

CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

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About The Consortium

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 director of the Special Education Center of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. Sara is the Special Needs Department field consultant for the Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington.

As expressed in its name, the Consortium was developed to strengthen special education through central agencies for Jewish education, and to provide a context in which communities' special educators can build a professional network. The Consortium's *Call for Action* appears on page 20.

The Consortium encourages the North American Jewish community to use the Consortium as a resource. Consortium activities include regular correspondence among members, the *Newsletter*, the development of a resource database, and an annual Colloquium. Additional copies of the *Newsletter* are available for task forces, lay leaders, professionals, and other community groups. Contact Caren Levine at JESNA: phone (212) 284-6898; fax (212) 284-6951; email: caren@jesna.org

Los Angeles Hosts Colloquium



Special Education Consortium members from across North America convene in Los Angeles

The Fourteenth Annual Colloquium of the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies was held in Los Angeles in May 2000. The Colloquium was hosted by the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Los Angeles and coordinated by Dr. Kenneth Schaefer.

Participating in the conference were: Wendy Dratler, MetroWest, NJ; Ellen Fishman, Cleveland; Elliot Fix, Rochester; Hindy Friedman, Baltimore; Amian Frost Kelemer, Baltimore; Becca Hornstein, Phoenix; Flora Kupferman, San Francisco; Cecile Jordan, San Diego; Lenore Layman, Washington, DC; Caren Levine, JESNA; Dori Levine, Toronto; Maura Wechsler Linas, Kansas City; Anita Naftaly, Detroit; Dr. Kenneth Schaefer, Los Angeles; Dr. Sharon Schanzer, Philadelphia; Rabbi Marty Schloss, New York; Sara Seligson,

New York; Rita Schwartz, Denver; Sara Rubinow Simon, Washington, DC; Marlene Tewner, Columbus; and, Linda Zimmerman, Atlanta.

Highlights of the 14th Annual Colloquium

The conference included sessions on Developmental Optometry, Autism/Asperger's Syndrome, Gifted and Learning Disabled, and Time Management, as well as brainstorming and networking opportunities among Consortium members. Participants conducted site visits to the Shalhevet School, the Stephen S. Wise School, the University of Judaism, the Skirball Museum and the Getty Museum.

15th Annual Colloquium of the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education

Hosted by the BJE of Greater Toronto, Sunday, May 6 - Tuesday, May 8, 2001
Contact: Dori Levine, Special Education Consultant, at the BJE of Greater Toronto, (416) 633-7770 ext. 249 or DLevine@ujafed.org.

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Special Education

Rabbi Marty Schloss

It is sobering to note that organized special education classes in Jewish schools are close to a century old. This information was documented at a 1994 international conference on Jewish special education held at the University of Tel Aviv, Israel. In a stimulating presentation, Dr. Carlebach of Hebrew University delivered a paper on Jewish special education in pre-World War I Hamburg, Germany. The principal of the Hamburg Jewish day school, Rabbi Dr. Joseph Carlebach (the presenter's father), created a class for students who encountered learning difficulties and for whom the school's curriculum was clearly inappropriate. Of particular interest to me was the fact that my own grandfather (after whom I am named) was the instructor of that special education class. Aside from historical interest in this knowledge, there are compelling educational comparisons between that program and our current programs. The important question is, "What, if anything, has changed in close to a century of special education classes in Jewish education?"

To date, the author of this article has not had the opportunity to examine the curricula, materials and structure of that class – and probably never will. Nonetheless, one can assume some obvious differences between then and now. Clearly, some differences directly relate to the research and developments culled from the scientific world of special education during the fourscore interim. Noteworthy is that the Hamburg Jewish special education class existed as Simon and Binet were in the process of cultivating the field of intelligence quotient (IQ) testing – a fundamental component in understanding special education. Additionally, the contributions of Piaget, Skinner, Strauss, Frostig, Valet, Vellutino, Wiig & Semel, Kohlberg, Schumaker & Deshler, Shepherd and Fried, just to name a few, were unknown. Much of the research that platforms present special education thinking wasn't even contemplated at that time.

On the other hand, one can only assume that concepts of inclusion, adaptation, modification and alternative instruction were prominent in Rabbi Dr.

Carlebach's thinking, as were responding to parental concerns, anxiety and frustrations. Mastery of the traditional Judaic texts of Bible, *Mishnah*, *Talmud* and *Halacha* posed similar educational challenges as it does today. And, most likely, Rabbi Dr. Carlebach confronted the special education dilemmas of last year's article – educational standards and school reputation. In Germany, all students were subjected to important 4th grade exams, not unlike today's students. Those exams, however, unlike today, dictated a student's academic future. Test results determined whether a child would be permitted to pursue an academic track leading to a potential university education or a vocational track. One can only imagine the pressure on day school leaders at that time to demonstrate academic excellence in Jewish day schools. No doubt, as today, parental comparisons of academic track successes of day schools with that of other school options factored significantly in school selection.

Success in an increasingly technological society demands skills not conceived of at the turn of the 20th century - the very skills that most directly challenge those with learning and developmental disabilities.

Thus, a plausible perspective in a near century comparison of Jewish special education would yield a result of some similarities and some differences.

In reality, however, the above analysis is somewhat frivolous. Not at all tangential to these educational comparisons are the societal and environmental variables. Success in an increasingly technological society demands skills not conceived of at the turn of the 20th century - the very skills that most directly challenge those with learning and developmental disabilities.

This last statement brings us to the far more pertinent challenge of today, namely, "What have we learned about special education during the last century that will better assist us as we begin a new

millennium?" Whereas there are probably countless answers to this query, I would like to focus on two: *Prevention* and *Technology*.

The most critical stage for effective educational intervention is the earliest moment that a potential problem is detected. Research by social psychologist Carol Dweck, often cited by Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd of Columbia University, demonstrates the devastating impact of persistent and consistent academic failure on self-efficacy and ultimately upon self-motivation. In a creative experiment, Dr. Dweck examined various children's reactions to academic failure. The results indicated that the child's age contributes to the perception of that failure. Youngsters between the ages of about 4-7 equated intelligence with effort: "If I try harder, I'll get smarter". The youngsters in this age group attributed their failure to their level of effort. Thus, failure was less devastating to them. They simply responded that if they try harder they would do better – a dynamic view of intelligence. This perception changes when the same children turn ten years old and older. The child then personalizes success and/or failure. Intelligence is now viewed as an aspect of the individual and is not subject to change: "I am either smart or dumb. And, if I am dumb, then nothing I do can change that notion." More disturbing is that even if the child were to succeed at a given task, s/he would attribute this success to the task being so easy that anyone could do it, to having been "lucky" or to the teacher having simply given him/her this mark out of kindness, when it was not really earned. This self-perception, if not corrected, can become a true lifelong disability that permeates and negatively affects all facets of the child's life. Special education literature refers to this condition as "learned helplessness." Thus, delays in recognizing potential problems often result in far reaching devastation well beyond the learning problem itself.

Unfortunately, the challenge to early intervention has been the inability of teachers to detect potential problems at the most critical stage – before the child experiences academic failure. Many of the difficulties encountered by children

with learning disabilities manifest themselves in the capacity to read. This is a skill that is often difficult to determine until the individual actually begins to learn to read – late in the optimum intervention process. This condition is exacerbated by the inability of various screenings and assessments in the pre-reading youngster to accurately identify potential precursors to reading difficulties.

... new software packages take complicated abstract Judaic concepts and concretize them into understandable sequential segments ... [They] not only assess student outcomes, but also provide targeted programmatic review for mastery - clearly a valuable educational tool.

The good news is that the 21st century begins with a strong indication that the above challenge may well be on the road to being positively addressed. For close to a decade, Drs. Frank Vellutino and Donna Scanlon, among others, have been conducting significant research correlating pre-reading language behaviors with later reading capacity. Their published findings suggest that not only are many reading difficulties identifiable in the pre-reading stage of development but that with guided prescriptive classroom instruction, many are correctable. Their studies demonstrate that many students who are identified as learning-disabled in the area of reading, in fact have no disability and that if these students receive appropriate instruction in their early childhood classes, they will never experience school failure. This is not to say that all children may be spared learning disabilities in reading. Indeed, there are children who possess true reading disabilities who will not respond as successfully as others. It does suggest, however, that at-risk children who are not truly disabled may be successfully prevented from experiencing school failure, while children who are truly disabled may receive special education intervention at the most propitious time.

Based on the above, and accompanied by the support of two foundations, the BJE of Greater New York initiated a longitudinal pre-reading intervention pilot project in Jewish schools in collaboration

with Drs. Vellutino, Scanlon, Shepherd, Robbins, Tannenbaum and Luchow. The four pilot schools receive ongoing staff development on the assessment techniques determined by Scanlon and Vellutino as well as the instructional components of the Scanlon and Vellutino studies. Student progress will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Interim findings will be presented at periodic special education conferences and the final results will be published in a professional journal. The purpose of this activity is to ascertain whether the initial findings of Scanlon and Vellutino is replicable in Jewish schools and whether the findings in English language are applicable to those in Hebrew language. The potential benefits of this effort include the enormous impact on early childhood and special education in Jewish schools – not to mention the thousands of children whose lives will be profoundly enriched.

Technology represents the second Jewish special education frontier for this millennium. The changes in technology are fast and furious. Every day is accompanied by new innovations that impact the way we go about every aspect of our daily lives. And, because we have become so accustomed to technological development, it is taken for granted. Didn't we always have cell phones, the Internet, ATM's, MetroCards and E-Z Pass? Did doctoral candidates actually use typewriters for their dissertations? What did they do when they realized they had omitted a few paragraphs in the middle of their thesis?

