

## PHILADELPHIA HOSTS COLLOQUIUM

The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies celebrated its 21st anniversary at the annual Colloquium in Philadelphia. Once again we spent three days of learning and sharing to help us bring the best special education services to our communities.

Highlights of the Colloquium included having the opportunity to pray with Philadelphia's local super star, Lior Liebling, from the movie, "Praying With Lior."

After we sang and prayed with Lior he had his first opportunity to answer

questions about himself and the making of the film. Several members of the Consortium shared successful workshops they have done to enable others to conduct the same training. Much time was devoted to reviewing existing surveys and in the creation of new surveys to help us better understand the populations we deal with and how to best meet their needs. Two new Hebrew programs were also presented that are expected to be helpful for children who have learning issues. We toured the Perelman Day School and worked in their computer lab to learn about the Misunderstood Minds website. The participants included: Beverly Bernstein, Diane Brezner, Jackie Brooks, Rachel Brumberg (JESNA), Shelly Christensen, Wendy Dratler, Shana Erenberg, Elliot Fix, Lisa Friedman, Debbie Gettes, Becca Hornstein, Lenore Layman, Shayna Levine-Hefetz, Jed Luchow, Ellen Maiseloff, Phyllis Miller, Sandy Miller-Jacobs, Dafna Ross, Sara Rubinow Simon, Marty Schloss, Sara Seligson, Marlene Tewner, and Linda Zimmerman.



*Pictured (L to R): Sara Rubinow Simon (JESNA), Becca Hornstein (Phoenix, AZ), Shana Erenberg (Chicago, IL) and Debbie Gettes (Philadelphia, PA)*

### SKY BLUE WATERS COLLOQUIUM 2008 22ND ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM OF THE CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Minneapolis is the host city for the 2008 Colloquium and we look forward to welcoming our colleagues to the beautiful Land of 10,000 Lakes. The Colloquium will feature an afternoon of learning and discovery at Pacer Center, one of the nation's leaders in programs for children and young adults with disabilities. Hands-on learning about the latest in assistive technology will be one of the topics we study with the experts from Pacer Center. We will also have the opportunity to learn about other cutting edge programs that are housed in the Twin Cities. Learning from each other is an important component of the Consortium, and a number of our colleagues are presenting on a wide range of programs and research that their agencies have developed as well as trends in the fields of Jewish special education and inclusion. A panel of members who are involved with Jewish synagogue movement national organizations will share resources that these movements have made available to support working with Jewish education. Every evening will be capped by dinner on one of our many lakes. We welcome our Consortium colleagues to Minneapolis' Sky Blue Waters Colloquium.

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#### MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

- Program models and development
- Specialized curriculum and technology
- Inclusion
- Professional development and support
- Advocacy and Legislation
- Community Relations and Awareness

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

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

The Consortium Call for Action appears on the back of the newsletter.

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

## Reflections

We want to thank everyone for their full participation, support, insights, and networking in the advancement of Jewish Special Education. Our Consortium members are truly a cadre of experts, whose knowledge, dedication, and passion have opened doors and created opportunities for meaningful inclusion for Jews with special needs in your communities. We acknowledge and commend the Central Agencies for Jewish Education and the Jewish Federations that have recognized the important need for Jewish education for all children, and have appointed representatives to the Consortium. We urge communities that have not yet joined to make Jewish Special Education a priority; surely all Jewish children and adults are entitled to an appropriate and meaningful Jewish education, regardless of disability or need. Together, we can make "Chinuch L'nar AlPi Darco" a reality for all.

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

In the past year, Consortium members addressed the issue of membership in the group and outreach to unrepresented communities. In developing a policy for participation in the listserv and the annual colloquium, members further refined the mission of the Consortium. These topics will be discussed at the annual colloquium hosted by the Minneapolis Jewish community in May, 2008. The ongoing effort to create policies and strategies will enable the Consortium to engage in meaningful outreach to communities throughout the country.

*Dr. Shana Erenberg & Becca Hornstein  
Consortium Chairpersons*

## Consortium News

### Atlanta, GA

In the last few years there has been a virtual flood of information about building inclusive communities and on providing better support for families who have members with diverse abilities. I am very proud of The Amit Program's accomplishments in advocating for children with special needs and their families to be included in their schools, synagogues and the community. Amit has become a resource to Jewish and non-Jewish families, professionals, schools and agencies throughout Atlanta and the nation.

Just this past month, we had visitors from the Jewish communities of Washington, D.C. and Boston who toured our programs and spent time with staff and lay leaders of Amit to hear about our services and learn from our success. In addition, I am now working with a group from Kennesaw State University which hopes to create learning opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities on their college campus. We even had a visiting professor from Alexandria, Egypt visit our program. He was very impressed with how our children are made to feel so much a part of the host school.

We have come far from the early days at JES with one staff person and a few very dedicated volunteers. I no longer wonder if anyone is going to show up for a guest speaker or other program. Instead we need to make sure the venue is going to be large enough to hold all those who wish to attend. Our Parent Virtual Network now serves close to 70 families and our day school classrooms are bursting at the seams. In just a few weeks we will be visited by a team of professionals from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. We are confident that we will pass our accreditation visit with flying colors.

The Amit Board is now in the process of strategic planning for our next five years and beyond. Today our agenda is quite different than it was 12 years ago. We no longer have to define who we are; instead we struggle to keep up with

the need and to offer a continuum of services to the growing population of children with special needs in our community.

When those outside of the Jewish community look at our success and ask how we have accomplished so much, it is an easy answer. We are fortunate to live in a community that understands the key principles of creating an environment in which families can truly feel part of Klal Yisrael. Our community values diversity, believes in a sense of belonging, and strives to offer community support.

The Amit Community School Program offers the following educational support:

### **Preschool Services:**

New this year, the Amit Early Intervention Task Force has developed a pilot program which will serve five Jewish preschools in our first year. This pilot program was made possible by a generous grant which established the Samsky Speech Therapist Position. Part-time therapists will spend 10 hours each week on site at their assigned preschool to mentor the teachers in early identification and early intervention. They will also provide direct services on a sliding fee scale.

### **Day School Services:**

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

*The Amit Gar'inim Program* is a modified self contained program for children with developmental disabilities and is housed at The Davis Academy, a Reform Jewish day school. Gar'inim currently serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Students receive individualized and small group instruction in academics and join with their peers in Davis Academy classrooms for all non-academic programming. When appropriate,

students participate in academic subject areas as well. Speech/Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Social Skills Therapy are integrated into the school day. The program will continue to expand adding grade levels each year and we are looking to open satellite locations in other Jewish day schools this fall.

#### **Congregational School Services:**

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

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

#### **Additional Services:**

AmitParentNetwork is a virtual support group for families of children with special needs. At the suggestion of a parent the AmitParentNetwork was formed as a way for parents to communicate on a regular basis with questions, concerns, advice, etc.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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#### **Baltimore, MD**

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

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

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

The new *STARS Program*, providing Students Testing Assistance, Referrals and Support has been launched. Made possible through the generosity of the Charles Crane Family Foundation, the goal of this program is to provide support to fifteen families and schools as they pursue assessments for suspected disabilities, as well as to provide funding to ensure families with financial need access to assessments that the school system does not provide. Our special education consultants work with area school staff to help them implement testing recommendations.

