

TASK FORCE ON JEWISH DAY SCHOOL VIABILITY AND VITALITY

United Jewish Communities & JESNA

111 Eighth Avenue, Suite 11E
New York, NY 10011-5201

Bennett Yanowitz, Chair
June, 1999

Charles R. Bronfman, Chairman
Board of Trustees
United Jewish Communities

Joel Tauber, Chairman
Executive Committee
United Jewish Communities

Mark Lainer, President
Board of Directors
JESNA

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JEWISH DAY SCHOOL TASK FORCE

Bennett Yanowitz, Chair, Cleveland

Herbert S. Abrams, Los Angeles
Rabbi Robert Abramson, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Gerhard Bachrach, Bergen County
Michael J. Bohnen, Boston
Rabbi Joshua Elkin, Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education
Wayne Feinstein, San Francisco
Rabbi Joshua Fishman, Observer
Peter Friedman, Chicago
Billie Gold, New York
Harley Gross, Cleveland
George Hanus, Chicago
Rabbi Robert Hirt, Yeshiva University
Alan S. Jaffe, New York
Carol Koransky, Los Angeles
Dr. Alisa Rubin Kurshan, New York
Dr. Laurence Kutler, Jewish Community Day School Network
Eileen Lane, Pittsburgh
Murray Laulicht, MetroWest
Al Maimon, Seattle
Stuart Mellan, Tucson
Lauren Merkin, AVI CHAI Foundation
Karen Morris, Wilmington
Dr. Bernard Novick, Innovative Education Systems
Judy Stern Peck, New York
Jaynie Schultz Romaner, Dallas
Joel Roseman, Rhode Island
Michael Rosenzweig, Atlanta
Dr. Alvin Schiff, Association of Institutions of Higher Learning for Jewish Education
Paul Schlesinger, Portland
Elaine Schreiber, Phoenix
Donald Sher, Jewish Community Centers Association
Robert M. Shroyer, Chicago
Elliot Spack, CAJE
Richard Spiegel, Minneapolis
Barbara Steinberg, Association of Directors of Central Agencies
Joey Steiner, Toronto
Howard Wilchins, Washington, D.C.
Bruce Yudewitz, Miami
Dr. Michael Zeldin, PARDES

STAFF

Lorraine Blass, United Jewish Communities
Norbert Fruehauf, United Jewish Communities
Dr. David Shluker, JESNA
Dr. Jonathan Woocher, JESNA

May 23, 2001

Charles R. Bronfman
Chairman of the Board
United Jewish Communities
111 Eighth Avenue, Suite 11E
New York, NY 10011

Joel Tauber
Chairman, Executive Committee
United Jewish Communities
111 Eighth Avenue, Suite 11E
New York, NY 10011

Dear Charles and Joel,

It has been my pleasure to chair the United Jewish Communities-JESNA Task Force on Jewish Day Schools since its inception one and a half years ago. The Task Force process benefitted from the active participation of a broad spectrum of lay and professional communal leaders drawn from federations, Jewish education agencies locally and nationally, foundations, schools, and the ideological movements. I am especially gratified by the collaborative nature of the project, which included the religious streams along with communal and private philanthropy.

At our last meeting of the Task Force there was a strong feeling on the part of all present that this report was of singular importance and should be widely disseminated, discussed and acted upon. All expressed their desire for continued participation in monitoring the impact of the report in fostering the growth and enhancement of day schools.

The Task Force's report was unanimously approved by the Planning and Research Division Steering Committee at the Founders' Forum in Washington on Sunday, April 11 in Washington. Since the new governance body of United Jewish Communities has not yet met, the Report has not been formally adopted by our new continental entity. The Task Force has asked that the Report be presented to the appropriate governance bodies of United Jewish Communities at the earliest opportunity.

The Report represents a powerful statement on the importance of the day school enterprise in assuring our Jewish future. Ensuring viability and vitality, however, will require an enormous infusion of human and financial resources, locally and continentally, and from diverse sources. The Task Force emphasized that federations alone cannot be expected to provide the lion's share of needed funding, and that the role of private philanthropy will increase in importance. A major finding of our process was that while tuition can be a factor in whether families choose day school, the image and quality of the school play a significant role in parent decision making. It is clear that quality and funding are linked.

Thanks are due to Conrad Giles, who, as then President of the Council of Jewish Federations, assigned to me this complex but rewarding responsibility. I am indebted to the Chicago leadership, especially George Hanus and Peter Friedman for their initiative and encouragement. In addition to those on the Task Force we received the advice of educators, directors of central agencies for Jewish education, federation executives and planners, and the benefit of our consultants Rabbi Joshua Elkin, Dr. Naava Frank, Dr. Alice Goldstein, and Dr. David Shluker who prepared valuable briefing papers. The Task Force could not have succeeded without the professional work of Lorraine Blass and Norbert Fruehauf of United Jewish Communities: Dr. Jonathan Woocher and Dr. David Shluker of JESNA and administrative assistant Dorja Smith.