There is, unfortunately, one prominent area that has been sluggish in its efforts to adjust to technological advancement – that of education. The most prominent topic for the New York State Education Department Commissioner's Advisory Panel on Special Education handled the question of how to assist educators in incorporating technology into their classroom instruction. This topic is not germane only for general and special education but for Jewish education as well. In fact, it is probably more critical an issue than in the general education sector. Millions of dollars worth of latest technology remain in original packaging because so few Jewish educators have the knowledge, skill and capacity to best utilize the increasingly growing universe of educational technology. Not a week goes by that we don't see new software, both general and Judaic, that could have

a profound impact on successful student learning. There are new exciting software developments in Hebrew reading, *Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud*. My father who has suffered some retinal damage resulting in significant reading difficulty has successfully maintained his learning of the "daily Talmud page" through a CD that has both auditory and visual components of each Talmudic tractate. Within a week, the BJE technology department viewed two Judaic text software packages that were designed to make text learning more exciting and successful. What is meaningful for our Consortium is that the new software packages take complicated abstract Judaic concepts and concretize them into understandable sequential segments. The packages also contained student evaluation units that not only assess student outcomes, but also provide targeted programmatic review for mastery – clearly a valuable educational tool.

Once again, NYC's BJE has responded to this challenge by partnering with a major university specializing in instructional technology. BJE's newly constructed technology lab already houses Title III sponsored (three credit) graduate school courses for nonpublic school teachers. In addition, the BJE Division of School Services has negotiated a joint Master's program in instructional technology with the same university. Unique to this joint program will be the additional course work focus of Judaic content areas. The Master's program will commence in the summer of 2001. Effects on teacher efficacy will be reported periodically through ongoing seminars and conferences.

As we emerge into the 21st Century, serious attention ought to be paid to the developments of the above two areas. Both will undoubtedly factor heavily in the progress of Jewish special education during this millennium. And just imagine what a difference the above would have meant to Rabbi Dr. Joseph Carlebach a hundred years ago.

CONSORTIUM NEWS

Atlanta

The Special Needs Department of Jewish Educational Services of Atlanta has just completed its fifth year of service to the community. The main focus of our agency is to provide professional development opportunities to the teachers in our day schools, synagogue supplementary schools and preschools. Through the Department, workshops and consultations are offered to teachers on topics related to teaching children who learn differently.

The **JES-Gesher Symposium** is an annual event in Atlanta in which teachers, parents and professionals in the community spend a day together learning how to meet the needs of children with barriers to learning. We are honored this year to have as our keynote speaker, Mr. Michael Thompson, author of *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*. In addition to Mr. Thompson's keynote and workshops, other specialists in our community will offer workshops on a variety of topics.

A new addition for this year is the **Inclusion & Collaboration Conference**. The JES-Gesher Symposium and the JF&CS Bregman Series, a day of speakers and workshops for adults with developmental disabilities, joined together with the Jewish Community Center and offered a two day workshop open to all individuals interested in providing services to individuals with disabilities in the Jewish community around the country.

On day one, participants attended either Gesher or Bregman, or spent time at both.

On day two there was an Inclusion & Collaboration Conference, expounding on the benefits of inclusion of all people regardless of their abilities and to explore different models of collaboration.

This program was held on March 4 & 5, 2001. Look for more details to follow.

In addition to the above-mentioned programs, the Special Needs Department of JES continues to provide consultation services to parents, observations of children and information and referral to the general community. Through the efforts of the department there is an increase in the number of children who are being included in typical preschool and supplementary school classrooms. The Amit Sunday morning religious school program

continues to meet for children whose families have chosen a self-contained program for religious education.

JES is currently facilitating a plan to open a day school program for all children who need assistance in learning. The program will include a modified self-contained class for children with significant learning needs and will offer technical assistance to teachers, families and children who are able to learn in the typical day school classroom with a facilitator or other modifications.

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Baltimore

Thanks in large part to a tripling of funding through significant advocacy during the 1998-99 year, Special Education Services at the Center for Jewish Education in Baltimore, MD has increased its personnel and enhanced its services to the pre-, day, and congregational schools, students, families, and the community.

Educational Consultation: Our staff of consultants has been more available to our pre-, day, and congregational schools this year. They are able to consult and give appropriate follow-up, meeting with teachers, parents, and administration as necessary. Additionally, the Center's educational consultants now take a proactive role in our congregational and day schools through regularly scheduled visits to schools and correspondences with teachers and members of the administration.

SNAP (Special Needs Advocates and Parents) is a group of parents of children with special needs who have had extensive training in special education law. SNAP offers voluntary support and advocacy to families of children with special needs. Services offered include Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and Individualized Family Services Plan

(IFSP) preplanning, accompaniment to IEP and IFSP meetings, resources, information, and referrals. We are planning a Rosh Chodesh SNAP Appreciation Brunch to honor our volunteers, and a workshop with Larry Larson for parents to learn about due process in the school system. Last year, SNAP supported over twenty families with more than 100 hours of consultation.

Yad b'Yad is made up of the Jewish Special Educators Network and JADE, Jewish Advocates for Deaf Education. Our very successful workshop series and the triennial publication of our newsletter, *The Pointer*, have truly put special education on the map in Baltimore. Both JSEN and JADE have new advisory teams that have helped to determine that accessibility will be their focus for the year. Our workshop series this year is entitled "Critic's Choice: Book Reviews on Behavior Management, Practical Applications in the Classroom." World-renowned speakers and educators Dr. Thomas Armstrong, author of *The Myth of the ADD Child in the Classroom*, and Dr. Ginger Rhode, author of *The Tough Kid Book* will be presenting.

Gesher LaTorah, our supplementary Jewish education program for adults and children with severe special needs, has a new principal, Rachel Turniansky, and has moved to an exciting new location at the JCC. This move will enable us to partner more effectively with the JCC and provide a full day of respite to the parents of our students. Additionally, the TAG class for adults who are interested in vocational and community service opportunities has doubled in size this year!

Kulanu K'Echad is an interagency collaboration that includes Jewish Family Services, Jewish Vocational Services, Jewish Big Brother/Big Sister League, JCC, and the Center for Jewish Education. CJE and our sister agencies are working hard to communicate and plan services for children with special needs and their families, in an effort to provide more complete and comprehensive programming for our population. Disability awareness, staff training, direct consultations at recreational programs and referrals to Jewish educational opportunities are all a part of the role of the Kulanu K'Echad Jewish Special Educator, on staff at the Center for Jewish Education.

In other special education news, Jewish special education is now available on-site at the Norbel School, a non-public school for children with learning disabilities and with ADD/ADHD, and at two campuses of Maryland School for the Deaf. Through these weekly programs run by Special Education Services at the Center for Jewish Education, over fifteen students are receiving Jewish special education at their schools, and are benefiting from the heightened sense of Jewish identity and community while attending these programs.

Additionally, through the generosity of the Crane Family Foundation, sixteen Baltimore area Jewish schools benefitted from Special Education Enhancement Projects (SEEP) grants. Through the SEEP program, funding was provided to schools in order to enhance their capabilities to include children with special needs in their programs.

Finally, Special Education Services at the Center for Jewish Education has a new coordinator, Shayna Levine-Hefetz. Shayna comes to CJE with a wealth of experience in special education and Jewish communal service. The Special Education Services team is glad to welcome Shayna to the team.

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Boca Raton

The **Otzar Program**, a program of the Jewish Education Commission, has had an overwhelming welcome into the Jewish community this past year. Students with developmental disabilities that include autism, Down's Syndrome, Asperger's Syndrome, and Fragile X Syndrome were enrolled in this educationally-based, Sunday school pilot program.

The children learned about and experienced traditions that include, but are not limited to, Shabbat, Chanukah, Tu B'Shvat, tzedakah, mitzvot, tolerance, Purim, and Passover. These lessons were presented utilizing a multi-modality

approach that combined language, literacy, music, fine and gross motor skills. This approach has allowed each student to learn and experience Jewish content-based instruction. By utilizing this holistic approach, each student's strongest learning modality was employed, thus promoting individualization of the program participants.

The students of the *Otzar Program* have gained extensive and significant attention this year, receiving an Honorable Mention for their participation in the United for United Jerusalem Art and Essay Contest, hosted by the Jewish Community Relations Council of the South Palm Beach County Jewish Federation. Additionally, the students of the *Otzar* program donated a beautiful Passover basket to a less fortunate family in our community through the Forster Food Pantry, a program sponsored by Ruth Rales Jewish Family Service. Active community involvement has facilitated increased community awareness of the Jewish special needs population.

Objectives for this coming year include building upon the foundation set forth by the lessons of this past year and the addition of a resource teacher to work individually with the students for the acquisition of lexical and written Hebrew. In addition, the *Otzar* program, funded by a grant from CAJE, the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, will help to facilitate outreach to a variety of local synagogues. The students will visit the area temples and participate in their services. This will provide additional opportunities to bridge learning and to facilitate a smooth transition to Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

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Boston

Jewish Special Needs Education services have grown dramatically in the past several years. The BJE of Greater Boston's **Special Educator Network** provides the forum for day school and congregational school educators to focus on common issues. It also serves as a clear-

inghouse for local resources. The network meets six times a year; this past year, guest speakers have addressed the group on Torah study, mental illness, LD testing, brain research, and curriculum modifications. Most importantly, there have been opportunities for professional sharing. Several years ago, through a private donor and an allocation from the Combined Jewish Philanthropies, the BJE established a **Jewish Special Needs Grant Initiative**. To date, several hundred students in twelve different institutions have benefitted from the programs that received the small incentive grants. The grants were awarded by an advisory committee interested in promoting the following criteria: regional services, highlighting the local expertise of existing organizations, and providing direct services to as many students as possible. Two types of grants were awarded: professional development and long term planning for a regional center for children with learning disabilities. Until now, professional development collaboration has centered on classroom management strategies, dealing effectively with students who have non-verbal learning disabilities, and reading programs. Next year, a second consortium of supplemental schools will begin planning another regional center to open the following year.