*CORE* (Creating Opportunities for Reading Education) is a new program this year. CORE is designed to assist kindergarten teachers in three day schools in Baltimore to assess, monitor, and provide intervention in reading for students in their classes. There are three primary components to CORE: assessment using the DIBELS, modeling effective strategies by a reading coach, and continued professional development for teachers.

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

*Jewish Special Educators Network* supports parents, related services professionals and general classroom teachers – not only special educators! We held a four-part workshop series, *The Mystery of the Struggling Reader*, attended by over 150 Jewish educators, professionals and parents representing day, congregational and pre-schools from across the Jewish ideological spectrum. In addition, we continue to maintain our list-serv that enables workshop participants to connect between sessions.

#### **Building on our successful workshop series, the annual Spring Seminar in May:**

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

have been available at all parent teacher conferences and school events.

**Our ongoing programs include:**

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

*Gesher LaTorah*, our Sunday Jewish education program for children with severe special needs, continues to grow, with over 40 students enrolled. Our partnership with the JCC includes Sunday Funday, a full day of respite every other week for parents of our students. *Gesher LaTorah* includes the TAG program for adults who are interested in vocational and community service opportunities. TAG has a meaningful partnership with an Assisted Living Facility, in which our students volunteer and learn Torah with seniors every week. Last year, *Gesher LaTorah* received a generous donation that created the Lawrence Braverman Computer Lab. Our students have been able to gain many benefits from this new technology, reinforcing key concepts that are learned in the classrooms, such as Hebrew reading, vocabulary and Torah stories.

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

In addition, MD S.N.A.P. offers ongoing workshops throughout the year for our advocates as well as others interested in

the field. MD S.N.A.P. presented a collaborative workshop with Maryland Disability Law Center for parents and advocates regarding the reauthorization of IDEIA following the publication of the much-anticipated new federal regulations. MD S.N.A.P. has recently joined forces with Jewish Legal Services to provide pro-bono services to families invoking their due process rights.

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

CJE is proud of our community collaborative projects. *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. The *Professional Advisory Committee on Special Needs of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore* includes these agencies as well as other community agencies that serve individuals with disabilities in the Jewish community. These groups are working hard to communicate and plan services for children with special needs and their families.

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

CJE continues to partner with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Baltimore Jewish Council to advocate for quality education for children in our community through

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

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

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### **Boston, MA**

Just over five years ago, despite our standing in many other areas, Boston was not known for Jewish special education. Though the BJE invested modest sums to maintain a very part-time "presence", with the hope that one of its proposals would bear fruit, Boston did not even participate in JESNA's annual meeting of the Consortium of Jewish Special Educators in Central Agencies. In 2005, for the first time, the annual event was held here! During the past several years, funds from the community's Combined Jewish Philanthropies have exceeded all other years combined. The 16 congregation programs, five preschools and 14 day schools are all more inclusive than ever before.

### **Two special programs are in process and evolving rapidly:**

In General Studies, we focused on a reading approach for grades K-2 and for students of all grades with special needs, introducing the Creative Reading Program (formerly the Wisnia-Kapp Reading Program), developed by Sharon Weiss-Kapp, Clinical Assistant Professor in the Language Laboratory in the Graduate Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Massachusetts General Hospital. Three workshops were given to introduce and implement this program to support children with language-based learning problems.

To support our teachers of Hebrew, local educator Stephanie Bernstein offered workshops based on her adaptation of WKRP for Hebrew instruction. Participants from 8 day schools attended an introductory workshop, to be followed by two day-long workshops and follow-up visits by Stephanie. Last year we funded a pilot program involving the multi-sensory Hebrew curriculum described above. After attending an initial workshop, three

synagogues and the Sudbury Valley Jewish Special Education Initiative were selected to participate in additional workshops, receive materials, and visit Stephanie Bernstein's class to see the program in action. She has provided follow-up coaching on a regular basis. Teachers of the weekly summer "Pizza and Practice" remedial Hebrew program have participated in the training and implemented the Hebrew reading program during the summer.

At present, outreach to five other programs is in process and a new cycle of training and mentoring to implement this effective multi-sensory approach to Hebrew instruction is under consideration.

Second, to support the implementation of actual inclusion throughout the region in each institution, the Special Needs Professional Committee of Greater Boston was invited by the Synagogue Council of Massachusetts to speak with the President's Council at their Annual Breakfast. Following their business meeting we planned and shared an informative session on "Creating Inclusive Congregations: How Open are Our Doors?"

During our brief time together on Sunday morning, we field tested a newly designed synagogue self-study tool to help assess where each congregation is developmentally with respect to inclusion. Then we talked about ways to take steps toward further action. We brought together some basic information about the different synagogue buildings and programs. The questions asked included: How accessible is your building now? Are there children and/or adults in your congregation who need some special accommodations? OR, how many individuals do you serve who have disabilities? What changes have you already made toward inclusion? What changes would you like to make?

The session was presented by:

- Sherry Grossman, M.Ed. MAJS, Director of Special Education Services, Bureau of Jewish Education

- Mindee Meltzer, LCSW, Ed.M., Social Worker at Jewish Family Service of Metrowest

As part of the program, Dr. Harvey Lowell -- President of Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters and past President of Temple Emunah in Lexington, and his son, Shalom, a CHAI resident of Avalon in Newton and an alumnus and former staff of Camp Ramah's Tikvah Program - - discussed their family's journey through our Jewish community's offerings for individuals with special needs.

The program received rave reviews and the feedback gleaned has already provided us with concrete next steps. Our goal is to prepare the tool for the Hebrew month of IYAR Disability Awareness Month, May 6-June 3, 2008.

### **Regional Programs**

#### *Brookline Area Special Education Collaborative*

Temple Sinai & Congregation Ohabei Shalom, Brookline and Temple Israel of Boston

This collaborative focuses on teaching Hebrew to students with learning difficulties. The staff has been expanded to be able to provide support services.

#### *Lexington B'Yachad Program at Temples Emunah and Isaiah*

These schools offer special education support for children with special needs and their families. Students who are unable to participate in a regular classroom setting are served in a self-contained class which is open to the entire community. The program also helps students with special needs learn alongside their peers in an inclusion model for synagogue members. The part-time education director provides professional consultation to inclusive classroom teachers as well as to the teachers of the self-contained class. A new class begun in 2007-2008 supports children who are twice exceptional – gifted and learning disabled.

#### *Newton Area Special Needs Program at Congregation Mishkan Tefila and Temple Emanuel*

Each congregation offers special education support for students using both in-class and pull-out models.

*South Area Regional Center at Beth Emunah, Brockton; Ahavath Torah Congregation, Stoughton; Temple Beth Abraham, Canton*

The goal of this program is to provide students with an appropriate learning environment according to their needs so they may acquire the skills needed to become a B'nai Mitzvah and to lead active Jewish lives as they continue on their Jewish journey. Students receive special education support for Hebrew reading and Judaics.

*Sudbury Valley Jewish Special Education Initiative at Congregation Beth Elohim, Acton; Congregation Kerem Shalom, Concord; Congregations Beth El and B'nai Torah, Sudbury; Congregation Or Atid, Wayland*  
These congregations have joined together for both professional development and service delivery. This collaborative is committed to ensuring that all children in the five congregations are able to participate in Jewish education and practice. Part-time co-executive directors of the program coordinate the services and provides consultative support to teachers. Each school receives approximately 2 hours per month of consultative support from a special educator and 2 hours per week of tutorial/remedial service for children. Each consultant has a slightly different background so that the team can provide support, as needed, to children with different learning issues. The Initiative sponsors an annual professional development conference on "Noteworthy Special Education Practices" open to all Jewish educators. This year's conference is being held Sunday, November 18th at Hebrew College.