In addition to CJF's funding, support for the study was generously provided by JESNA and by the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education.

We submit this Report believing it to contain an important blueprint and action plan for strengthening our day schools and our communities. I urge you to give this issue high priority on the Jewish Renaissance and Renewal agenda as well as the Financial Resource Development agenda, as United Jewish Communities moves forward in implementing its mission. The Task Force deemed it essential to remain in business for the immediate future to follow up on its recommendations. We are available to assist you.

B'Shalom,

Bennett Yanowitz, Chairman
Task Force on Jewish Day Schools

cc: Stephen D. Solender

May 23, 2001

Mark Lainer, President
JESNA
111 Eighth Avenue, Suite 11E
New York, NY 10011

Dear Mark,

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B'Shalom,

Bennett Yanowitz, Chairman
Task Force on Jewish Day Schools

cc: Dr. Jonathan Woocher

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Day school education is increasingly viewed as the backbone of the formal component for Jewish identity-building. This perception is reinforced by the 1995 *Report of the North American Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity* which characterizes day schools as “arguably the most impactful single weapon in our arsenal for educating Jewish children and youth.”

Providing adequate financial resources to sustain existing day schools in North America (approximately 810 schools and their estimated 212,000 students) places a tremendous burden on the schools, the parents and the local federations — which, in most communities allocate substantial funds and serve as a critical revenue resource for the schools. Providing for expansion of the system, across all religious streams, enhancing the quality of schools, and enabling those who wish to attend to do so strains the infrastructure almost to its limits.

In light of these realities and in response to an initiative presented by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee to the 1997 General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, the CJF Executive Committee created the Task Force. It was charged with “examining and making recommendations concerning the funding, affordability and long-term viability of day school education in the context of federation’s longstanding commitment to quality Jewish education in all of its forms and settings.” The body, organized as a partnership of the CJF (now the United Jewish Communities) and JESNA, was constituted to represent key constituencies: federated communities of diverse size and geographic locations, national organizations involved with Jewish education, private foundations, and religious streams.

The Task Force met three times, commissioned and reviewed briefing papers by day school experts and held consultations with day school principals, directors of central agencies for Jewish education, federation planners, executive directors and presidents.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

The following *findings, conclusions, and principles* inform the *recommendations*.

- 1) **Day school education has a strong positive impact on Jewish identity development with high school education achieving the most positive impact.**
- 2) **Quality is a key factor in promoting the growth of day schools.**
- 3) **It is in the interest of the Jewish community to ensure that, regardless of financial ability, all those who wish to enroll in day schools have the opportunity to do so.**
- 4) **It is incumbent upon every Jewish community to provide appropriate educational programming for those with special needs in a manner which is both educationally appropriate and financially feasible.**
- 5) **Day school education is costly, and significantly greater funding is needed to attract and retain personnel, improve educational quality, provide leadership development and enhance facilities.**
- 6) **Massive resources are needed for student scholarship assistance from federations, as well as from other sources. Strategies for easing the burden on parents need to be explored. Customary methods, as well as new creative approaches are needed such as special incentives for critical entry grades, or across-the-board subsidies funded by foundations.**
- 7) **Day school education needs to be broadly advocated for and promoted at all levels. Both local communities and continental bodies need to be involved in ways that capitalize on their respective capabilities. Besides providing funding, the federation system has the capacity to help schools in a wide range of areas that affect quality and finances.**
- 8) **All forms of Jewish education are important in their own right. Consequently, additional financial support for all types of Jewish education is needed and merited. Increased funding**

for Jewish education in general, and for day schools in particular, cannot come at the expense of other vital communal needs and responsibilities.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above findings, conclusions and principles, the Task Force calls on federations to:

- 1) **unequivocally express their support for Jewish education in general, and day school education in particular, by providing increased financial resources and other forms of assistance for all types of Jewish education, with special emphasis on support that helps to ensure day school viability and vitality;**
- 2) **adopt and promote the principle that while the primary responsibility for a Jewish education is that of the parent, no Jewish family that desires to send its child(ren) to a Jewish day school should be prevented from doing so due to financial reasons;**
- 3) **adopt and promote the principle that excellence in Jewish day schools is the best guarantee over the long term for school growth and financial resource development;**
- 4) **adopt and promote the principle that excellence is linked to the quality of human resources, both lay and professional, and work to attract, train and retain top quality Jewish educators, administrators, and lay leaders.**

In order to implement these broad recommendations, the Task Force calls for action to be taken at *local* and *continental* levels. At the **local** level, federations, working with the schools and other supporters of day school education, should increase overall support to day schools through the development of creative and innovative strategies in the areas of **advocacy** and **promotion** of day schools, **financial resource development, improving school quality**, and facilitating **cooperation** and **collaboration** among schools, federation and other institutions. At the **continental** level, UJC and JESNA, should play a leadership role in developing and supporting initiatives in these areas and help to create an independent '**continental council**' comprised of day school leaders and others from North America to serve as a forum to address field-wide day school issues on an ongoing basis.