By focusing the attention of the community on the very important need for trained Jewish special education personnel, we were able to support Hebrew College to establish a certificate/masters program in Jewish special education which began this fall.

The BJE hosts several conferences and each offers workshops for special needs educators. At the December Day School Conference, there was a track devoted to special needs targeting two specific areas: non-verbal communication and reading. Subsequent staff days were devoted to follow-up on these topics. The BJE has also co-sponsored day-long conferences with the JCC and independent organizations highlighting the inclusion of children and their families with special needs.

The Boston BJE continues to advocate for more attention to and support of special education issues in the Jewish community. Recently, the BJE hosted a community dialogue to bring together existing, new, and emerging groups to create a coordinated, collaborative approach to the expansion of special education services. By building on strengths and particular expertise and interest, we hope to

seize an opportune "moment" in greater Boston. Federation has already promised an increase in financial support for special education which will help maximize resources and minimize competitive issues. We look forward to continued growth in this important area.

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Cleveland

The Special Education Department of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland is marking its twelfth year serving the Jewish community's affiliated pre-schools, supplementary and day schools. Working with individual religious schools, the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland maintains a strong network of programs serving youngsters from pre-school through age twenty-one, with a broad range of needs. These students are served in the supplementary system (including the ETGAR and Shadow projects) and in day schools in a variety of ways. The special education staff works in both arenas. Many staff hours are devoted to providing direct service to the teachers, instructional aides and "shadows" in the field. The staff develops curriculum, designs professional development programs and observes and coaches teachers and support personnel. Additionally, the department works to maintain good relationships with the public schools in an effort to advocate for students and their families.

The ETGAR program, which is completing its tenth year, continues to serve children with a variety of disabilities. Youngsters served in this supplementary program gain familiarity with prayers, Jewish music, and art. Hebrew vocabulary is included in the instruction. Dedicated personnel with highly specialized training are available to help each youngster participate as fully as possible in a wide range of Jewish learning. The holiday curriculum is multi-modality and multi-level designed specifically for the needs of these individuals.

The *Shadow* project, now in its sixth year, continues to grow as increasing

numbers of families request inclusion as the educational option for their children. *Shadows* teens providing one-to-one support to students with special needs, are trained by the Special Education staff to learn about disabilities, social or academic tutoring and to understand behavior. These *shadows* are typically identified by their synagogue schools and are assigned to work with one or two students throughout the school year. The *Shadow* project allows students who would otherwise not be able, to be full participants in Jewish educational life.

During the current year, the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland established a relationship with **Segula**, a grass roots organization established to serve a group of students with special needs enrolled in our day schools. An inclusion program, students are assigned instructional aides who follow them throughout the day. A Judaic, general and behavior specialist work closely with these individuals to provide support as they deliver instruction to their students. The remainder of the special education staff works closely with the day school administration and teachers to ensure a smooth relationship among all the parties.

The Special Education Department continues to offer a series of Jewish Educator Services Program staff development opportunities related to special education. These classes include a host of topics which address the needs of learners with special needs and their families. These offerings are an effort to effect change in teachers' understanding of and attitudes toward their students.

The Special Education Department works cooperatively with other local agencies to support special education initiatives throughout the community. **Coffee Talk**, a networking group for parents of children with special needs, meets to share parents' challenges and triumphs. Throughout the year, professional staff from three agencies designed programs to respond to these needs.

The special education materials contained in the JECC curriculum library are available to the education community as well as to parents, and the department is always acquiring new resources. These texts, videos and other curricular tools promote a deeper understanding of special education issues and related topics.

The area of Jewish Special Education continues to grow and develop in Cleveland. As it does so, the Center makes every effort to respond to community needs.

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Columbus

The Special Education Department of the Commission on Jewish Education is a program of the Columbus Jewish Federation. Founded in 1996-97, its programs currently serve more than 50 children and adults and their families. The department works with more than 100 teachers in ten schools and institutions in the Columbus Jewish community.

The department provides a broad-based network of programs serving students in pre-school, 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 other private sources.

Many programs have been implemented in cooperation with Jewish Family Services, Wexner Heritage House, Shalom House, Leo Yassenoff Jewish Community Center, and area congregations.

The Department of Special Education of the Commission on Jewish Education's mission is based on the principle that, throughout his/her lifetime, every Jewish child and adult has a rightful place as a proud and self-assured member of his/her Jewish family, community, congregation, and school.

Yachad

'Yachad' is the Hebrew word for "together." This program, affiliated with the National Jewish Council for the Disabled, provides unique social, educational and recreational mainstreamed programs for the developmentally disabled. The Columbus chapter is sponsored by the national organization, the Commission on Jewish Education, and Jewish Family Services. It presently provides young adults with special challenges with programming that brings 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.

Families with Young Children

Holiday programs are conducted for families with children under age eight who have special needs. This Judaic educational program provides social and learning opportunities that include music education and art therapy. The multi-sensory, pre-holiday celebrations incorporate Torah stories, Jewish customs and traditions. Most importantly, children learn the joy of being Jewish.

Services for the Deaf

The Commission on Jewish Education helps to provide interpreting and educational support for deaf and hard-of-hearing children in the synagogue religious schools. It works with the Jewish Community Association for the Deaf and the Midwest Center on Jewish Deaf Resources to provide interpreting for High Holiday religious services as well as other services for community members in cooperation with area congregations.

Internship Opportunities

High school students have the opportunity to create curricular materials on Biblical and Judaic topics utilizing educational strategies appropriate for developmentally and learning-disabled students. The students are guided by professionals and materials provided through the Jewish Teacher Resource Center.

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 Department 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.

In-Service Education

Each year, the Special Education Department offers a series of staff-development opportunities related to special education. Class topics have included background on the educational and behavioral needs of students and suggested strategies with which to meet these needs. Through these and other staff development offerings, the department endeavors to strengthen teachers' understanding of and ability to manage the range of students in the classroom.

Consultation to Schools

Working with individual religious schools, the Special Education 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. The department also provides curricular materials on disability awareness and sensitivity training to congregational schools.

Parents

The Parent Network on Including All Our Jewish Children is an organization for parents of children with special needs. Parents of children of all ages are welcome to participate in this program. Each month, experts in the field present and lead discussions and provide information on medical, legal, psychological, educational, and other issues. Parents are encouraged to recommend future speakers and topics. The group is co-sponsored by Jewish Family Services.

Kesher

This religious school class for elementary-age students prepares children with special needs to participate actively in the Jewish community. The class is conducted by the Commission on Jewish Education and presently meets at Congregation Tifereth Israel. The youngsters served by Kesher gain familiarity with Jewish holidays, prayers, Jewish music and art. Hebrew vocabulary is included in the instruction. Throughout the religious school year, events are con-

ducted to provide opportunities for Kesher students to integrate with the mainstream religious school. Dedicated personnel with highly specialized training are available to help each youngster participate as fully as possible in a wide range of Jewish learning.

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Denver

The Colorado Agency for Jewish Education (CAJE) continues to offer programs focusing on educational inclusion and community awareness of special needs in Colorado's growing Jewish community.

Kochavim ("Stars")

Magnet programs at Congregation Emanuel and at CAJE's Community High School of Jewish Studies offer opportunities for children with special needs to participate in supplemental religious school programs. Peer aides often accompany students with special needs to classes and programs, allowing them to socialize and learn in a Jewish environment while other children in the religious school have the opportunity to learn with peers who have special needs. CAJE also provides ongoing consultation and in-service programs on inclusion strategies and resources at all area supplemental schools, as requested.

Chaverim ("Friends")

Chaverim provides opportunities for lifetime Jewish learning for adults with severe special needs. Adults from local supervised living environments participate in cultural and educational activities on a regular basis.

Preschool Inclusion

CAJE encourages early intervention and preschool inclusion in five area preschools. Early childhood specialists provide screening, identification and family consultation for children at risk for disabilities. They consult with teach-

ers and administrators to provide techniques and modifications that encourage successful inclusion. The specialists act as liaisons between the preschool staff, parents, and school district/community resources. In-service presentations on classroom management, socialization strategies, Child Find evaluations, and crisis intervention are important components of this program. A speech/language pathologist is also available at the preschools for on-site screenings, evaluations, and speech /language therapy. Parents pay a minimal fee for these services with the rest of the cost underwritten by CAJE.

Day School Inclusion

CAJE provides support services to facilitate successful inclusion at five area day schools. Students with mild disabilities or uncategorized learning or behavioral problems are referred to the CAJE special education staff by the principal, teachers, or parents. Support services for these students include parent conferencing, IEP recommendations, consultation with outside physicians and agencies, and medication supervision. In-service training and conferences with teachers and parents is a major component of the program. Students with significant special needs are included in regular classes in grades K-7 in a magnet site at the Denver Academy of Torah, a modern Orthodox day school. Full time staff members provide intensive supervision, individual instruction, modified curriculum and materials, and crisis intervention as needed.