#### **Individual Synagogue Programs**

*Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley*  
The co-directors of this inclusive program observe children in classrooms and make suggestions to the teacher for curriculum modifications and instructional accommodations. Some children are pulled out of the classroom for extra support by a tutor who receives consultation from the director.

*Congregation Kehillath Israel, Brookline*

This school program supports students with special needs in an inclusive environment. The special educator

supports children's learning and consults with teachers about the best ways to support children's skill development and social interactions.

*Temple Reyim, Newton*

A special educator consults with teachers about students' special learning needs and provides support for teachers to make appropriate accommodations in the classroom.

#### **Day School Programs**

*CJP/BJE Initiative for Day School Excellence: Special Education*  
Now in its third year of funding, this initiative is expanding special education services to all our day schools. The funding covers additional staff, classroom supports, professional development, funding for Gateways: Access to Jewish Education, and research & evaluation. As part of the professional development programming nationally renowned speakers offer lectures open to our entire community. Close to 300 day school professionals attended conferences held in June and August 2007 on Differentiated Instruction hosted by the Rashi School and Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston. This conference featured a main speaker from All Kinds of Minds and a choice of afternoon workshops.

*Gann Academy, Jewish Community Day School, Maimonides School, MetroWest Jewish Day School, New England Hebrew Academy, Rashi School, Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston, South Area Solomon Schechter Day School, Striar Hebrew Academy of Sharon, Torah Academy*  
These day schools have special educators, reading specialists, psychologists and/or social workers on staff to provide support for staff and students with mild to moderate special needs. Please talk with them about the specific services offered.

#### **Community Programs**

*Brandeis Jewish Education Program*  
([www.bjep.com](http://www.bjep.com))

A special educator provides support for teachers and students as they work with

children with a variety of learning styles and needs.

#### **Preschool Programs**

*Temple Kehillath Israel Nursery School, Newton*

A part-time speech and language therapist was hired to support children with special needs, educate the staff about teaching children with special needs, consult with parents and help the staff determine how they can accommodate children with special needs into the preschool.

*Temple Beth Shalom, Framingham*

This preschool program is using its grant for professional development. A speech and language pathologist presented on typical and atypical development and observed in classrooms. Staff will be attending a workshop on motor development and on delivering difficult information to parents. Classrooms have added more visuals and some special chairs and equipment.

*Temple Israel, Boston*

This preschool program offers support for teachers in identifying developmental issues of children with special needs and providing for their learning.

*Temple Beth Shalom, Needham*

Support for teachers was increased through a grant which enables a psychologist and speech therapist to work in the schools and give guidance to the staff.

*Jewish Preschool of Lexington*

This school benefits from professional development opportunities for the staff and parents to help children who develop difficulties as they grow and learn.

#### **Additional Funded Programs**

*Hebrew Curriculum*

This highly interactive, multi-sensory approach to teaching Hebrew is used in classrooms to facilitate children's success in Hebrew reading and with individual children who need remedial help. This grant enables schools to attend workshops, visit a classroom to see the program, obtain the curriculum materials, and receive coaching from the creator of these materials, Stephanie

Bernstein. This curriculum is being piloted in the following schools and programs: Congregation Kerem Shalom, Concord; Temple Ohabei Shalom, Brookline; Temple Beth Emunah, Brockton; Sudbury Valley Jewish Special Education Initiative; Temple Sinai and Klal Yisrael, Sharon; Brandeis Jewish Education Program. Over 300 students using this program are successfully learning and retaining Hebrew reading skills.

#### *TeenAde*

Teens spend about 30 hours in seminars throughout the year learning about disabilities, Jewish views on disabilities, and teaching strategies. A special focus this year is on the power of story telling. For the academic year 07-08, we placed 18 TeenAde in congregational schools, teaching in inclusive classrooms and/or with individual children who have special learning needs and receive supervision from special educators and BJE staff. The seminars provided the students with the opportunity to share practices, learn about themselves and develop friendships. Since its inception in 2002, we have prepared 60 teens who have been placed in 15 congregational schools with special educators on staff. Sunday Seminars take place at the BJE on Sept. 9, Oct. 21, Nov. 4, Dec. 2, Jan. 6 & 27, Mar. 2, Apr. 6, May 4. A final celebration will be held at the end of May.

#### *Minyan Me'YOUchad*

Shabbat is celebrated in an interactive and inspirational service designed for people of all ages with special needs and their families and friends. Services are held at Congregation Kehillath Israel (384 Harvard St., Brookline) for a Ruach-filled (spirited) service from 10:30-12:30 in Lander's Hall that includes prayers, songs, and Torah reading and lesson. The entire congregation joins the Minyan for Kiddush following services. Services for 2007-2008 are Oct. 6, Nov. 17, Dec. 15, Jan. 26, Feb. 9, Mar. 15, Apr. 12, and May 17. (This program is partially supported by grants from BBJCF and Synagogue Council as well as CJP/BJE.)

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### **Chicago, Illinois**

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

The following information was compiled from Central Agencies for Jewish Education in Chicago, as well as through the program directors. If any programs were inadvertently omitted, please accept my apologies.

#### **Anne M. Blitstein Teachers Institute of Hebrew Theological College**

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

disabilities, and autistic spectrum disorders. The education programs offer a high faculty to student ratio and a challenging curriculum taught by experts in the field of education. Current teachers can also take courses to fulfill continuing education and NCLB requirements.

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

#### **Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago**

The Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago has launched the *Makor Or Center*. Hebrew for "source of light" *Makor Or* will address a significant need in the Chicago community: to provide a model of excellence in Jewish education for all students, and to facilitate inclusion for students with special needs in Jewish educational settings. By providing innovative materials and support for religious and day school teachers, students with special needs will receive the instruction they need to succeed. This exciting new endeavor will focus on best practices in universal design and differentiated instruction, and house a collection of Jewish resources for teachers and families, including books, music, games and technology.

In November, *Makor Or* sponsored two workshops by Rick Lavoie entitled "It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success" and "The Motivation Breakthrough: Six Secrets to Turning On the Tuned-Out Child." Over three hundred and fifty

parents, teachers and administrators attended the workshops. Future workshops and teacher inservice opportunities are being planned. *Makor Or* also offers hands-on workshops for religious school classes as well as for teachers to provide rich, differentiated educational experiences.

*Makor Or* is also working closely with The Friendship Circle of Illinois to provide social and recreational experiences for Jewish children and young adults with special needs. The first program held was the Purim Bubble Mania. Families of children with special needs were invited for an afternoon of entertainment, megillah reading, Purim crafts, and preparation of mishloach manot.

*Makor Or* is in the process of training a cadre of experts in Jewish Special Education to serve as the *Makor Or Consultants*. Upon completion of an intensive training program, the consultants will be available to religious school programs to provide guidance on differentiated instruction, best practices in Jewish special education, and to facilitate inclusion of students with special needs. The *Makor Or Consultants* group was founded in response to a needs assessment conducted by the Board of Jewish Education and the Community Foundation for Jewish Education which indicates a large number of Jewish children with special needs who were not being adequately served in supplementary and Sunday schools.