IMPLEMENTATION

- 1) Implementation will require coordinated efforts by the associations of day schools and the national religious movements and their religious education departments, along with United Jewish Communities representing federations. It is envisioned that JESNA will take the lead and serve as a catalyst for convening the relevant national bodies and for maintaining momentum.
- 2) It is recommended that funding be sought from private philanthropists to advance the implementation of the Task Force recommendations, especially the development of the concept and framework for the independent 'continental council'.
- 3) The regional structure of United Jewish Communities and JESNA should be prepared to assist individual federations in implementing the locally-based recommendations through the provision of consultation services on day school matters. These initiatives should be implemented in coordination with the day school associations and the educational divisions of the religious movements.
- 4) Day schools should be kept on the front burner of the national agenda through major sessions at General Assemblies and other national meetings that highlight innovative strategies and local successes in the areas delineated in the body of the report.
- 5) The Task Force should remain in existence for the short term in order to ensure that critical first steps be taken and in order to monitor progress in implementation.

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON DAY SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND

The modern Jewish day school movement first emerged in a less-than-supportive environment through the efforts of Torah Umesorah in the 1940s and 1950s. It has now come of age. Thanks to the considerable efforts of day school leaders, local and national Jewish education agencies, and religious movements, intensive Jewish education in day schools has become a powerful vehicle for stimulating and sustaining Jewish growth and identity throughout North America. The 1995 Report of the North American Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity characterized day schools as “arguably the most impactful single weapon in our arsenal for educating Jewish children and youth.”

Day school growth has surpassed all predictions. For a comparison, the 1987-1989 Jewish school census reported nearly 600 day schools in North America, with an enrollment of 168,000. Currently, there are approximately 810 day schools, and enrollment is estimated at 212,000. Of the 810 schools, 660 are Orthodox, 72 Conservative, 58 communal, and 20 Reform.¹

With the proliferation of day schools, there has come an almost universal acceptance of the concept and a recognition of its vital role in addressing the challenge to Jewish continuity. Virtually all segments of the community agree that the day school is the most effective form of Jewish education, and that it will continue as such for the foreseeable future.

Community federations have recognized the achievements and the potential of day school programs and are taking action to meet the challenge of ensuring day schools' long-term vitality, even as the demand increases to support human services, all forms of Jewish education, and other identity-building programs.

TASK FORCE

The Task Force on Jewish Day Schools was convened in response to an initiative presented by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee to the 1997 General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, in Indianapolis. The fact that the response was swift and positive reflected heightened interest in day schools and recognition of their perceived importance to Jewish continuity. The increased focus on day schools within the Jewish community at large is exemplified by recent initiatives of support undertaken by the AVI CHAI Foundation, the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, and the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee, which first convened day school presidents and principals in the fall of 1997 to address the issue of affordability.

While the Council of Jewish Federations had previously included material on day schools in planning reports and in compilations and analyses of statistical and funding data, and while the importance of day schools was noted in the Report of the North American Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity, the current task force process represents the first initiative of the Council of Jewish Federations devoted entirely to issues of national and communal policy with respect to the day school enterprise.

The Task Force, organized as a partnership of the Council of Jewish Federations (now United Jewish Communities) and JESNA (Jewish Education Service of North America) was charged with “examining and making recommendations concerning the funding, affordability and long-term viability of day school education in the context of federation’s longstanding commitment to

quality Jewish education in all of its forms and settings.” It was anticipated that the Task Force would address issues and strategies related to augmenting revenues and scholarship funds, improving quality, enhancing recruitment, and increasing enrollment in K-12 day schools at the local level².

The Task Force was constituted to represent key constituencies: federations in communities of diverse sizes and geographic locations; national organizations involved in Jewish education, private foundations, and religious streams.