Recreation

CAJE staff consult with counselors and administrators at Camp Shai at the Robert E. Loup Jewish Community Center to facilitate inclusion of children with moderate disabilities. In the Summer Magic program, children with severe special needs spend time at Shwayder Camp in Idaho Springs. CAJE provides programming, staff training, student orientation, special transportation and supervision. Sunday Fun Club provides afternoon activities with a Jewish focus for older teens and adults with disabilities at the JCC. Theater outings, sports parties, and celebration of Jewish holidays are exciting activities. As an

approved ARTREACH agency, CAJE maintains a telephone contact system that allows people with disabilities and their families to obtain free tickets to many of Colorado's theater, museum, concert, and sports events.

Networking

Kibbitz, Kvell & Coffee provides a forum in which parents and families of children with special needs can share information, expertise and accomplishments. Just Us is a support group for brothers and sisters of people with disabilities. Activities include outreach to other siblings, information sharing, and field trips.

Consultative Services/Resource Center

CAJE offers community-based educational and consultation services. The Special Education Department functions as a clearinghouse for special education information for the Front Range Jewish community. Teacher workshops, sensitivity training, youth group presentations, agency liaising and referrals are ongoing. A broad range of books, videos, current articles, and local and national agency information is available through the CAJE Library and Resource Center.

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Detroit

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

Opening the Doors Special Education Partnership Program has continued our mission of enabling children with learning disabilities and other special learning needs to receive a quality Jewish education – one that is appropriate and positive. Our primary focus this year has been on the expansion of this delivery system of special education assistance. We are currently serving twenty-three schools in our Metropolitan Detroit community. Our gratitude goes to our Jewish

Federation of Metropolitan Detroit which approved this expansion last year in response to additional needs and our proven effectiveness in meeting those needs. Their continual support and funding enabled partnership schools – Early Childhood, Day Schools, Congregational Schools – across the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Humanistic spectrum – to open the doors of opportunity for over 700 children with special learning needs! Each partnership school received funding from the JFMD to provide for the hiring of qualified special educators to implement services within their schools. Schools in turn demonstrated their commitment by providing internal challenge funds in their school budgets.

The Agency for Jewish Education (AJE) Special Education Director coordinates the *Opening the Doors* program and provides support and consultative services to school directors, special educators, classroom teachers and parents. Our services have included: recruitment, placement and supervision of special educators in partnership schools; development of school program models (pull-out, inclusionary, resource room, zero and tenth hour); on-site seminars and conferences. Our substantial growth necessitated the following changes: we hired 8 additional Special Education teachers – bringing our *Opening the Doors* team to 20 Special Educators with Master Degrees and/or certification in the field of Special Education. We also hired a part-time assistant, Ellen Maiseloff, to help with on-site visits, supervising special education teachers and coordinating training.

A variety of seminars were provided to enhance the skills of the classroom teacher to meet the needs of the diverse learners within their classroom. A sampling of learning opportunities included: *Communication Development From Ages 3 – 5: How to Recognize Red Flags*; *Disruptive Inattentive Students? Classroom Management Strategies That Can Help*; *Communication Disorders in Children: Early Identification*; *Behavioral Concerns: Early Childhood*; *Effective Hebrew Strategies*; *Roundtable Discussion with a Psychologist*.

Our third annual **Jewish Day School Conference** brought together teachers from five partnership schools to hear

nationally known speaker, Rick Lavoie, speaking to educators on *Batteries Not Included: Motivating the Reluctant Learner* in the afternoon session and to parents on *Happy Healthy Family* in the evening session. The conference was generously sponsored by the Jay M. and Dorothy S. Rosenthal Teacher Institute Fund at Hillel Day School. It was our largest conference thus far – 300 teachers in attendance for the afternoon program and 150 parents at our evening program.

The **Family Circle Program** is the fifth annual luncheon seminar for parents and professionals. The presentation was *Childhood Disorders Affecting Socialization* featuring Max Wiznitzer, M.D., Pediatric Neurologist at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, University Hospitals of Cleveland, Case Western Reserve University. The program was well attended – with over 150 participants. Following his presentation, a private parent session was held "circle style" with Dr. Wiznitzer facilitating discussion.

The **Special Educators Network** met periodically through the year to discuss relevant issues and invited professionals to share current thinking in the field. The highlight was an inspiring and insightful presentation of a community professional describing her own reading disability – *Reaching My Goals, Despite the Obstacles*.

AJE worked with day schools to support their state-mandated services for special needs children into their day schools. To supplement the public school services, a clinical psychologist was hired by AJE to provide psycho-educational evaluations for those in need.

We continued to offer **Kids On The Block** disabilities awareness puppet performances to our congregational schools. We held this performance three times this year at school sites – serving 5 schools and 300 students. The performances were presented by volunteers from the Michigan Metro Girl Scouts. *You and I Were Made B'Zelem Elokim* curriculum, written by Bayla Landsman and Sheva Locke, was available for use by 3rd and 4th grade students community wide.

We continue to act as a community resource by providing current materials – resource files, student assessments, books and videos – for use by both teachers and parents.

Our **Efshar Sunday School Program**, under the capable direction of Robyn Glickman, continued to meet the needs of 13 children with more involved needs through individualized instruction reflecting the needs of learning, development and behavioral challenges. Multi-sensory instruction provided an exciting and meaningful curriculum. Music, crafts, drama, Judaic software, Bar and Bat mitzvah preparation, holiday celebrations, field trips and family programs are integral components of the Efshar program.

Our agency completed this year by moving into beautiful new offices – in the Max M. Fisher Building, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. This has been a busy and fulfilling year. With our new "home" comes the renewed commitment to continue to meet the ever-changing needs of Jewish special education.

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Houston

Grant Approval and Allocations Distribution

The Houston Jewish Community Foundation recently approved a grant in the amount of \$30,000 to the Bureau of Jewish Education for Project **CHILD - Collaboration to Help Individuals with Learning Differences**. The project was administrated by Elaine Kellerman, Director of the BJE and the Special Education Consultant, based on a needs assessment carried out at each of the five Jewish day schools in Houston.

Each school has made a commitment to utilize this funding to advance the current special education services at each school. In addition to this funding, the BJE will conduct monthly networking meetings for professionals in the Jewish schools. We are pleased to note the Jewish community's increased awareness of the needs of our Jewish special needs students.

Nosh and Nurturing:

Kesher Support Meetings

This year, meetings for parents of children with special needs are being held on Sundays at the congregation where the Kesher Sunday School meets. These meetings afford the parents a chance to share and learn over coffee and bagels. Topics included socialization and middle school services for special needs students.

Day School Consultation Services

Consultation is available for the day schools regarding modifications and in-services. As the day school assessments in general served to highlight the need for additional support services, the BJE has increased the Special Education Consultant's hours to help service this area.

Supplemental School Consultation

The Special Education Consultant continues to deal with the impact of inclusion on our schools. The Special Hebrew class still continues to service children attending a specific congregation. An additional teacher has been added to fill the needs of that congregation.

Teacher Training

Teacher training programs have been provided prior to school beginning this fall as well as since then. Topics presented were "Ten Easy Ways to Help the Special Child in Your Class" and "Organizing Your Classroom Helps All Children." Last year, presenters included a behavior therapist, a social worker, an educational diagnostician and a workshop using Richard LaVoie's video, "Learning Disabilities."

We are looking forward to the continued success and growth of services for our special needs students, their parents and the professionals working with them.

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Kansas City

Funded by generous grants from the Jewish Heritage Foundation of Greater Kansas City, the Abe and Anna Bograd Memorial Trust, the Bertha S. and Ida F. Adelson Memorial Fund, and the Frances Wang Gershon Foundation, CAJE Special Needs continues to make a difference in the lives of children, families, institutions and programs in the Kansas City area.

Inclusion facilitators are providing services to all community schools, camps, and congregations. Facilitators create program access for individuals not currently involved or not actively participating in the community due to unmet special needs. In addition, they aid existing programming to better meet the needs of children with disabilities. Child advocacy, teacher mentoring, parent and family support, consultation services, transition assistance, crisis intervention and parent training have also been made available and accessed by the community. Included among our current programming is tuition assistance for teachers, remedial Hebrew for students, consultation services to schools and congregations, parent training and education, inter-agency collaboration and public school partnership.

Tuition Assistance

Because of the inclusive nature of the philosophy of our program, special education training is offered to all interested classroom teachers. CAJE Special Needs offers every community teacher in a Jewish setting tuition reimbursement for an approved graduate special education methods course. This one time per career offer is well received by teachers who are now employing new skills and greater self-confidence in their teaching of children with disabilities in Jewish educational settings. The long-term goal of this program is to increase the personnel available to work with students with disabilities.

Jump Start Hebrew

This community-wide course, taught by qualified special education teachers, is offered to any child in the community with a disability that makes learning Hebrew in a supplementary school challenging. Participating students, who are

identified as eligible by inclusion facilitators or school principals, participate in this daily Hebrew class for two weeks prior to the beginning of the fall term. *Jump Start* provides participants with foundation knowledge, enabling them to begin their Hebrew education with success.

Re-Charge Hebrew

This community-wide course, taught by qualified special education teachers, is offered to entering second year midweek Hebrew students who, because of a disabling condition, struggled in first year Hebrew. Students identified as eligible by teachers, religious school directors and CAJE inclusion facilitators are invited to participate in this daily Hebrew class for two weeks prior to the beginning of the fall term. This intensive review *re-charges* their knowledge, allowing students greater success in the new school year.