**Community Foundation for Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago**  
Produced by the Community Foundation for Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago's imprint Nachshon Press, *Homeland: The Illustrated History of the State of Israel* is a graphic novel filled with sequential pictures and historical information that makes it easy for both children and adults to learn from. It tells a seamless narrative from the biblical land of Israel to the current state of Israel; using both art and real photographs to depict this story. The book has won the *National Jewish Book Award* as well as the *Moonbeam Children's Book Award*. *Homeland* has been publicly reviewed, by Jews and

non-Jews. The Midwest Book Review (October 2007) describes *Homeland* as "a historical overview of 3,500 years of Israel's complex and complicated history presented with the accuracy of university level scholarship and accessibility of a graphic novel.. a welcome and enthusiastically recommended addition to personal, school, and community library collections." The illustrations are the nuclei of this graphic novel. These fascinating pictures bring the story of the land of Israel to life. They prove the old adage that the right pictures can be worth thousands of words. The text is concise but rich and edifying so the reader easily retains the information from both the text and the illustrations. *Homeland* has such a remarkable presentation that all children and adults will be given an educational experience no other text book could provide. The text can be easily adapted for special education with students who have a variety of special needs. [www.homelandisrael.com](http://www.homelandisrael.com)

#### **ELAN**

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

#### **Friendship Circle**

The local chapter of The Friendship Circle began in September of 2006, offering a wide range of Judaic, social and educational experiences for children with special needs and their families. The Friendship Circle currently has enrolled more than 60 volunteers from 11 high schools. After an in-depth training, teenage volunteers are paired with children who have a wide range of disabilities. Most volunteer weekly at the home of a child with special needs, to provide friendship and company. "We have found this program to have the greatest impact on our teen volunteers. These students take time from their schedules and make this a priority, to

play with a child with special needs." says Rabbi Zelik Moscovitz, Director of The Stuart I. Raskas Friendship Circle of Illinois. Parents are given a chance to kick up their feet, or tend to the needs of other siblings. Other programs for the children include Mom's Night Out, Children's Circle, Young Adults Circle, and Holiday Events. More information can be found on their web site [www.FCIL.org](http://www.FCIL.org). The Friendship Circle is an affiliate of Lubavitch Chabad.

#### **Gesher HaTorah**

Gesher HaTorah Day School began in 2005 as a community-initiated response to a profound need. Students who could function well in conventional day schools as well as those who had severe impairments both had choices for appropriate schools. On the other hand, students with mild disorders and/or a need for intensive therapeutics had no choices for an appropriate Orthodox Jewish education. These students whose impairments were too mild for the severe-focused institutions, but too severe for conventional day schools were either not in school, struggling in their existing placements, or tolerating public school settings whose values and standards were not consistent with communal norms. An accomplished educational psychologist, an eminent and experienced retired day school principal, and a dedicated and concerned parent worked together to develop a school that would combine substantive Torah and secular education with intensive therapeutic services to address this heretofore poorly serviced population. They were also jointly committed to developing an institution within the community consistent with its religious and educational standards and values.

Gesher HaTorah presently serves 26 students in an environment of very individualized and low operating ratio instruction. In addition, there is a full time staff that provides intensive therapeutics which include occupational therapy, speech/language therapy, and social work. An experienced exercise physiologist implements appropriate physical education experiences which include martial arts and conventional sports. Aides are also integrated into the instructional work of the classroom, occasionally bringing innovative

approaches that augment the work of the teacher. The environment of Gesher HaTorah encourages innovative collaborations between the instructional staff, therapists, and physical education personnel that all work together to accelerate the learning of students. The ultimate goal is to mainstream all students, returning them to day schools when appropriate.

### **Jewish Child and Family Services**

The Jewish Children's Bureau is a partner in serving our community, supported by the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation. The *JCFS Therapeutic Day School* is designed to meet the needs of students with behavioral and emotional disorders and attempts to provide an atmosphere that helps to alleviate these behaviors. In its attempt to address the emotional and behavioral issues of the students, the program offers individual and group therapy, as well as individualized and small group special education services. The school operates on the principle that a therapeutic environment for students with emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities requires meaningful participation from parents, mental health professionals, the community and the students themselves. The Therapeutic Day School is accredited and licensed by the North Central Association and the Illinois State Board of Education. In addition to working with the Chicago Public Schools, the School works in conjunction with many suburban school districts from the North Shore, Lake County and the Western suburbs.

The school also offers a *Yeshiva Program* that provides a therapeutic environment for students whose behavioral, social and/or learning problems significantly interfere with their academic work and/or their classroom behavior at other day or public schools. The Yeshiva requires meaningful participation from parents, mental health professionals, the community, and the students themselves. JCFS Yeshiva students live in their own homes and attend school with the involvement and approval of their home school districts. JCFS Yeshiva integrates strong Judaic, secular and vocational programs with an intensive clinical program of day treatment.

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

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

The *Virginia Frank Child Development Center*, a program of the *Glick Center for Early Childhood Services*, offers a continuum of caring, preventive and therapeutic services for children ages birth to six. Virginia Frank operates on the principle that children, families and service providers grow and develop most in the context of reciprocal and supportive relationships. Our staff supports the achievement of a child's developmental milestones and promotes a strong parent-child foundation. With staff expertise in infant mental health, family systems and developmental

theory and practice, the Center's programs prevent the long-term consequences of developmental delays, depression, neglect and child abuse. The Center offers a Therapeutic Nursery and Kindergarten, as well as Get Together, an hour and a half drop-in program for parents with children under five.

### **Keshet**

Founded in 1982, Keshet is a not-for-profit organization providing educational, recreational, and vocational programs for children and young adults with developmental disabilities. Keshet programs include: *Ariella Joy Frankel Keshet Day School - K-8th* and the *Irving A. Hokin Keshet High School - 9th-12th*; *Keshet Transition Program* for young adults ages 18 through 21; *The Cooperative Community-Based Program for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*; *Summer Camp* programs; *Jacqueline Besser Keshet Special Olympics*; and *Keshet Sunday School*. Keshet also hosts the *Leventhal Keshet Autism Training and Demonstration Center*, and has become a TEACCH training site for the State of Illinois.

### **Otzar**

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

### **P'TACH**

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

### **Walder Education Pavilion of Torah Umesorah**

The Walder Education Pavilion of Torah Umesorah is committed to the ideal that "all children deserve to be taught in the way that best helps them to reach their potential". From their wing of educational learning centers and games to hands-on projects and interactive bulletin boards, each department is infused with ways to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all students. They are currently developing a Learning Disabilities Department with the help of a learning disabilities resource specialist, a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, and a physical therapist. These specialists are experts in their respective fields and are assisting in the development of curricula that strives for academic success for all children. They maintain a role at the Pavilion to help instruct, guide, and support educators to reach all students regardless of learning styles or challenges.

To assist other educators in bringing out their students' potential, the Walder Education Pavilion of Torah Umesorah, in conjunction with the Associated Talmud Torahs (ATT) of Chicago, and with the financial support of the Jewish Federation and the Foundation for Learning and Development, is implementing the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment Program (FIE) in Chicago and day schools. FIE is a program based on paper and pencil exercises that help children develop critical thinking skills, social and emotional awareness, and organizational

and spatial dexterity. This past summer, over 60 educators from across the United States came to the Walder Education Pavilion of Torah Umesorah to be trained to administer FIE at their respective institutions. FIE technical support is provided by the Pavilion to help participants from across the United States who implement Feuerstein in their communities. The Pavilion has plans to continue to provide annual FIE training conferences in the summers ahead. The center is currently working on developing a Feuerstein Center to expand the services that FIE can offer to individual children and their families.