THE PROCESS

During the study process, the Task Force met three times, commissioned and reviewed five briefing papers by day school experts on issues related to its mission (see appendices) and consulted day school principals, directors of central agencies for Jewish education, federation planners and executive directors and presidents of small, intermediate and large city federations. In addition, staff consulted with leadership of several federations (including Chicago and New York) which had voiced special concerns on the process.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS and PRINCIPLES

A. INTRODUCTORY COMMENT

Process and Terminology

The Task Force examined a broad range of issues relating to the viability and vitality of day school education. Presented below are the Task Force's: a) *findings* related to these issues, followed by brief *comments* designed to amplify and expand on the *findings*; and b) *recommendations* for action to be taken by individuals, schools, communities, and national bodies, including those directed specifically to federations.

The *findings* and *recommendations* are based on:

- 1) deliberations by the Task Force;
- 2) input from day school principals, central agency directors, other educators and educational consultants;
- 3) input from federation executive directors and presidents;
- 4) input from federation planners;
- 5) input from United Jewish Communities and JESNA staff members;
- 6) experiences in schools and in local communities; and
- 7) data from briefing papers prepared for the Task Force (see appendices for amplification and additional sources on many of the *findings* relating to day school impact, finances, and quality assurance);

B. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS and PRINCIPLES

1) Day school education is highly effective.

Comment: Research generally supports the proposition that day school education has a strong positive impact on the development of Jewish identity.³ Although this research is not extensive, there is no reason to doubt that day schools overall represent the most effective type of formal Jewish education available. At the same time, we must recognize that the quality, and hence in all probability the impact, of day school education varies from school to school, often as a function of the available human and financial resources.

2) Day school education at the high school level is an important factor in achieving the maximum positive impact on development of students' Jewish identity.

Comment: Research indicates that continuing in day school from the elementary through the high school years is a critical component in strengthening Jewish identity and observance and is therefore considered highly desirable. Establishing and maintaining day high schools is complex and costly. It requires substantially more resources than those needed for elementary and middle schools.

3) It is in the interest of the Jewish community to ensure that, regardless of financial ability, all those who wish to enroll in day schools have the opportunity to do so.⁴

Comment: There is a growing sentiment in the Jewish community that a day school education should be made available to every Jewish child who desires it, regardless of the family's financial capacity. However, this aim is recognized as an ideal difficult to achieve. In light of the demonstrated effectiveness of day schools, it is considered in the interest of

Jewish communities to encourage greater participation through financial incentives and other means.

It is important to note that with regard to day schools, there are at least two populations to consider. For families that have already made the commitment to day school, the major concern is assuring that their children receive a quality education at a cost that is not unreasonably burdensome. In order to promote day school enrollment among families that have not committed to day schools, a well-calibrated set of strategies is required that includes advocacy, marketing, and creative tuition pricing.

- 4) **There is an increased demand for educational programming for children with special needs. It is incumbent upon every Jewish community to examine local circumstances and provide appropriate educational programming for those students in a manner that is both educationally appropriate and financially feasible.**
- 5) **Day school education must be broadly advocated and promoted at the continental, regional, and local levels.**

Comment: It is appropriate for all communal institutions and philanthropists in the Jewish community, with federations and synagogues taking the lead, to be visible advocates of day school education and to seek to increase the number of families who send their children to day schools.

- 6) **Day school education is costly, and most day schools vitally need additional financial resources. The current situation calls for decisive action, both to capitalize on the extraordinary advancements of day schools over the past decade and to address the acute financial needs that might undermine that success. Significantly greater funding is needed to help day schools continue to strengthen Jewish identity and promote Jewish continuity. This is a critical, overarching concern.**

Comment: The cost of providing a quality day school education is substantial and is rising. The burden of meeting this cost is felt by schools, as well as families. Many families contend with a significant financial burden, far larger than that required for any other form of Jewish education. Some view the entry barrier as too high and consequently do not enroll or are forced to drop out.

While tuition almost never covers the cost of educating a child, the financial situation of individual schools throughout the continent varies. Some face almost perpetual fiscal crises; others are in no imminent financial danger. However, *all* schools need additional financial resources to improve access for potential students; to continue to raise the quality of education (especially significant considering that Jewish day schools provide a dual curriculum); and to meet capital needs. By virtually all measures, when comparing Jewish day schools to public and private schools, it is clear that day schools are underfunded for the roles and responsibilities they are increasingly expected to fulfill.

7) Quality is a key factor in promoting the growth of day schools⁵. Financial resources have an impact on quality, and invariably, financial resources and quality of education are closely linked.

Comment: It is widely agreed that day school viability and vitality are ultimately a function of educational quality, which in turn is dependent on a sound educational vision and the availability of adequate resources to achieve it. Resources are needed for a range of areas that are closely linked:

- a) Personnel, Program, and Facilities:** Higher salaries and more benefits are required to attract and retain highly qualified administrative personnel and teachers. Day school leadership should strive for excellence in both general and Jewish studies. Where needed, facilities should be enhanced to achieve these ends;
- b) Scholarships:** Substantial resources are needed for scholarship assistance;
- c) Lay Leadership Development:** Since high performance by lay leaders is seen as pivotal to all aspects of school quality, resources are needed for activities such as workshops, retreats, and conferences. It is important that the governance structures of day schools include not only parents, but broad segments of Jewish organizational and communal leadership.