Hebrew Review

This course is taught to entering third year midweek Hebrew students still challenged by the Hebrew language. Special education teachers work intensively with students for two weeks prior to the fall term reviewing previously taught curriculum. These children are then able to join their classmates with renewed confidence.

Consultation Services

We have been successful in securing the services of highly qualified and experienced special education inclusion facilitators. All community preschools, religious schools and day camps receive consultation services on a no less than a regular weekly basis. Inclusion facilitators work with schools and families, provide teacher in-service training, offer assistance in obtaining assessment and services, and support inclusion within the institution. CAJE Special Needs also provides para-professionals in all three settings to facilitate better learning outcomes and Jewish connections for our children with special needs.

Parent Training and Education

CAJE Special Needs offers parent education programs to community members in a collaborative effort with the Jewish Parenting Center. Taught by CAJE Special Needs staff, these popular programs are offered to the entire community throughout the year. Topics have included discipline, inclusion, classroom

management, parenting issues, and service acquisition.

Community Collaboration

A successful three-way partnership involving CAJE Special Needs, our Jewish day school (Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy) and a public school district, Blue Valley Schools, was created. With CAJE Special Needs' support, the district will place qualified, certified special education personnel in the day school to provide special education services for identified Academy students. It is hoped that this model will promote student services without categorization, while providing teacher support and training leading to enhanced skills, better assessment tools, and new strategies.

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MetroWest

The newest innovation of the JEA Center for Special Education is the development of a **Special Education Resource Library**, staffed by a special educator with whom parents and educators can meet to explore the library's resources. Thanks to the generous support of The Healthcare Foundation of NJ, the following services will be offered to the community:

- A lending and reference library of books and materials, and a resource file relevant to special education for teachers and parents, including computer searches and an "Ask the Expert" link.
- Formal teacher education programs to promote inclusion in Jewish community life and family education, such as holiday celebration programs and Jewish Discovery Zones for developmentally challenged young children.
- Programmatic resources for parents, schools, agencies and synagogues which assist with providing early intervention and problem solving/conflict resolution for children at-risk for special education or identified with special needs.

- A Spring and Fall teacher training for afternoon and day school educators on "Solving Social Problems in the Jewish Classroom" by teaching emotional intelligence to children.

Education Begins in the Home: Teaching Emotional Intelligence to Parents

In response to a need expressed by parents in search of appropriate parenting techniques that encourage the development of "emotional intelligence" in children, The Center for Special Education developed a Parent Education Series consisting of six workshops. In the belief that educators could similarly benefit from this type of forum, the Center also developed a Teacher Training Program made up of four workshops. Dr. Steven Tobias, a psychologist and founder of the Center for Child and Family Development in Morristown, NJ, and co-author of *Emotionally Intelligent Parenting* was commissioned to run the workshops. Dr. Tobias utilized strategies to help kids (preschool through adolescence) build empathy, manage strong emotions, and develop social skills for handling relationships and working in groups. He helped parents to communicate effectively with their children and set up household routines that reduce stress. Dr. Tobias believed in utilizing humor to ease tensions. The teacher-training program focused on:

- Why do we need to teach social and emotional skills to children?
- How can we facilitate students' independent social problem-solving skills?
- What are the key social and emotional skills?
- How can teachers teach these important skills within the context of their already packed schedule?

This program was co-facilitated by Dr. Bruce Ettinger, Executive Director of The Children's Institute, Verona, Penny Petchers, a psychologist in Bergen County and Michele Havens, an adjunct professor at Kean College of NJ. Their task was to integrate social emotional learning with Jewish education in a hands-on breakout session with educators. These facilitators utilize *parshiyot* such as "Joseph and his Brothers" to demonstrate how things might have worked out differently had the strategies of problem-solving and social skills been

used. These programs were very well attended by both educators and parents.

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New York

NEW INITIATIVES

School and District Administration Certificate Program

After years of exploration and negotiation, BJE's Institute for Special Education Enrichment (I-SEE) has finalized a joint certificate program with Long Island University in Educational Administration and Supervision. The post-graduate SDA (School and District Administrator) program provides participants with a New York State Certificate in Educational Administration that will allow them to serve as state-approved district supervisors as well as school administrators in any NY State School District and approved general and special education program. The first joint program cohort will begin during the summer semester, 2001. This initiative builds on the already successful Centers Masters Degree program in Special Education.

Masters Degree Program in Instructional Technology

BJE, in collaboration with the New York Institute of Technology, will be offering a Master's Degree Program in Instructional Technology beginning in the 2001 summer semester. The program is designed to run for two summers at the NYC BJE with the intervening fall and spring semester courses being run through distance learning and online courses. In addition to providing the traditional instructional technology course of study, the program will have the additional focus of Judaic studies content. Given the technological developments in general and Jewish education, this program seeks to enhance teacher skills and opportuni-

ties for effective "anytime-anywhere" learning in day, congregational and informal Jewish educational settings. The program has significant implications for teachers of children with learning disabilities and other special needs.

Preschool Reading Disability Prevention Program

Based on twenty years of special education research, BJE's Special Education Center in conjunction with BJE's Early Childhood Center and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFC) has initiated a reading disability prevention program aimed at kindergarten and pre-1A youngsters in Jewish day schools. The program will attempt to replicate the recent federally supported work of Drs. Frank Vellutino and Donna Scanlon. Vellutino and Scanlon developed an assessment tool and intervention program geared to detect and correct potential reading problems in youngsters. In a recent article reviewing their research, Vellutino and Scanlon demonstrated that as many as 50% 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 serve as general program consultants with Drs. Margaret Jo Shepherd and Lisa Robbins of Columbia University serving as the on-site consultants. To date, the program has begun in four model school sites. Prior to employment, school personnel attend a summer training program in assessment and curricular interventions. Previously, the Special Education Center ran a *Yom Iyun* by Drs. Vellutino and Scanlon in which they explained their work, as well as a joint summer graduate school course with Long Island University (LIU) that focused on the acquisition of reading skills. A conference reporting the interim results is being considered for the fall of 2001.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

School Inclusion Program

Based on last year's initiative, the Center will be continuing its pilot project of inclusion for students with special needs in regular classrooms. The program

incorporates intensive staff development, on-site assistance, seminars, workshops and conferences. The program's goal is to enhance teacher abilities in educating a class of students with varied abilities and needs. This year, the program will work with a community school network and a number of independent schools. The project is open to both day schools and congregational schools.

Government Relations

BJE's Special Education Center serves on federal, state and city government councils and task forces representing Jewish special education programs, issues and concerns. The Center advocates for Jewish special 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 Center contributed to the development of the latest regulations associated with Public Law 105-17 (IDEA). On the State level, the Center representative is a member of the NY State Education Department's Advisory Panel on Special Education Services and is the chairperson for the NY State Education Department's Commissioner's Advisory Council on Non-public Education. The Center is also a member of the NY City Committee of Non-Public School Officials. The most recent issues addressed by the BJE Government Relations team include: the impact of PL105-17 on non-public and parochial school programming, inclusion vs self-contained placement, the participation of students with special needs in the developing NY State Regents standards and testing initiatives and distribution and implementation of Title III technology programs.

Child and Family Advocacy Program

The BJE Special Education Center 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 seeks to develop a comprehensive communal network of information and resources for persons with disabilities. The goal of the program is to have a one-call system that provides callers with 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 regarding existing gaps in service for the purpose of identifying future initiatives. BJE joins the Westchester Jewish Community Services Agency and the Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) in serving as lead agencies for this project.

The Advocacy program also utilizes the latest technology to enhance timely responses for those in need. Valuable information is available on the BJE website (www.bjeny.org). This provides a 24 hour information service. To date, the program has responded to approximately 2,500 requests for assistance.

BJE/Chai Lifeline Telecommunications Network

BJE and Chai Lifeline administer 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 teacher 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 video phones can be attached to large TV monitors as well as camcorders for varied educational use. To date, close to 50 youngsters have benefited from the program. Two years ago the program was the subject of a Channel 12 Long Island Cable News report.

In addition to the above, the program seeks to link a big brother/big sister pro-

gram as well as family communication through email and chat programs on the Internet. To accomplish this goal, the program has developed a relationship with the National Christina Foundation which provides a number of computers to children and their families for the particular use of this project.

JETNET Website

For the past few years, the BJE Jewish Education Telecommunications Network (JETNET) has maintained its own website. The website provides viewers with extensive information on a wide variety of topics including Jewish special education organizations, services, job and placement opportunities and links to other valuable websites. The BJE website continues to explore the feasibility of a chat area for a variety of online real time discussions and bulletin board that allows educators to post information, suggestions, and questions. Ongoing planning includes the potential for staff development through stream video and distance learning.

Council of Jewish Special Education Programs

BJE's Special Education Center staffs a council of special education schools and self-contained programs serving students with learning disabilities. The Council plans joint educational programs and special projects and initiatives. This past year, the Council conducted sharing seminars where professionals in particular aspects of Jewish special education collaborated on strategies, methods and materials with colleagues for peer initiated professional growth. The 2000-2001 school year focused on classroom management. The Council is working with Dr. Margaret Courtney, affiliated with Long Island Jewish Hospital and, most recently, with the New York University Hospital Child Study Center. In addition, the Council is continuing the previous years' projects of, "Self-Advocacy (through language) and "Writing Skills".

Child Abuse Prevention Program

The BJE Special Education Center and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCS) are now in their 6th year of their joint Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP) for the Jewish community. The ongoing pro-

gram provides educators and administrators critical information regarding child abuse. 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 85 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 sponsored 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 seminaries. Another aspect of the program is the creation of an educational curriculum and resource center to assist teachers in helping their students recognize and respond to inappropriate relationships.