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

In addition to the aforementioned programs, most of the Jewish Day Schools in the Chicago area offer resource and social work services for students with learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral issues. At the elementary level, *Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School*, *Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov Elementary*, *Yeshivas Tiferes Tzvi*, *Yeshiva Shearis Yisroel: The Veitzener Cheder* and *Arie Crown Hebrew Day School* are among the schools that offer resource assistance. *Hillel Torah* also offers accelerated learning opportunities gifted students. *The Solomon Schechter Day School* system (Northbrook, Skokie, and Middle School) offer an array of pull out and in-class resource services. *The Akiba-Schechter Day School* offers creative programming and levels for students with learning issues as well as for students who are gifted. At the high school level, *the Ida Crown Jewish Academy* and *the Hannah Sacks Girls School* offer resource services for students with special learning needs.

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### **Cleveland, OH**

The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JECC) works with schools, congregations and agencies to develop and implement programs that dramatically improve Jewish education in Cleveland. The mission of the JECC is

to ensure Jewish continuity in Cleveland by fostering and strengthening lifelong Jewish learning in various settings and forms. The Special Education Department offers services to students in day schools through SEGULA and in supplementary schools through Etgar, and provides in-service training opportunities to special education coordinators and teachers in the field.

The SEGULA program provides critical support services in the classroom that enable special needs students to receive cultural, educational and social benefits of a Jewish day school education. The program has expanded, providing individual adaptation and intervention specialists for 19 students, ages 5-18, enrolled in the 5 Jewish day schools affiliated with the JECC. SEGULA Intervention Specialists provide one on one adaptation, intervention and socialization skills during Judaic and general studies. Each Intervention Specialist is supervised by an Educational Coordinator. The role of the Judaic and secular coordinator is to be in the classroom one to two days per week, adapt curriculum and tests, provide supervision, and ensure that an effective team is working together to meet the child's needs. The Educational Coordinators have a bi-weekly team meeting to share concerns and brainstorm effective interventions.

A nine hour training session was provided in November and December of 2007 for the Intervention Specialists. The presenter, Vivian Garfunkel, an outstanding educator in our community, presented a three part series entitled "Visualization/Verbalization". This class is taught in several of the colleges in our community and in other cities across the country. The sessions provided the theoretical background and the practical implementation and techniques to help students develop the skills to enhance both visualization and verbalization skills. To date, the implementation of the techniques has been very effective.

The Etgar program of the JECC provides supplemental religious education to any Jewish student in the greater Cleveland area who is not able to learn in the regular congregational setting due to a variety of special needs. Etgar currently serves 18 students, ranging in age from 7

to 21 years old, from a consortium of 10 area synagogues. Etgar classes, led by highly qualified special education teachers, provide the structure, materials and teaching format crucial for a successful religious school experience. The teacher to pupil ratio is kept low to ensure student success. Students attend classes according to age and abilities during regular religious school hours.

Etgar students began the 2007-2008 school year with an intergenerational Rosh Hashanah program at Menorah Park Center, a Jewish home for the elderly. Culminating the end of the 2006-2007 school year was a Passover learning experience where a Rabbi from Chabad's Living Legacy Holiday Series taught the students to make matzah in a Model Matzah Bakery. Special learning programs, made possible by the Bobby Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, have included celebration of Tu B'Shevat with a Drum Circle and visits to the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage as well as the Passover program.

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### **Columbus, OH**

The Columbus Jewish Federation's Jewish Education and Identity (JEdI) Department provides support for individuals and families with special needs. Founded in 1996, its programs currently serve more than 70 children and adults and their families. The department works with more than 200 teachers in thirteen schools and institutions in the Columbus Jewish Community.

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

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

### **New Programs**

#### *Teen Tsiburim/Yachad/Partnership 2000*

Eleven teenagers with a wide range of disabilities participate with the P2K Young Partners group of typical peers in monthly social, educational and recreational programs centered on Jewish Values and Ethics. The Partnership 2000 program of the Columbus Jewish Federation selected nine teens to partner with nine teens from Kfar Saba, our partnership city. Both groups agreed to volunteer to work with students with disabilities in their respective cities. The typical teens in both cities communicate on a regular basis and share their experiences working with this population.

With funding provided from The Federation, the Stuart and Marilyn Cole Fund at The Columbus Jewish Foundation and the National Jewish Council for the Disabled, the teens with disabilities and their partners fulfill mitzvot such as helping to build a synagogue's succah, visiting residents in a nursing home, being kind to animals, and baking challah.

### **Ongoing Programs**

#### *Services to the Deaf Community*

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

#### *Kesher*

This program, providing support services in congregational religious schools to children with a wide range of disabilities, has expanded its services to include students with disabilities including

hearing impairment, learning disabilities, emotional and behavior issues and mild developmental disabilities. Each child is assigned an aide to provide individualized support to enable the child to succeed in his/her religious school classroom. The number of students served increases each year. The program is funded through the Federation's annual campaign.

#### *Bar/Bat Mitzvah class*

In its eighth year, our class for students with more involved needs actively prepares middle school and high school students for participation in a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony that is meaningful and specifically designed for each child. Students who have already become a bar/bat mitzvah continue to attend classes to reinforce and enhance their Jewish identity. Eight students representing five congregations meet for two hours each Sunday morning at Congregation Tifereth Israel. Dedicated personnel with highly specialized training are available to help each student participate as fully as possible in a wide range of Jewish learning. Funding for this program is provided by the Federation, parent tuition and individual synagogues.

#### *Yachad*

This program, affiliated with the National Jewish Council for the Disabled, provides unique social, educational and recreational mainstreamed programs for the developmentally disabled. Our Yachad chapter serves two populations; young adults and teens. Activities include field trips to museums, community programs, and sports activities. Special events are planned around Jewish holiday themes. The Columbus chapter is sponsored by the national organization, the Federation, and Jewish Family Services. Additional funding is received from private donors.

#### *Synagogue Inclusion*

The JEdI Department provides consultation to area synagogues to support inclusion of individuals with disabilities in ritual services. Modified Shabbat services are held in one synagogue to accommodate children and adults with developmental disabilities among the typical congregants. This synagogue has also increased

accessibility for congregants with physical disabilities. Another synagogue provides sign language interpreting for ritual services.

#### *Friendship Circle*

The JEdI Department partners with the Schottenstein Chabad House and Jewish Family Services to provide training for volunteers to become "buddies" with children with disabilities. The Friendship Circle program engages students from 12 to 20 years old and coordinates weekly visits to homes of children with special needs. Volunteers receive training in disability awareness, medical and safety concerns, behavior management and meaningful play. Licensed professionals lead all training workshops.

#### *Resource Collection*

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

#### *Professional Development*

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

#### *Consultation to Schools*

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

assessment of individual student needs, home visits, and curriculum support.

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

The department also provides curricular materials on disability awareness and sensitivity training to congregational schools.

