun Chaim consultants who work in the day school system coordinate this initiative.

The representatives discuss pertinent special education issues, exchange relevant information, plan and deliver professional development and invite special education facilitators from the greater educational community to speak.

This forum has helped to create a positive

shift in attitude within schools that has resulted in enhanced opportunities for children with special needs. There is now a greater awareness and understanding of children with exceptionalities and an acceptance of the need to train teachers to work with the diversity of children in the classroom.

**Parent - to - Parent Group:** Tikun Chaim’s Director, Debbie Gladstone, along with community agency representatives, initiated this program as a result of an identified gap in support services to parents of children with exceptionalities. Professional staff members from Jewish Family and Child Services, Reena, Zareinu Education Centre, The Bathurst Jewish Community Centre, The Family Resource Centre, and The Friendship Circle explore various types of support for Jewish parents. Professional facilitators are invited to lead programs that provide an arena for the exchange of vital information and opportunities for social interaction and networking with other parents who have similar needs. Another outcome of these sessions is the lessening of isolation that may be experienced by children with special needs, their siblings, and parents.

**Parent Forum:** Tikun Chaim, with Dr. Joanne Foster as the facilitator, hosts a number of support group meetings for parents of gifted/high-ability learners. This program offers an opportunity for parents to meet, to hear about and discuss matters that relate to giftedness and subject-specific mastery, and to ask questions and learn how to support high-level development. Topics have included emotional and social issues, motivation, resource access, and strategies for handling day-to-day realities at home and school.

**JVS Toronto: Psycho-educational Support Services to Day Schools:** JVS provides psycho-educational support to a number of affiliated day schools. This program is funded through UJA Federation and participating schools and is administered by Tikun Chaim. The services provided by the psycho-educational consultants include direct consultation to teachers, participation in multi-disciplinary school team meetings, and the provision of formal assessments as requested by the school administration.

## CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

### CONSORTIUM NEWS

**Jewish Family and Child Service School Social Work Program:** JF&CS provides regularly scheduled school-based social work support to a number of affiliated schools. This program is funded through UJA Federation and the participating schools and is administered through Tikun Chaim. JF&CS also provides emergency social work services as requested by schools. Day schools may also request additional support for their students through the Family Life Education initiative which has a wide range of programs available for all age groups and needs.

**Tikun Chaim Advisory Committee** (Rhona Shulman: Chair): The members of this committee include individuals with personal and professional interests related to students with special needs. The committee represents a wide range of the religious spectrum, as well as individuals with links to various community agencies and schools that provide support and services to day and supplementary school students. The mandate of this committee, which meets regularly throughout the year, is to help set policies, monitor and evaluate initiatives, and ensure fiscal responsibility.

**Community Inclusion for Jewish People with Special Needs:** Tikun Chaim, through its Director Debbie Gladstone, is represented on the UJA Federation's Inclusion Task Force. The agenda of this committee is to identify the community resources, as well as the support gaps, so that all people with special needs, across the life span, and their families, have access to and benefit from greater Toronto's Jewish community's religious, social, recreational, and spiritual programs. UJA Federation has recently supported the hiring of a Director of Community Inclusion.

#### Future Needs

**Foundation Program:** Tikun Chaim is exploring the concept of partnering with community day schools to create Special Education classes for children with learning exceptionalities. This is in keeping with the philosophy of supporting children in day schools with special needs who wish to remain in a school setting of their educational, cultural, and religious choice.

**Alternative/Vocational Jewish Community High School:** A committee has met to explore the possibility of developing an alternative/vocational/co-op program within the Community Hebrew Academy of

Toronto's (Toronto's community Jewish high school) school environment. An alternative high school program would provide a broader range of opportunities to meet the needs of students who do not qualify for the high academic programs currently standard at CHAT, thus allowing them the option to remain in a Jewish day school environment. Vocational training programs would try to match skills to needs in the community.

**Developing More Effective Models of Communication:** Tikun Chaim is in the early stages of developing more effective means to inform schools of, and assist schools in acquiring, effective and current resources, learning materials, and program ideas, including electronic formats. This would be accomplished through the use of a "bank" of effective practices, housed within a Resources/Information Centre, as well as via an expanded Website. The services would be made available to a variety of stakeholders including school administrators, professional staff, students, and parents.

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### WASHINGTON D.C.

The Special Needs and Disabilities Services Department of the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning works to help increase the level of services and opportunities in our Jewish community for individuals with special needs. Our goal is to help ensure that every member of the Jewish community, children and adults alike, have access to the range of social, educational, and religious opportunities that the Washington area has to offer.

#### **Opening the Gates of Torah: Including People with Disabilities in the Jewish Community**

On December 3, 2006, 250 people attended our 4<sup>th</sup> annual conference, focused on raising the level of awareness in our synagogues, Jewish communal institutions, schools, and youth groups about inclusion. Rabbi Bradley Artson, Dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies and Vice President of the University of

Judaism, delivered the keynote address and led two sessions at the conference. Synagogue professional staff and lay leaders as well as community professionals, people with disabilities, and parents of individuals with disabilities attended the conference. This conference continues to be a focal point of various initiatives that our agency is involved in related to synagogue inclusion.