The Child Abuse Prevention Program has recently expanded its service to include a classroom management project for Jewish educators. The project began with a conference dedicated to the area of classroom management followed by on-site school workshops. The conference featured Lee Cantor who demonstrated his program of behavior management.

Special Education All-Star Courses

Following the success of the last five years of All-Star courses, the Special Education Center and Long Island University (LIU) ran a 6th course. The three graduate credit courses provided sessions on a variety of special education topics. Each session was conducted by an expert in his/her particular field. Thus, students had the unique opportunity to encounter leading professionals in their field in one course. This year's topics included: *New York State Learning Standards, Special Education & the NYS Learning Standards, NYS Learning Standards: English Language Arts Assessment, NYS Learning Standards: Mathematics Assessment, Assessment Issues*

in Special Education: Early Identification in Reading, NYS Learning Standards & Technology Accommodations, The Inclusion Movement & NYS Learning Standards, The Inclusion Movement in Jewish Day Schools, Early Childhood Programs & Standards in Jewish Education: Project ALEH, Standards in Jewish Education & Special Education. The course instructors included: Dr. Robert Bedford, Marilyn Adsitt & Grace Donahue, Theresa Newell, Dr. Allison Egert, Rabbi Martin Schloss & Sara Seligson, Dr. Jed P. Luchow, Dr. Judah Weller, Ruth A. Musnikow, and Dr. Joel Dickstein.

Models of Excellence

The BJE Special Education Centers program for gifted and talented students directed by Dr. Abraham J. Tannenbaum is beginning its 7th year. In its first year, the program helped two Jewish high schools start programs for gifted and talented students under the guidance of Dr. Tannenbaum meeting the unique needs of each school. Three years ago, four schools presented their own unique designs and rationale for each school's selection in a *yom ivyun*. Last year, plans for a new special school program were initiated. Those plans continue for this year as well.

JETNET

The BJE's telecommunications network, JETNET, is beginning its 7th year. In addition to providing Internet access to schools and homes at discount prices, JETNET creates international inter-school projects and provides ongoing Internet workshops, seminars, and conferences for Jewish educators. JETNET also continues to develop education / technology sessions at the annual New York State Education Departments Non-public School Conference. This past year, JETNET members participated in an international Conference on Jewish Educational Technology in Beer Sheva, Israel and co-sponsored its own conference in New York on Educational Technology with The Goldman Center in Chicago, Touro College and JESNA.

This past year, JETNET constructed its new and expanded telecommunications lab. The lab allows JETNET members to explore a variety of hardware, software and Internet innovations and functions.

Plans for this year include expanding school and community training sessions and exposing new technology options for Jewish day and congregational schools. JETNET's technology initiatives serve as the basis of the BJE / Chai Lifelines project of developing socialization programs for homebound children. In addition, the lab hosts Title III training programs for nonpublic school teachers. Also, JETNET has installed a satellite dish for distance learning programs. Last year, the BJE served as a staff development distance learning site for the new New York State 4th and 8th grade math assessments. Additional training through satellite technology is planned for this year.

Association of Jewish Special Educators

The Association of Jewish Special Educators (AJSE) is beginning its 20th year. During that time, the AJSE has sponsored numerous conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposia for over 16,000 participants. It has published a newsletter entitled *Special Edition* and a professional journal entitled *The Jewish Special Educator*. *The Jewish Special Educator* is now indexed in ERIC and has received recognition from professional organizations as a new exciting special education publication. This year's planning includes the next edition of the *Jewish Special Educator*.

Guidance and Consultations Services

The Special Education Center provides ongoing help to organizations, schools, administrators, teachers, parents and persons with special needs. The Center 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 Center regularly assists graduate school students in their quest for a doctorate or masters degree in special education. It has also assisted in the creation of a private colleges department of special education.

The Institute for Special Education Enrichment

The Institute for Special Education Enrichment (I-SEE) sponsors two basic

activities: a graduate school tract and a religious teacher seminary tract. In the graduate school tract, the Center sponsors a masters program in special education jointly with the College of Staten Island of the City University of New York (CUNY). This project, originally funded by the J.E. & Z.B. Butler Foundation, has graduated close to 300 students with graduate degrees in special education. Well over 90% of the graduates are currently teaching in Jewish or public school special education programs. Many have gone on for additional certificates and degrees in bilingual extension, school administration, and doctoral programs. I-SEE is currently seeking to develop alumni programs that follow the graduates through their professional careers.

The Teacher Seminary project provides special education courses in three seminaries and sponsors special education courses in additional Jewish teacher seminaries. The goal of this program is to develop more day and supplementary school teachers who are sensitive to the needs of children with special challenges in their classrooms. The program also helps develop a more supportive Jewish community for Jewish persons with special needs.

The Vocational Preparation Program

The Vocational Preparation Program (VPP) now in its 17th year, continues to assist disabled and non-disabled individuals in planning a viable and meaningful career. 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 2,000 individuals.

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

Volunteers in Special Education

The Volunteers in Special Education (VSE) Project continues to recruit, train and place qualified persons in Jewish schools to help students with special

needs keep up with their school work. To date, VSE has placed approximately 1,300 volunteers in over fifty educational settings serving over 3,700 students. VSE is planning the development of a manual of its volunteer program so that other communities can replicate its success. This year's planning includes the development of community based volunteer tutoring project. Project partners include the BJE Special Education Center, Bikur Cholim of Boro Park (Brooklyn, New York) and Maimonides Hospital.

The Parent Education Program

The Parent Education Program (PEP) funded through a grant from the Butler Family Foundation, is beginning its 9th 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, sponsored a special services conference and fair last fall to help parents access important and necessary services for their children. This year, PEP is sponsoring a Conference/ Fair that will provide parents maximum opportunities to learn first-hand about important resources as well as initiate face-to-face contact with communal service providers. Last year's Conference drew over 400 participants who came to hear keynote speaker Dr. Turecki who presented on effective behavior management strategies for parents.

The Jewish Heritage Program

The Jewish Heritage Program (JHP) is beginning its 22nd year. Currently, JHP programs are in four Jewish community centers throughout the greater New York area, serving approximately 100 developmentally disabled individuals. In addition to the ongoing Sunday school program, JHP conducts an annual Pesach Model Seder and other special events. JHP publishes 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.

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Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Jewish community continues to expand its services in special needs education with 50 programs in the day schools, supplementary and community schools, pre-schools and informal education groups. The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education, through its consultant for special needs, provides in-service to teachers and principals on establishing and maintaining programs for children and teens with special needs in the Jewish schools.

The Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia provided grants for six innovative programs for children and teens with special needs in the supplementary, community and pre-schools. This is the tenth year that Federation has provided the grants. The lay committee for special education of the Auerbach Central Agency meets on a regular basis and selects schools based on their grant proposals.

Philadelphia's newest initiative **Orot** (Hebrew for "lights") is expanding rapidly. Its mission is to support special needs education in the day schools for those children who need more than the resource room can provide. Most of the classes reflect the concepts of academic self-contained and social inclusion classes. In just over a year's time, *Orot* has grown from a single class of two students in one day school to six classes serving over twenty children in four day schools. The children range in age from kindergarten through the eighth grade with diagnoses including severe learning disabilities, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, and Down Syndrome. *Orot* hosted its inaugural cocktail reception in June, 2000. Over 200 people, representing all walks of Jewish life, attended the gala which was held at the new National Liberty Museum in Philadelphia's historic area.

The first edition of Sharon Schanzer's **Hebrew Decoding Inventory** was published in the fall of 1999 and sales have been steady since that time. The inventory assesses pure Hebrew decoding skills by using nonsense words. It tests a child's ability to read all Hebrew consonants and vowels in isolation and in one and two syllable words. It also provides both class and individual analyses of what has or has not been mastered. It is an individual test that takes about 10 minutes to administer.

In the fall of 2000, under the auspices of Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education, Dr. Schanzer published an accompanying booklet to the inventory on how to teach Hebrew reading to typical children and those with special needs. It will provide a theoretical and practical approach to teaching Hebrew.

The featured speaker at our special education forum this year was clinical psychologist Dr. Saul Fisher who spoke about "Discipline without Damage." Dr. Fisher's common sense approach to discipline, based on building self-esteem, was well received by the audience of teachers and parents. The event was sponsored by the Association for Jewish Education of the Auerbach Central Agency, which continues to publish the *Tekiah* newsletter for parents and professionals involved with special needs education.

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Phoenix

The Council For Jews With Special Needs continues to provide a variety of programs and services to children and adults who have developmental, physical, behavioral and emotional disabilities. In the past year, the Council created a web site (www.cjsn.org) that has educated its visitors, informed them of Council events, advertised employment opportunities, linked them to other Jewish/disability-related sites and offered e-mail addresses for personal contact. In addition,

the web site offers online shopping as an option for charitable giving to support the agency.

For fifteen years, the Council's continuing programs and services include special education classes and support for inclusion; teachers and tutors in the synagogues; special education consultants for all of the preschools, day schools, high school and supplementary schools; trained counselors for both day camps and residential camps; staff trainings and supervision in schools and camps; sign language and oral interpreters in any Jewish settings; social clubs for teens with severe disabilities and for young adults with special needs; support groups for parents, grandparents and siblings; educational forums on disability related topics; disability awareness workshops; family outings; and information and referral services.