#### *Information and Referral Service*

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

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

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#### **Detroit, MI**

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

As we begin our twelfth year of operation, our Opening the Doors Partnership Program of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit's Alliance for Jewish Education continues to "open the doors of opportunity" for children with special needs in our community. Our partners are Early Childhood Schools, Day Schools and Congregational Schools across the

denominational spectrum—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Humanistic Judaism. Each partnership school receives funding from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit to provide for the hiring of our Special Educators (with Master's Degrees or near completion of Master's Degree) to implement supplementary services on site. Each school's model of service delivery is specialized to fit the needs and philosophy of each school.

We are proud of the growth of our program. We began the program by serving 225 children in 13 schools, and now we are helping close to 800 children in 23 partnership schools! The children we serve range from kindergarten to high school. We help children with a variety of disabilities that include: *Learning Disabled, ADD/HD, Speech and Language Impaired, Hearing Impaired, Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome and Central Auditory Processing Disorder*. The Special Educators are used as consultants, pull-out teachers, or resource room teachers who deliver supplemental support.

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

#### **Doors to the Future**

We are grateful to be the recipients of a new two-year grant from the *Mandell L. and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation* for the "Doors to the Future" early childhood inclusion program. We are currently in the second year of the grant. This grant enables us to continue to provide early intervention that will help preschool children have a successful early childhood experience. It provides one-on-one assistance to preschoolers who need temporary intervention to help them function successfully in the classroom. Our program is based on

scientific research that early intervention reduces behavioral, social and learning disabilities.

We serve about 20 children each year who may be considered at-risk or may have learning difficulties. Three Para Educators are placed into seven early childhood partner schools. We provide our Para Educators with formal coursework at Oakland Schools to obtain Para Educator certification. Our Para Educator Coordinator, Helene Weiss Kohn, (certified with a Masters' Degree in Special Education and experience in Early Childhood Development), supervises them. Formal evaluation results from parents, classroom teachers and directors indicates that this service is highly beneficial and a valuable resource. We extend our gratitude to the Berman Foundation for their confidence and commitment to our program and for enabling us to make a real difference in the lives of our young children!

This year we implemented a tribute card program. We designed tribute cards for families to use to mark significant occasions, such as birthdays or passings. The parents of children in "Doors to the Future" have the option of buying a single card, or pre-packed cards to send to the recipients of their choice. The revenue from these purchases enable the parents to be more involved, as a partner to this program.

#### **Para Educator Lunch & Learn Program**

A new program implemented this year is a *Doors to The Future Lunch & Learn Professional Development Program* for our Early Childhood Para Educators. The past speaker was Educational Consultant Marcia Mitnick who spoke on the topic of "*Understanding and Responding to Children's Cues*". She provided many specific, practical tips and strategies for young children and emphasized the need to be the advocate for the child first. It was very worthwhile for all who attended.

#### **Special Educators Network**

Our team of 18 Opening the Doors Special Education teachers meets quarterly throughout the year to discuss relevant issues and to share current

thoughts, methodology and experiences. Our recent meeting was held at Shalom Street- the Jewish Museum located in our Jewish Community Center. Their Exhibit of the Year was "Every Picture Tells A Story", which was designed to teach tolerance through children's literature. Every one of the educators truly benefitted from the fantastic program. The upcoming speaker for our network meeting is Robyn Glickman, Lower Elementary School Principal of Hillel Day School and Program Director of Efsar Sunday School. She will speak on the topic: "Act Don't React: Handling Challenging Behavior with Dignity and Diplomacy."

#### **Efsar Sunday School**

Our Efsar program, under the capable direction of Robyn Glickman, continues to expand each year. It provides a Jewish education for children with more complex learning, developmental, and behavioral challenges. Individualized and multi-sensory instruction reflecting the needs of learning, development and behavioral challenges contribute to a meaningful Judaic curriculum. Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, music, crafts, holiday celebrations, drama and family programs are integral components of the Efsar program. After the preparation, students may return to their home congregation to have their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Enrollment for the program has really grown this year.

#### **Specialist Series**

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

- Dr. Roger Lauer Ph.D., and Dr. Isabelle Beaulieu Ph.D, Center for Neuropsychology & Learning, spoke on, "*Who's Running the Ship? Executive Functioning in Students: What They Are, and How Can We Help*"
- Jill Guz, Occupational Therapist and Abilities Center Director spoke on, "Weaving Sensory Motor Strategies into the Classroom: Tools for the Teacher".

- Max Wiznitzer, Pediatric Neurologist and Director of Rainbow Babies and Autism Center at Children's Hospital in Cleveland gave an informal question and answer session called, "*A Taste of Dr. Max*"
- Robyn Glickman, Lower Elementary School Principal of Hillel Day School, gave a presentation on, "*Act Don't React: Handling Challenging Behavior with Dignity and Diplomacy*"

#### **Individual School Support for Teachers and Parents**

This year we provided school support for the teachers and staff of various nursery and congregational school in the community by arranging speakers to present on an educational topic of interest. Dr. Daniel Klein Psy.D. P.C. spoke on the topic of "*Childhood Aggression: Why Does it Happen? What Can We Do?*" He provided tips and strategies on dealing with aggressive behavior in young children. He also spoke to one nursery school on the topic of "*Enhancing Relationships and Building Competence with Special Needs and Challenging Children.*" Additionally, Robyn Glickman, Principal of Hillel Day School, will speak on the topic of "*Act Don't React: Handling Challenging Behavior with Dignity and Diplomacy,*" as requested by the nursery school directors.

#### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

The Federation's Special Education Committee comprised of professionals, Special Education teachers and Federation laity has crafted an "*Anti-Bullying Policy*" which begins to address the methods of confronting and correcting the problems of bullying and harassment. This code of conduct was based on handbooks from the Michigan State Board of Education and local school policies. The directors of each local school have agreed to adopt this draft as a universal policy or to adjust it to fit their particular school's needs. This year the "*Anti Bullying Policy*" has been implemented in all our Nursery schools, Day schools, and Congregational schools. Other institutions such as JCC and the Fresh Air Society (a residential

camp) are reviewing this policy for possible implementation into their settings as well. It is our goal that this Bullying Policy will be a way for our community to address the serious issue of bullying, teasing, and harassment between children and adolescents.

This year we were proud to co-sponsor Nick Dubin and Wilma Fellman- both authors of books about dealing with special needs- during the annual Book Fair at our JCC. Nick, the author of *"Asperger's Syndrome and Bullying: Strategies and Solutions,"* spoke about his experiences growing up as a child with Asperger's Syndrome and how he suffered from bullying by his classmates. Wilma, the author of *"Finding a Career that Works for You,"* spoke about job opportunities for the special needs adults in our community. The event was very well received by all of the attendees.

#### **Tallit Program**

We have implemented a new pilot project- Special Needs Tallit Program. This project helps special needs pre-B'nai Mitzvah children in the congregational schools create an individualized hand-woven Bar/Bat Mitzvah tallit. This is an opportunity for each student to make a tallit with their parents' assistance. We instruct 6<sup>th</sup> grade special needs students in the history of the tallit and the Jewish symbolism of the garment as well as how to use the floor-loom for the weaving of the tallit. The tallit will be designed and woven by the students with assistance from their parents. The students will then learn how to tie tzitzit on the four corners and practice saying the blessing for the tallit with their clergy and tutors. At the conclusion of the project, each child will have had a successful experience and have a beautifully designed and executed hand-woven tallit for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah that truly was made with his/her own hands. Some of the students have talked about this unique experience in their d'var Torah at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

#### **Disabilities Awareness**

Our Special Educators enjoyed using our two original storybooks with guided discussion questions which were offered for our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Each book

was written and illustrated by Julie Schwartz, a Covenant intern and made possible by a generous grant from the Covenant Foundation. These original books, *Hanukkah Fever* and *Birthday Blowup*, were written to sensitize children to the needs of their peers with special needs and to promote friendships and discussions on how to include these children in social settings. Volunteer members of our Alliance's special education committee and our special education teachers presented them to children in our congregational schools.