Some day school and community leaders perceive the acute need for scholarship assistance and funding to relieve basic operational pressures on schools as most critical. Others recommend increased funding primarily for quality improvements that will have a positive impact on virtually all aspects of a school, including image, enrollment, and leadership recruitment. All agree that quality is a central component in the growth of day schools, and that efforts to assure school viability must address it.

8) Virtually all issues of school excellence are linked to the availability and quality of personnel. Quality of personnel, in turn, is inextricably linked to the financial resources available for better salaries, for increased benefits, for training new professionals, and for ongoing staff development.

Comment: The personnel crisis that most communities and schools confront, is beyond the scope of this report, but it is closely tied to the issues before the Task Force. In sum, massive resources are needed to attract teachers and administrators to the field and retain them. These resources can only be mustered by the collective work of the broad Jewish community.

9) How to use additional funding is a decision best left to individual schools, local federations, and to other funding sources such as endowments, private philanthropists, and foundations.

Comment: Because different schools have different needs and financial circumstances, the focus should be on increasing funding to schools for purposes best determined by the schools themselves and their federations and other funding sources. It is important, however, that the broad range of needs and objectives be considered.

- 10) **High tuition often has a negative impact on day school enrollment. It may serve as a barrier for families who very much desire a day school education for their children—and even more of an obstacle for those who have some interest, but not yet a deep commitment to providing their children with a day school education. We must explore strategies to ease this burden. To supplement scholarships, tuition reductions, and discounts, some communities now employ such approaches as special incentives for critical entry grades or across-the-board subsidies funded by foundations.⁶ Tuition costs are not the only factor in decisions on enrollment, however, and may not be the most decisive for every family.**

Comment: Tuition rates are rising to levels that make day school education, even with scholarships, prohibitive for many families. As a result, there are increasing calls for a significant infusion of money from federations and other sources so that schools can lower tuition and offer more scholarships. This would enable families who want day school education, but cannot afford it, to enroll their children. It might also attract marginally interested families not otherwise prepared to take the next step from passive interest in day school education to actual enrollment.

At the same time, research indicates that factors such as school quality and prestige, parental involvement and Jewish commitment, and the quality of local public and private schools are as important for some prospective enrollees as (and perhaps more important than) costs. Opinions differ on the equity, operational effectiveness, and cost efficiency of across-the-board tuition reductions as opposed to other strategies for increasing enrollments and other ways of using financial resources. Whatever measures we take to reduce the burden should not exempt those who have the resources from paying full tuition.

- 11) **Day schools need substantial funding from federations as well as from other sources. Federation allocations to day schools have grown in recent years—in some cases dramatically so. In some communities, the federation has not only contributed major funds through allocations, special grant initiatives, and endowment distributions, but has also managed, coordinated, and contributed to school capital expansion campaigns. Generally, though, allocations have not kept pace with day school growth and expanding needs. In many instances, relatively flat campaigns, urgent needs in other domains of activity, and federation involvement in capital and other special fundraising efforts, have prevented federations from increasing their annual support to day schools to the extent that day school advocates and many federation leaders themselves believe is needed and justified.**

Comment: Although federation funding for day schools has increased substantially over the past quarter century, allocations during the past decade have not kept pace with the proliferation of new day schools, rising enrollments and increased costs. This is due to modest growth or even declines in some annual campaigns, and it has resulted in a reduction in the percentage of day school budgets funded by federations. As the community's overall body for allocating funds, it is appropriate that the Federations be a significant source of resources for day schools. But federations cannot be expected to bear the primary responsibility for funding day schools. Local situations vary widely, so it would be difficult to establish a uniform set of norms for adequate and appropriate levels of federation financial support. However, there are numerous ways beyond annual allocations in which federations can meet their responsibilities to day school education (see finding #13). Furthermore, day school leaders and parents must support the annual federated campaign that addresses all the vital needs of the community, including day schools.

- 12) Other institutions and individuals share the responsibility for increasing the financial resources available to day schools. In addition, day schools can improve their own fund-raising efforts and increase efficiency.**

Comment: In addition to funds from federations, increased financial support for day schools must come from a variety of sources. These include synagogues, the religious movements with which schools are affiliated, parents and grandparents who can afford the costs, foundations, and individual philanthropists (including those who have not historically supported day schools). In addition, the schools have the responsibility to develop sound fiscal policies, undertake vigorous and professional fund-raising efforts, and operate efficiently to reduce costs. They must seek advice and guidance from a variety of sources, including the federation and its agencies, private school consortia, and consulting groups. Finally, a range of federal and state services, subsidies, and grants are available to day schools and are utilized by many of them.