In Winter 1999, the Council produced a 180-page **Disability Resource Directory** of Jewish agencies, schools, camps, residential and vocational programs in Canada and the US. The directory includes names, addresses, phone/fax numbers and e-mail information as well as brief descriptions of what programs or services each group offers. The directory is available for \$25 (p & h included). Agencies not presently listed in the directory are encouraged to contact the Council to get into the next printing of the directory.

In the past year, the Council has experienced a marked increase in requests for preschool services and is exploring ways to provide more assistance in inclusive early education settings. There was also an increase in the number of children, teens and adults who require the assistance of a sign language interpreter for a variety of Jewish settings (religious school, youth groups, camps, community gatherings, adult education as well as in synagogues for services). The challenge is to find and train enough sign language interpreters.

Finally, in early June, 2000, the Council put on a "prom" for its teens and young adults who have special needs. With the support of businesses in the community, almost all of the flowers, centerpieces, decorations, photography, food, music and parting gifts were donated. About 50 people dined and danced

and did the stroll for hours; their smiles lasted for many days to follow.

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Pittsburgh

This year, our community supported a number of exciting initiatives for children with special needs. We are thrilled to report that next year we will be continuing our current programs, as well as beginning several new ones.

New Initiatives

For parents with a child with special needs, every day brings new challenges. Sometimes, these challenges can seem never-ending. The family not only has to manage the child's day-to-day needs, but also has to navigate a sea of services and information that can be overwhelming at times. Parents are often not aware of all the services available in the community and may not know where to turn to obtain the information they need. Additionally, the professionals who work with these children not only seek to continue their education, but to network with other professionals working with this population.

In order to serve both parents and professionals, the Jewish Education Institute, in partnership with Jewish Family and Children's Service and ARC Allegheny, has developed *Building Partnerships for Special Needs: A Seminar Series for Caregivers and Professionals*. Underwritten by a grant from the Ladies Hospital Aid Society, this fifteen hour course was created to bring parents and professionals together to study and discuss quality information regarding children with special needs. The five evening seminars covered educational, home and family, legal, medical, and social and emotional issues, with top experts on each subject presenting a number of points of view. This seminar series, which was listed as a "That All May Worship" conference, also provided the professionals an oppor-

tunity to receive continuing education credits.

Ongoing Initiatives

In Pittsburgh, there are a number of programs with an educational component, which serve children with special needs and their families. This community is embarking on an endowment effort to ensure that this network of services is fully funded in perpetuity. The initiatives involved are the following:

The Jewish Care Coordination Program (JCCP), a joint effort between Jewish Family and Children's Service (JF&CS) and the Jewish Community Center (JCC), provides case management, outreach, information and referral, and advocacy services to children and their families. JF&CS offers case management services designed to help families organize tasks, prioritize needs, and locate necessary services, while offering emotional support throughout the process. The JCC provides support groups and educational programs for parents, grandparents and siblings of children with special needs. In addition, there are workshops for parents and caregivers, an informational newsletter and a resource library which is open to all community members.

The JCC Special Needs Department offers summer camp and after-school programs, sports activities, and field trips to children with special needs, in addition to their extensive programming for adults. The JCC takes pride in the fact that individuals with special needs are included in all aspects of JCC life. One goal of the Center is to educate and sensitize the community to the needs of this population and to include individuals with special needs in all JCC activities.

The three day schools, Community Day: A Solomon Schechter School (CDS), Hillel Academy, and Yeshiva Schools, provide school-based special needs services that include resource room learning, the development of Individualized Education Plans, tutoring, testing, and adaptation of classroom resources, as well as in-service training and consultation for their teachers. Each school works to ensure that the students with special needs spend as much time as possible with their

regular classes, only going to the resource room when necessary.

The Jewish Education Institute (JEI) runs the Congregational Schools Special Needs Program designed to integrate children with special needs into religious school education. The coordinator and consultants work individually with the children, their teachers, and their parents to create a positive learning environment for each child. An Individualized Education Plan is developed and the consultant provides ongoing support and school visits, as well as seeing to it that adaptive devices are provided when necessary. The program now serves seven synagogues and the area's only supplementary, community-based Jewish high school. Many children have received services and a number of teachers have made use of the library resources and training sessions.

One link amongst the network of services is the way each one serves to educate. Whether the audience is the children, the families, the teachers, or the community, these programs increase knowledge, awareness and sensitivity.

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Rochester

While various Jewish agencies have sponsored cultural and social programs for children and adults with disabilities, in the community of Rochester there has never been an adult education course on Judaism to engage the adult with mild disabilities in challenging content. There are a number of Jewish adults who reside in agency or state-sponsored community residences or supportive apartments. In many situations, such individuals may be the only Jewish people living in a partic-

ular group home. In addition, many have never received a formal Jewish education, while others have a minimal connection to Jewish life. Temple Brith Kodesh in Rochester, which sponsors the Rochester Kollel, an open, adult Jewish education program, supported the inclusion of the Jewish Living course in its offerings for 1999-2000. Dr. Edna Levy, Kollel Director and Rabbis Lawrence Kotok and Robert Morais enthusiastically endorsed the program.

Through contact with professional staff and families, fifteen adults between the ages of thirty and fifty with mild to moderate developmental disabilities, attended weekly sessions in the Temple's religious school while other adult education classes were being held at the same time. Participants learned basic Jewish practices and concepts through role-play, guest presenters, handouts, visuals, music, and art.

In addition to the course, students were offered the opportunity to participate in activities related to the course content: a Shabbat dinner at a Jewish women's group home, a Passover *seder*, a Purim *seudah* at a local synagogue. And, most simply yet also uniquely perhaps, these inclusive events took place on the actual holidays themselves rather than being offered as "pre-events," as has so often been the case for people with disabilities in the past.

The Kollel course has been successful in building a community of students who can now be encouraged to interact with participants in other Kollel classes. "I learned a lot about my heritage and many other things," commented one participant. "The music, the learning and the class in general were super."

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San Francisco

The Special Education program at the Bureau of Jewish Education continues to address the needs of children with disabilities, their teachers, principals, parents, and other members of the community. It is funded by a grant from the Jewish Community Federation Endowment Kohn Fund and also receives support from the Pinkus Sugarman Fund for Exceptional Children with Special

Needs in Jewish Education.

For the past twelve years, children attending synagogue schools have been receiving special education services. Eleven schools have a special education teacher on staff. This teacher provides individual or small group instruction, usually in a "pull-out" model. In some schools, the special education teacher assists students inside their classes. The Special Education Consultant at the Bureau of Jewish Education works in partnership with the synagogue schools, assisting in the hiring, training, and support of the special education teachers, subsidizing a small portion of the special education teachers' salaries, helping to choose the model of service delivery that most appropriately meets the school's needs, providing standardized forms for student referrals, evaluations, and IEP's, and being available to principals and parents when questions arise. Last year, the eleven synagogue schools directly met the needs of 169 children who had learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, and other disabilities. Indirectly, all the other children and teachers in these schools benefitted from the presence of the special educator on staff.

The Bureau of Jewish Education's **Handbook for Special Education Programs in the Synagogue Schools** is available at no charge on the Internet at the BJE's website (www.bjesf.org) or can be ordered from the BJE for \$10. 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. The online version features over forty links to related websites.

As part of the BJE's professional development opportunities for teachers, the following topics were offered: *Classroom Management, Multiple Intelligences, and Cooperative Learning Techniques*. Meeting special needs was addressed in all these areas. Additionally, since we tailor each workshop series to a school staff, we can address more individual issues.

During the 1999-2000 school year, we introduced a social program for children with developmental disabilities and their families. Groups met monthly for informal play and learning. Through music, arts and crafts, and stories, the children and their parents explored the Jewish

holidays. In the coming year, we are planning to partner with synagogues, holding the groups during existing Sunday school times. In this way, there will be opportunities for inclusion, and teen aides and other resource personnel will also be available to the group. Having additional people to help run the program will also give the parents the opportunity to form their own support network.

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San Jose

Last year, the Jewish Federation of Greater San Jose offered a pilot program for a **special needs self-contained religious school class**. Students involved in the program have developmental or social disabilities that included Down Syndrome, ADD, Dyslexia, Mild Seizure Disorder, Auditory and Visual Processing Difficulties.

The Federation is now adding five students to the program, which it has now named **Meyuchad**, ("special".) At this stage, students with diagnosed language disorders are also being added.

The Special Needs Coordinator for the Federation of Greater San Jose, Irene Swedroe, serves as the Director, Head Teacher and Consultant for this program. Responding to requests from teachers, parents and religious school principals, she observes students in order to determine whether they should stay in the regular religious school class (and suggests certain modifications to accommodate them if they do) or if the student is better served in the special needs Sunday school program.

There are also two other professionals on staff: a Judaica teacher who is also in charge of art, as well as a Hebrew teacher. All three staff members have an education in special education and Judaica. High school students (over the age of Bar/Bat Mitzvah) have also volun-

teered to join the staff in order to keep the student ratio low; at the end of the year, some students will receive community service awards in acknowledgment of their important work.

Students in the program love coming to class! Teaching is done through art, visual kinesthetic modalities, and repetition. Students receive 20 minutes of Hebrew instruction in either a small group of two or individually. The class runs 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Last year's curriculum focused on the holidays. This year, we are hoping to add biblical content, visit local synagogues and attend their Junior Congregation services. I am encouraging the parents to explore the local Jewish youth groups. I am hoping to provide further outreach to the area synagogue religious schools.