This year we made available a "lending library" of several children's books dealing with disabilities for classroom teachers to use with students in their classrooms. The subjects range from books on autism to books on hearing impairments. Several special educators also read them to students to increase sensitivity and respect for differences.

#### **Day School Support**

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

#### **Day School Conference 2007**

On Tuesday, November 6, 2007 about 200 day school teachers gathered at the Birmingham Conference Center for an afternoon of professional development. Our 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference continues to be the only opportunity for all of our four local day schools to come together for a day of learning. Our conference featured a Judaic session and a Secular session.

Our secular session featured Dr.'s Roger Lauer and Isabelle Beaulieu, outstanding Neuropsychologists of Ann Arbor, MI who spoke on the topic, *"Understanding Learning Styles."* They brought in many teaching tools and visual aids and offered various teaching strategies useful for the classroom. They taught about the differences in children's brain functioning and ways to improve their executive functioning.

The Judaic session featured Rabbi Naphtali Hoff, an experienced educator from Chicago, IL, who spoke on the topic, *"Enhancing Student Learning, Comprehension and Retention."* Rabbi Hoff included organized and clear information on specific intervention techniques for increasing classroom success and methods to help increase comprehension through activities.

At the director's request, Rabbi Hoff presented an additional session entitled, *"Cooperative Learning: Practical Applications for the Judaic Studies Classroom."* His expertise and practical strategies were well received and appreciated.

Written evaluations from the Judaic and secular sessions illustrated that many teachers were able to take back facts and strategies and implement them in their classrooms.

#### **Anita Naftaly Family Circle Conference 2007**

Dr. Max Wiznitzer, Pediatric Neurologist and Director of Rainbow Babies and Autism Center at Children's Hospital in Cleveland, was the speaker at our Anita Naftaly Family Circle Conference on the topic of *"Slicing Through the Challenges of Childhood and Adolescent Disorders."* He had the herculean task of discussing specific characteristics and challenges of children with Asperger's Syndrome, Autism, ADHD, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders, Tourette's Syndrome, and Anxieties. Through personal stories and experiences, he offered strategies and interventions for the classroom teachers and parents to use, to promote their children's success. On Sunday morning, November 11, 2007 he addressed these issues for parents, teachers, school directors, and professionals at our annual Family Circle Program. Over 380 people attended, all were mesmerized by his presentation and gained a deeper understanding of these childhood and adolescent disorders. It was a phenomenal program! We were very fortunate to have Dr. Wiznitzer speak to parents in a private lunch session, after his initial presentation. He really addressed the heart of their concerns and parents were very appreciative of his expertise and advice. Parents were

extremely impressed and relieved to get an expert's answers to their questions.

### Meetings

The directors of the various Special Education organizations in our community, P'tach, JARC and Friendship Circle, occasionally get together to touch base and learn about events and programs that are being offered to the special population in the community. This is very beneficial so that each director can be kept informed and updated on the various programs being offered.

Through the founding of the Opening the Doors Program, and the intervention and support of our Special Educators, hundreds of children with learning disabilities and other special needs have been helped academically, behaviorally and socially. These children and adolescents have been able to receive a quality Jewish education and lead richer lives as part of our community. As we enter our 13<sup>th</sup> year of operation we are proud of serving our community which continues to be committed to providing quality service and to meet the ever-changing needs in our Jewish school system. We will continue our work with our eyes and hearts focused on our Jewish children.

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### Houston, TX

BJE'S Special Education Department continues to provide a variety of programs and services to facilitate inclusion of people with disabilities into Jewish life.

### Adult Programs

This year begins the Jewish Family Service Alexander Institute for Jewish Families with Special Needs. This

initiative began with the BJE's Special Needs Survey in 2006 which helped identify areas needing service in the Houston Jewish Community. The following programs have begun since then:

1. Two full time staff hired for employment services for adults and program development
2. On-line Special Needs Resource Directory
3. Establishment of a Residential Research Committee
4. Initiation of a 7 week workshop for parents of special needs children/ adults
5. On-going Parent Support Group held monthly at JFS
6. Development for the first community-wide Disability Conference in 2008
7. Assisted listening devices offered at Collage-Jewish Federation of Greater Houston's Women Campaign luncheon.
8. Presentation of the film, "Praying with Lior" at the JCC Film Festival
9. Convening of an advisory coalition that, for the first time, includes representatives from all Jewish agencies, to discuss special needs in the Jewish Community.

This staff member is the liaison between BJE and the Alexander Institute.

Continuing adult programs include:

1. Night Owls—a monthly program for adults with cognitive issues. (JCC)
2. Project Shalom—a monthly program for adults with emotional issues (JFS)

### BJE's Programs include:

1. A community-wide Sunday School class for children with learning differences.
2. Consultations, available to teachers and parents in our Congregational and/or Day School.
3. Jewish Network of Special Education Professionals which meets three times a year to share and disseminate information concerning the implementation of modifications in the school setting.
4. Teacher training which offers in-service programming to the over 500 teachers who teach in our Jewish community.

- a. The special needs workshops presented at Night of Learning were:

*ADHD: Practical Tips for the Classroom* by Dr. Minizeh Gruber

*Sarah and David System for Hebrew Reading* by Diana and Lily Yacobi (who presented at the Philadelphia Consortium.)

- b. Fall and Spring workshops were:

*Blow Up Your Textbook* by Debi Mishael.

*Peers, Tears, and Fears* by Dr. Minizeh Gruber

*Autism Workshop* by Lori Gross and Karen Fisher

*Spoonful of Sugar: Making Learning Fun with ADD Children* by Marcie Rosen

*Let's Play* by Debi Mishael

- c. Yom Limmud, Day of Learning, included five presenters, sponsored by both the BJE and Alexander Institute on special needs topics:

*Eight Prayers That Lift Me,  
Inspire Me and Keep Me  
Going* by Rabbi David Rosen

*Special Needs, Special  
Planning: Put Your Heart into  
Planning for the Special One  
in Your Life* by Naomi Duke

*Behavioral Interventions in a  
Jewish Setting* by Joel Farb

*Enabling Success for Your  
Child with Learning  
Disabilities* by Karol Musher  
and Ruth Strudler

5. Updating and evaluating all special needs programs and/or needs in Early Childhood, Day School and Congregational Schools. I am midway through evaluating the Early Childhood Survey which the principals have completed.

**Other Community Programs include:**

1. Club Haver—social club for young children meeting monthly (JCC)
2. TOP Soccer program –soccer program for young children (JCC)
3. STARS—preschool intervention program (JCC)
4. Friendship Circle under the direction of Rabbi Dov Goldstein, Chabad

We in the Houston Jewish Community are proud of what we have accomplished in the past few years. The support and guidance that I personally have received from The Consortium of Special Educators through e-mails, conferences and phone calls is immeasurable. The professional networking does indeed work.