- 13) Besides providing funding, the federation system has the capacity to help schools in a wide range of areas that affect quality and finances. In this regard, the traditional federation roles as advocate and as convener of resources are especially important.**

Comment: The demonstrated capabilities of federations in strategic planning, organizational management, leadership development, marketing, and fundraising can be mobilized to assist day schools. In addition to raising allocations, federations can help day schools strengthen boards, enhance administrative and fiscal operations, improve advertising and recruitment, and establish legacy and endowment programs.

- 14) Local communities and all bodies responsible for supporting and funding day school education should be involved in ways that capitalize on their respective capabilities.**

Comment: Various strategies are needed to draw on the respective abilities of different levels of the communal infrastructure in order to strengthen day schools. Allocations are inherently local decisions, and initiatives to change community attitudes, expand types of assistance, and increase funding must be initiated locally. Nevertheless, support to day schools can also be provided regionally, nationally and continentally, and within religious movements through advocacy, information gathering and sharing, promotion and public relations, standard-setting, personnel recruitment and training, and leadership development.

- 15) All forms of Jewish education are important in their own right. Day school students, for example, benefit from participation in other types of educational experiences. Consequently, additional financial support is needed and is merited for all types of Jewish education.**

Comment: Research confirms that all forms of Jewish education have a positive impact on Jewish identity when pursued seriously. Day school students benefit from such informal educational programs as summer camps, youth groups, and trips to Israel, as well as from being part of learning families and vibrant synagogue communities. Under current circumstances all forms of Jewish education, including part-time synagogue or community-based schooling (which still enrolls approximately two-thirds of those who receive formal Jewish education) need additional financial support. Hence, it is important that added funding for day schools not come at the expense of other forms of Jewish education. Rather, communities should recognize that Jewish education in all of its manifestations is a

synergistic enterprise, and that there is a need for significant additional resources in all areas of Jewish education.

- 16) Communities have many important fiscal responsibilities in addition to support for Jewish education. Therefore, increased funding for Jewish education and for day schools cannot come at the expense of other vital communal needs.**

Comment: The Jewish community has always shown the ability to redirect its resources to new and urgent priorities. It is generally agreed that Jewish education and day school education merit increased financial support from both communal and private sources. However, this increased support cannot come at the expense of such responsibilities as aiding needy and vulnerable people. So the primary thrust of current efforts must be to develop new and expanded resources overall, not to reduce funding for other causes.

Note: The Task Force recognizes that there are responsible leaders, including members of the Task Force who believe that the high priority we urge for increasing financial resources for day school education justifies reallocating funds from worthy, but less urgent, communal endeavors⁷. We believe that this is a decision best made locally in light of specific conditions. But under no circumstances will reallocation of resources alone meet the need for significant expansion of funding for day schools, Jewish education in general, as well as the broad array of important communal needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above *Findings*, the Task Force recommends that all federations and the federation system as a whole should:

- 1) Unequivocally express support for Jewish education and day school education by providing increased financial resources and other forms of assistance to all types of Jewish education, with special emphasis on support that strengthens day schools at all levels: preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school.
- 2) Embrace the principle that while the primary responsibility for a Jewish education is the parent's, financial considerations should not prevent any Jewish family from sending a child to a Jewish day school, that paying for a day school education is the shared responsibility of parents, school, and community. Federations in every community should commit themselves to this principle. To achieve this, they should work with leadership from the day schools, the local community, the religious movements, the synagogues, and day school parents to lower tuition and increase scholarships to the greatest extent possible consistent with fiscal responsibility.
- 3) Adopt and promote the principle that excellence in Jewish day schools is the best guarantee in the long term of school growth and the development of financial resources, and commit themselves to working to enhance the quality of day schools. (The Task Force briefing paper *Portrait of Educational Excellence*, by Elkin and Frank, provides recommendations to schools and federations on achieving excellence. See Appendix A).
- 4) Adopt and promote the principle that excellence is linked to the quality of human resources, both lay and professional. To that end, federations should:
 - a. expand initiatives focusing on professional human resource development to attract, train, and retain top-quality Jewish educators and administrators. (Incentives and high-profile programs should be developed in Jewish education along the lines of the very successful FEREP program⁸); and
 - b. develop initiatives focusing on lay human resource development to recruit and train top-quality volunteer leaders.

B. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: While all communities are unique, with respect to the challenges of Jewish day school education, New York is *sui generis*. With more than 225 yeshivot and Jewish day schools in the New York area, educating more than 100,000 students (as compared to 36,000 students enrolled in congregational schools),⁹ it is estimated that the current budget of existing Jewish day schools and yeshivot is \$1.25 billion. It is further estimated that there are at least 5 major capital campaigns underway in New York totaling \$150 million as a goal. These statistics convey a sense of the immense magnitude of the challenges facing New York in trying to address issues of Jewish day school education¹⁰.

Hence, some of the specific recommendations made below will need to be considered separately within the context of New York's unique circumstances.

In order to implement the *General Recommendations*, the Task Force recommends the following:

- 1) At the **LOCAL** level, federations should work with the schools and other supporters of day school education to design and implement specific strategies.

Advocacy and Promotion:

- a. Advocate for day schools and build support among influential leaders.
- b. Establish and promote communal policies that safeguard the community's investment in Jewish education by ensuring a continuum of participation and services to build upon the benefits of each specific educational setting and to promote mutual relationships among the elements of the educational infrastructure (*e.g.*, facilitate transitions and linkages among preschools, day schools, community centers, camps, synagogues, and family education and adult education programs).
- c. Promote establishment and support of day high schools where feasible.

Financial Resources and School Quality:

- d. Increase funding through allocations from annual campaigns and sources such as endowments and special campaigns.
- e. Develop allocation methods that respond to the diverse needs of local schools and maximize the impact of federation support, emphasizing long-term growth and quality improvement.
- f. Increase resources for day schools through endowments;¹¹ capital campaigns; marketing and promotion drives; annual-giving campaigns; community funds for scholarship support; programs for school improvement and professional development; expanded support from individual philanthropists and foundations, especially through challenge grants and tuition subvention programs; tapping public sources for such activities as transportation, lunches, and special education, and otherwise leveraging new resources.
- g. Help school leadership strengthen capacities in such areas as board development, fiscal management, financial resource development, and strategic planning.
- h. Facilitate assistance to day schools by the central agency for Jewish education (or, if there is none, from other bodies) in improving curriculum development, teacher recruitment and training, and extracurricular programs.
- i. Encourage schools to make efficient use of physical facilities in the schools or in the community. Encourage greater cooperation among schools through joint purchase of program materials, supplies, and employee benefits.
- j. Help schools obtain special grants from foundations for startup of new grades, school improvement, staff development, and recruitment.
- k. Develop special recruitment incentives to attract students at particular grade levels, such as preschool, middle-school, and high school start-up grades.
- l. Facilitate fair, friendly, and equitable processing of scholarships.

Cooperative and Collaborative Efforts:

- m. Encourage day schools to take part in a broad range of communal, educational and other activities and to involve themselves with other local agencies and institutions.
 - n. Encourage and assist day schools to work cooperatively on marketing, advertising, student recruitment and retention, and school improvement initiatives; and provide technical support and expertise for these activities.
 - o. Encourage day schools to work together and avoid duplication and divisiveness resulting from the start up of new schools where insufficient data exists with respect to community need, capacity and viability. Federations in communities with multiple day schools should work with all of them to maximize resources, promote quality, and increase enrollment.
 - p. Encourage schools to join in community-wide capital campaigns for new and expanded facilities, if and when needs dictate.
- 2) At the **CONTINENTAL** level, United Jewish Communities and JESNA, working with the day school movements and other supporters of day school education, should develop and implement appropriate strategies.

Organizational:

- a. Consider establishing a continental council composed of lay and professional leaders from day schools, federations, Jewish education agencies, religious movements, education associations, and foundations throughout North America to address day school issues. This body might well carry out some of the recommendations that follow:

Advocacy and Promotion:

- b. Monitor and publicize new trends and developments in financial support for day schools, especially new funding strategies and initiatives.
- c. Conduct workshops and other events at General Assemblies and similar meetings to promote and support day school education, and showcase funding initiatives.
- d. Develop a system to share information on successful day school initiatives to improve schools, develop financial resources, and recruit students.
- e. Work with foundations and philanthropists to expand support for day schools through such strategies as challenge grants and tuition subvention programs.
- f. Support a continental marketing, advertising, and promotional campaign for day schools.
- g. Encourage creation of regional and communal day high schools.

Financial Resources and School Quality:

- h. In cooperation with local endowment programs, explore creation of a continent-wide legacy and endowment campaign for day schools.

- i. Create the mechanism to provide high-quality educational, management, and fiscal assistance and training to day schools, similar to those in public and independent schools.
- j. Explore the feasibility of developing a continental scholarship fund similar to the Pell Grant program.
- k. Monitor tuition-reduction experiments and other innovations and promote replication of successful ones.
- l. Address disparities in allocation levels by examining the feasibility of development of national guidelines for federation allocations to day schools.
- m. Research day school issues in conjunction with leading researchers.