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St. Louis

The Central Agency for Jewish Education (CAJE) in St. Louis has had another successful year in serving children with special needs. Fifty-one students were enrolled in the **"Three Rs" Program** ("Recognize, Refer, Remediate") during the 1999-2000 school year. This program is dedicated to providing Hebrew and some Judaic education for children who, for a variety of reasons, have difficulty performing in a traditional Hebrew school classroom situation. Admission to the program is based on parental input, teacher recommendations, CAJE recommendations, and the approval of the rabbi or educational director at the student's congregation. The program serves students throughout the community from third through seventh grades, with an occasional student continuing through the eighth grade. Each student receives twenty-four hours of private tutoring, either in 24 one-hour or 32 forty-five minute sessions.

Individualized Flexible Goals are developed for each student, which are generally based on the curriculum the student would have had in the afternoon Hebrew school or modified to the child's specific needs.

"Three Rs" tutors receive specialized materials to help with the individual needs of the students at a Tutor Orientation workshop in September and throughout the year. A Tutors Forum is held in January to share ideas and provide further support. In addition, our tutors are urged to attend educational opportunities sponsored by CAJE, such as the "New Beginnings" program in August, the "Educators Fair" in November, and special workshops throughout the year. Our tutors are encouraged and trained to be effective with mainstreaming and inclusion. Where appropriate, "Three Rs" students are included in Hebrew school shabbatonim and other programming. Students with special needs attend their home-based congregational religious school classrooms on Sunday or Shabbat. We continue to emphasize that the "Three Rs" program is not a Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutorial. Since 1990, over 50 students have completed our program and have become B'nai Mitzvah in their own congregations.

For the first time this year, CAJE held a graduation ceremony for students from the community Hebrew school programs, the Hebrew High School, and the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School together. "Three Rs" students were included in this ceremony, graduating with the Hebrew school program in which they would have been enrolled. Fifteen students were eligible to participate, though some chose not to do so. Those who attended were included seamlessly in the ceremonials.

The "Three Rs" Program continues to grow and to have a positive impact on many students and families. We are also making strides in outreach to and networking within the entire community.

Another program in the St. Louis community that was facilitated by CAJE staff, but which is independent from CAJE, is **Ohr Atid, Light of the Future**. Two years of intense organization by concerned parents of children with special needs resulted in a formal Jewish Sunday

School begun in September 1997. The two-hour per week Sunday school program, which is self-contained, began with six students, increasing to eight in 1998-1999, and including seven in the 1999-2000 school year. The children in the *Ohr Atid Sunday School* represent all denominations of Judaism. Students from various Jewish high school programs are trained to be madrichim to facilitate the learning environment. Madrichim also assist one child with special needs in a religious school preschool program on Sunday mornings. One student has also been mainstreamed into the home-based congregational religious school program.

Computers, donated by Monsanto Corporation, are used in *Ohr Atid's* therapeutic computer lab, which meets weekly for five weeks, two hours per session.

In addition, *Ohr Atid* has developed **Project PRISM** (Parents Resources Information Sharing Mission), a resource-sharing network. *Project PRISM* also includes a family referral project to match one family with another family caring for a child with a similar disability. As part of this project, *Ohr Atid* has also developed a list of resources for parents, including tips on social services and financial resources, Jewish educational data, entitlements from all levels of government, and Jewish experiential opportunities.

A support group for parents caring for Jewish children with special needs, hosted by *Ohr Atid*, meets monthly. This is a wonderful environment for parents to share their feelings and help one another face the stress and anxiety of meeting the needs of their children.

We look forward to the growth of *Ohr Atid*, an educational asset to the St. Louis Jewish community.

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Toronto

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater Toronto is currently working on the second phase of its investigation

into Jewish special education services in the city. The BJE will base its recommendations and set its priorities on the findings of the study. Dori Levine, Special Education Consultant to the Board of Jewish Education of Greater Toronto, is now collecting "best practices" for inclusion in the investigation's recommendations section. Please feel free to contact Dori Levine, who will welcome your contribution of information on your community's most successful programs and service delivery models.

Toronto also looks forward to hosting this year's upcoming Colloquium, to be held May 6-8, 2001.

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Washington, D.C.

The Special Needs Department of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington continues to offer a wide range of services to support students, parents and professionals in the field of special education. The Department recently received a grant from the Federation to conduct demographic research in the area of special education. The purpose of the research is to enable the BJE to be pro-active and informed in planning for the growing special needs population in the Washington area. Additionally, a second grant was received through the Special Needs P.P.A.C. (Parallel Professional Advisory Committee) which will provide funding for a Jewish Special Needs community newsletter and website.

Early Childhood Services

The BJE Early Childhood Special Needs Consultant, Mara Bier, continued to provide an array of services to meet the needs of young children with special needs in our community. Mara's actual "on site" time is divided between observing children where there is a concern regarding development and working with

staff and parents to facilitate the inclusion of a child with special needs into a typical classroom. Directors, teachers and facilitators are offered an array of classes and workshops that aim to improve their skill and confidence in working with our special needs population and their families. Besides teaching many of these in-service courses, the Special Needs department offers many courses taught by skilled special educators in the community.

This year, we have expanded our **Early Childhood Institute** offerings. Teachers who register for an Institute course receive two full days of instruction taught by a variety of presenters. They also participate in a day of observation and attend an evening workshop presented at a special needs program in our community. Teachers and individual facilitators attend a support group entitled "Inclusion is Real," where they gather on a monthly basis to brainstorm ideas aimed at increasing their effectiveness with special needs students in their classrooms. Parents participate in "Parent to Parent - A Support Group for Parents of Children, Birth to Age Five with Special Needs." The Board of Jewish Education and Jewish Social Service Agency co-sponsors this monthly support group. Both a morning and an afternoon group began in the fall.

A pilot program began in September at Adas Israel Nursery School. Increased services to children with special needs is included in the preschool program. Students receive speech and language therapy at school. An occupational therapist is on staff to monitor the motor and sensory development of all children. Additionally, the occupational therapist consults with teachers to ensure that they are optimizing motor and sensory activities as well as helping to accommodate the O.T. needs of children with special needs. The preschool also operates a "quiet room" that is equipped with many of the items found in any classroom but which is reserved for individual facilitators (shadows) who wish to come to use it with their students. This room provides a less stimulating environment to be used where necessary. Mara also supervises a "floating" special educator who is available to these special needs students who do not require the support of a full time

individual aide but who would greatly benefit from a certain amount of individual attention.

Mara is fortunate to have participated in a one-week study program in Reggio Emilia, Italy. She spent the week studying and observing this world-renowned system of early childhood education. Members of the community she visited hold a high regard for their children with special needs whom they refer to as children with "special rights." Mara hopes to be able to initiate several of the concepts learned at Reggio into our preschool classrooms.

Day School Services

The **Day School Learning Specialists Network** met on a bi-monthly basis and provided an opportunity for professionals at area schools to collaborate, problem-solve and share information on an ongoing basis. The Day School Parent Support Group which was co-sponsored by the Jewish Social Service Agency met monthly and gave parents the opportunity to hear speakers and to network with one other. Topics of meetings this past year included social skills, psychological testing, educational advocacy, legal rights and organizational skills. A fall symposium on college planning for Jewish students with learning disabilities was planned. The pilot day school program which provides on-site speech and language therapy through Montgomery County Public Schools was extremely successful and includes a second site for the 2000/2001 school year. In addition, professional developmental opportunities for secular and Judaic teachers included a series of seminars: "Behavior Management Through the Use of Sensory Integration Techniques in the Classroom", "Strategies for Teaching Chumash", and "Talking Tips: Strategies to Enhance Understanding in the Classroom." Finally, **SULAM**, a new community wide day school program for students with multiple disabilities, is expanding its program to a second day school which will begin a middle school program in the fall.

Supplementary Schools

Sara Rubinow Simon is continuing her work as a Field Services Consultant at area supplementary schools. She

makes on-site classroom observations and offers both verbal and written feedback to school professionals. The **Sh'lom Kitah** mentoring program continues to train teachers to integrate students with special learning needs in their congregational schools. The focus of the program has changed to provide training to teachers who have the potential to become learning specialists in the congregational schools. In addition, mentors play an active role in the congregational school where they are observing and offering consultative services to educational directors and staff at faculty meetings. A *Congregational School Learning Specialist Network* was started this past year which provided an opportunity for learning specialists from area schools to meet together to exchange ideas and to problem solve with colleagues. In addition, professional guidance is provided to educational directors, teachers and parents on an ongoing basis.

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JESNA

This year, JESNA staff has been busy developing its newly revised website. The site (www.jesna.org) is being reorganized to reflect JESNA's work in its six core areas: Congregational and Communal Education; Day Schools; Educator Recruitment and Development; Media and Technology; Research and Evaluation; and, Youth. The site also reflects JESNA's interest in Adult Jewish Learning, Early Childhood Education, Family Education, and Special Needs Education.

The Special Needs area of the website includes links to online clearinghouses and organizations, access to advocacy agencies, legal resources, education contacts, and curricular materials for students, families, and special needs professionals. There is a particular emphasis on resources for Jewish education, which

highlights materials by members of the Consortium. These include bibliographies, curricula, handbooks, and information on services. The Consortium's *Newsletter* is available to download as well.

Please help us build this community resource by submitting materials and links for possible inclusion.

Look for the new site early this summer!

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Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education 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 camping 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.

"It is enough that an individual is disabled. Let us not disable him or her as a Jew as well."

Keep Your Community Informed

Additional copies of the *Newsletter* are available for task forces, lay people, and other community groups.

Contact Caren Levine at JESNA if you would like additional copies:

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

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