#### **Jewish Disability Awareness Month**

For the fifth year, synagogues in our community participated in Jewish Disability Awareness Month by having speakers at Shabbat services on related topics and/or planning programming for adult study or students in the religious school. The *Jewish Disability Awareness Month Resource Packet* was revised and is available for purchase to other communities for \$25.

#### **Synagogue Inclusion Committees**

Close to a dozen congregations have started inclusion committees dedicated to meeting the needs of people with disabilities within their own congregation. A network of chair people of these committees get together 4 times a year to network, share ideas, and problem solve together. This year, the network put together a Synagogue Inclusion Questionnaire that was sent to area congregations. Our agency will compile the results and use the information to direct people in the community to congregations that have accommodations in place that meet their special needs.

#### **S.N.A.P.**

The Special Needs Assistance Program was started this past year, modeled after similar programs in Boston and Philadelphia. A group of typical teens spent four days during the end of the summer learning about Jewish special education and disability awareness. The 17 teens are working this year as assistants to students with special needs in congregational school classrooms and as buddies to kids with disabilities in youth groups. The group of teens continues to meet with our staff on a regular basis throughout the year to continue their learning. There has been a good deal of interest in this program and we are in the process of planning to train a 2<sup>nd</sup> group of teens this coming summer.

#### **Chaverim Connection**

Our agency started the Chaverim Connec-

tion program this year which is modeled on the Friendship Circle program. Typical teens and college students are recruited and matched 1 – 1 or 2 – 1 with kids and young adults with disabilities in the community. The “matches” meet twice a month in the home of the individual with the disability.

#### **Youth Director Training**

Several trainings were held during this year with a group of youth directors in the community to talk about inclusion and disability awareness. At this point in time, very few children and teens with disabilities participate in area youth groups. The purpose behind this training is to begin to change this and to enable youth directors to be motivated and educated to reach out to individuals with disabilities.

#### **Differentiated Training Initiative**

A group of day school teachers met 6 times this year with Dr. Scott Goldberg, a professor from the Azrieli Graduate School of Education at Yeshiva University. The year long training initiative was composed of seminar training, classroom observations, individual feedback sessions, meetings with day school administrators, and action research projects that each teacher worked on to help them differentiate the instruction in their classroom.

#### **Day School Learning Specialist Network**

Learning specialists from area day schools meet together on a regular basis to share ideas, network, and plan professional development initiatives together.

#### **Special Needs and Disability Services Lay Committee**

A council of parents, professionals, and individuals with disabilities meet on a regular basis to share ideas, help shape the direction of the special needs and disability services department, and advocate for the needs of individuals with disabilities in the Jewish community.

#### **Sh'lom Kitah Program**

Learning specialists, who are hired and paid by our agency, work with congregational schools throughout the school year, providing on-site observations, teacher training, and guidance in accommodations, modifications, and behavior management in 10 congregational schools in the area.

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## JESNA

### Organizational Background

JESNA was created in 1981 by the Jewish Federation system to provide advocacy, guidance, and support for the Jewish community in its efforts to strengthen and improve Jewish education. In the twenty five years since, JESNA has become a leading force promoting consistent excellence in Jewish education through a combination of high-quality community services and innovative initiatives that address Jewish education's foremost challenges. As our community has evolved, so has JESNA's strategic focus of Learnings, Dissemination, and Application of the right programs at the right time for communities across North America. JESNA is now comprised of three key centers of excellence: The Berman Center for Research and Evaluation in Jewish Education, The Learnings & Consultation Center, and the Lippman Kanfer Institute.

### Partner Organizations

Virtually all of JESNA's projects are carried out in partnership with other organizations to create synergies that move Jewish education forward most powerfully. JESNA identifies allies who complement our strengths, allowing us to use our assets to maximum effect and to strengthen our partners as well. JESNA collaborates with a wide-range of local and national organizations including federations, central agencies for Jewish education, schools, youth programs, religious movements, Hillels, Foundations and individual funders.

While partnering is an important strategy in our work, JESNA is unique in the field of Jewish education. JESNA works to raise the standards of Jewish education across the board, as a system-builder on a national level, as a convener, bringing together the people, ideas, organizations and resources needed to create excellent Jewish education, and as a developer of solutions, generating practical steps toward that will make an impact on every community across North America.

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## CALL FOR ACTION

In recognition of the obligation to provide a religious education for all Jewish persons with special needs, the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education, in conjunction with JESNA, the Jewish Education Service of North America urges all Jewish communities throughout North America to develop and support systems to:

- Identify Jewish persons with special needs including individuals with developmental, learning, behavioral, neurological, physical, medical, and sensory disabilities;
- Deliver Jewish educational services to special persons that will enrich their Jewish lives and those of their families. Such services include special educational programming in early childhood; day and supplementary schools; continuing adult education programs; and programs in residential, social/recreational and camp settings;
- Explore various funding sources for the provision of the aforementioned services through federal, state and local government entitlements and foundations as well as local community and private sources.

The Consortium, in conjunction with JESNA, endorses this proactive approach to provide services to Jewish individuals with special needs.

*Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for*

## **Jewish Education**

Dr. Shana Erenberg – Co-Chairperson, Consortium

Becca Hornstein – Co-Chairperson, Consortium

Rachel Brumberg – Co-editor, Newsletter

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