Personnel:

- n. Take the lead in mobilizing, developing, and funding initiatives to attract and retain new Jewish educators and enhance the skills of those already in the field.
- o. Develop ways to improve both salaries and benefits for educators, in order to attract our brightest and finest young people to careers in Jewish education and to help it become a valued and prestigious profession. The feasibility and costs of such initiatives should be carefully examined in order to enhance the likelihood of success.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the vision and recommendations embodied in this Report should be part of the mandate of the United Jewish Communities' Jewish Renaissance and Renewal and Financial Resource Development platforms. This work should be pursued in conjunction with JESNA, which should take a lead role in the implementation process, including convening the relevant national bodies and in ensuring that momentum is maintained. Successful implementation will require the coordinated efforts of the day school associations, the national religious movements and their education departments, UJC representing federations, and other communal, academic and private philanthropic partners. United Jewish Communities and JESNA must be ready to assist individual federations in carrying out local initiatives, with special emphasis on recommendations in this Report.

In order to begin the implementation effort at the continental level, special funding from private donors should be sought and used to pursue high-priority recommendations such as developing the concept and framework for the independent continental council envisioned as a vehicle for advocacy, promotion, and coordination of efforts on behalf of day schools.

The Task Force recommends that day school issues receive high priority in General Assemblies and other national meetings, and that sessions be organized to highlight effective strategies and local successes.

Finally, we recommend that the Task Force remain in existence for the short term, to ensure that critical first steps are taken and to monitor progress. This is especially important as United Jewish Communities completes the restructuring that will allow it to carry out the new agenda.

CONCLUSION

The Task Force acknowledges that the scope of the challenge is monumental, and that the vision and concepts embodied in this Report will involve aggressive and simultaneous action nationally, regionally, and locally for the next generation.

It is also clear that the day school imperative is part of the larger issue of the need for massive investment of new resources and creative energy into the Jewish education enterprise in all of its forms, and more broadly into other areas of the Jewish renaissance and renewal agenda. The scope of resources needed must not daunt us. If we are to follow through on our vision of Jewish renaissance going into the next century, the Jewish community as a whole dare not shy away from thinking and acting boldly to ensure not only the viability of day schools, but of the Jewish world in the twenty-first century.

Day schools have become an intrinsic element of the communal infrastructure of North American Jewry; consequently their vitality and growth are inextricably linked to the well-being of the community. The future of day schools depends upon strong communal support; and the presence of quality day school education enhances the community.

Members of the Task Force are confident that their efforts and recommendations will enhance this synergistic relationship and move Jewish communities everywhere in North America from strength to strength.

ENDNOTES

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1. JESNA - Mandell L. Berman Jewish Heritage Center for Research and Evaluation on Jewish Education
 2. The Task Force recognizes that preschools operating under a variety of sponsorships-synagogue, JCC and day school-all serve, in a sense, as the first Jewish day school experience for many children and families. Special efforts are therefore warranted to make these schools as rich in Jewish content and experiences as possible, and to encourage preschool families to continue their children in full-time Jewish education by enrolling them in day schools.
 3. Refer to Appendices. See the Task Force briefing paper, *The Impact of Day Schools*, especially summaries of the Schiff-Schneider report: *The Jewishness Quotient of Jewish Day Schools*, and the Cohen study *The Impact of Varieties of Jewish Education Upon Jewish Identity: An Intergenerational Perspective*. Or see the citations and obtain a copy of the full reports.
 4. This item deals with the matter of *financial* need only, not *educational* need.
 5. Refer to *APPENDICES*. See the Task Force briefing paper: *Portrait of Educational Excellence*.
 6. There are several creative initiatives currently under way (e.g., Atlanta, Cleveland, Morris County Seattle, and Tulsa) which might serve as models to emulate. They should be monitored and assessed over time to determine their effectiveness in increasing enrollment.
 7. One member in particular of the Task Force has expressed disagreement with the position and language of sections 15 and 16 that additional funding for day school *not* come at the expense of other forms of Jewish education. We note this minority view.
 8. FEREP-Federation Executive Recruitment and Education Program is a career track program of tuition grants for graduate training of professional personnel for federations.
 9. New York, Board of Jewish Education, 1999.
 10. Current annual allocations to Jewish day school education by UJA Federation of New York - including direct grants to Jewish day schools through the Fund for Jewish Education and Continuity Commission, the Board of Jewish Education, Suffolk Association of Jewish Educational Services, Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education - total \$5.1 million.
 11. Chicago's Day School Endowment Program and the National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee's *Operation Jewish Education: The 5% Answer* are noteworthy strategies in this regard.