Our community is motivated and energized in continuing its direction to meet the needs of the Jewish families with children/adults with learning differences.

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**Minneapolis, MN**

The Minneapolis Jewish Community Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities celebrated seven years since we began our innovative approach to developing a welcoming community response to inclusion. Over these seven years, our community has grown to embrace the concept of inclusion and our Jewish organizations are providing greater opportunities for participation by people with disabilities. The community has come a long way in recognizing that inclusion is not just for kids; inclusion is across the lifespan and across all organizational activities. We have engaged the Minneapolis Jewish community and are excited to see all of the positive change here.

**Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities**

We began our seventh year with the publication of the Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities, a comprehensive guidebook that was piloted by local agencies a full year before publication. Now that the Guide has been published, Jewish communities (and some non-Jewish communities and educational institutions) are using it to build more inclusive environments.

The Guide offers evaluation tools for many areas of Jewish organizational life and a process to create a concrete roadmap to meeting goals for inclusion. It addresses most areas of Jewish institutional life including, worship and social occasions, pre-school through adult education, b'nai mitzvah, recreation and leisure and organizational structure. In addition, information about high incidence disabilities makes this a perfect resource for the non-inclusion professional as well. A chapter on disability in the family provides much needed information and insight into the journey that families embark on, usually unexpectedly, as they raise a child with a disability.

**Consultation Services**

Due to a number of requests from other Jewish communities, we have added a fee-based Consultation Services component to the Inclusion Program. We would enjoy talking with you about the needs in your community and are available to help you in your inclusion initiative. Contact us for more information.

**Young Adult Program**

For years we struggled with ways to engage young adults who have disabilities in our community. Many people had gone to religious school, celebrated b'nai mitzvah, went to Jewish camp and even continued through confirmation but that was where Jewish engagement usually ended. Faced with this growing challenge, our community looked to the Sabes Jewish Community Center inclusion staff and found a willing partner in Inclusion Director Anita Lewis. Anita and her counterpart in St. Paul, Ann Hoffer, wrote a grant that would provide one-on-one personal training at the JCCs giving young adults a point of entry into the Jewish community. We call this program "Links." Participants pay a reduced annual fee, and personal trainer time is covered by the grant. The program started with 11 participants and a waiting list of 15. Due to its incredible success, additional funds have been secured to enable people on the waiting list to participate. Participants in "Links" have started to increase their engagement in the Jewish community. They take classes at the JCCs and some have even started volunteering in the community. It's an excellent start, and we know this is just the beginning!

**Camp Training**

Camp training is one of the collaborations that we provide in our community. All of our camps now have Inclusion Directors who provide the resources and support during the sessions. They have begun to support camp staff who have disabilities in addition to campers. Our training is based on the identified needs at each camp, and in 2006 we addressed mental health and behavioral needs. Training is provided to the entire staff not just the staff members who work with campers

with disabilities. We are looking forward to our 2008 training.

### **Caring Connections**

The Minneapolis and St. Paul Jewish communities collaborate on the Caring Connections program which serves adults with disabilities who primarily live in group homes or community-based housing. The goal of Caring Connections is to encourage participation in community events built around Shabbat and the holidays. Participants attend Shabbat and Havdallah services at Twin Cities' synagogues, attend plays at the JCC and join the community for celebrations such as Yom Haatzmaut. They also have a self-contained Chanukah party at the JCC and are welcomed guests at the Tybie Proman Seder for Adults with Disabilities. One particular success we would like to highlight is that our attendance has grown tremendously ever since we started to invite housemates to Caring Connections programs. Now entire group homes can come and participate with their Jewish housemate. In addition, Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis provides "Basics of Judaism," a program that volunteers provide to group home residents and staff.

### **Ability Awareness Curriculum for Religious Schools**

When Temple Israel Religious School contacted us to provide a basic awareness training for students, we started working together to create a model that will be implemented over several years. Starting in 2008, we will provide age/developmentally appropriate training for kindergarten and first grade students. In 2009 we will add two more grades and will do this each year until we have created curriculum for every year of religious school. Temple Israel is the pilot for this program, and we will make it available to other religious schools.

In addition, we provide necessary training for religious schools upon request, but this is the first time we will be addressing annual training needs for students in this manner.

### **Parent Advisory Committee**

Communities often struggle with ways to engage parents of children with disabilities. It can be an overwhelming task to parent all children, and coupled with the demands of life in the 21st century, asking for and obtaining help and support is one of the last things parents often consider. We have tried a number of things, and most have not worked.

Finally, we assembled a group of parents who sit on the Parent Advisory Council. Over the course of several meetings, we took the time to build relationships between the parents. They learned that regardless of the type of disability their child has, there are a lot of similarities. We defined what those were and looked at what the secular community already had in place. Finally we reached a point where we developed a mission statement. This slower paced process has been very helpful. Our next step is to host a panel of parents and rabbis that will sit down and talk together about parenting a child with a disability. From there we hope to engage more parents in the process and develop additional means of supporting and using the community for them.

### **Colloquium 2008—Sky Blue Waters!**

We have been planning the Consortium's annual meeting for May 19-21 in Minneapolis. It promises to be very beneficial for those of us engaged in Jewish special education and inclusion. We look forward to seeing everyone there!

For more information on the Community Inclusion Guide, Consultation Services, any of the programs mentioned or the Sky Blue Waters Colloquium please contact:

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### **New York, NY**

The mission of BJE's Special Education Department is to maximize the opportunities of persons with special needs for a meaningful and productive life in the global Jewish and general communities. Towards this mission, the Department, through creative programming continues to advocate, collaborate, create, negotiate, evaluate and educate on behalf of persons with special needs and their families. Below is a listing of new and ongoing developments in conjunction with BJE's Special Education Department. Dr. Jed Luchow serves as the Director of the Special Education Department and Associate Professor Emeritus at the College of Staten Island/CUNY.

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

Based on twenty years of special education research, BJE's Special Education Department in conjunction with BJE's Early Childhood Center and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCS) initiated a reading disability prevention project aimed at kindergarten and pre-1A youngsters in Jewish day schools. The project, a five-year longitudinal assessment and enrichment program, replicates the federally funded research of Drs. Frank Vellutino and Donna Scanlon. Vellutino and Scanlon developed an assessment tool and intervention program designed to detect and correct potential pre-reading problems in youngsters. In a journal article reviewing their research, Vellutino and Scanlon demonstrated that as many as 50% of students classified in fourth grade as having learning disabilities in the area of reading actually had no real disabilities other than, perhaps, poor instruction. Currently, Vellutino and Scanlon along with Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd and Dr. Abraham Tannenbaum, both formally of Columbia University, serve as the project consultants.

To promote the state of the art reading instruction, Project SIR sponsors Reading Summits incorporating the latest research in the field of reading instruction and special education. Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd of Columbia University, Dr. Joanna Uhry of Fordham University and Dr. Eileen Marzola,

formerly of the New York City Department of Education, serve as presentation panel respondents as well as coordinators of the question and answer period. On November 20, 2003, Project SIR presented its Project's first *Project SIR: Reading at the Summit*. The presenters were Drs. Sally and Bennett Shaywitz of Yale University's Center for the Study of Learning and Attention. Dr. Sally Shaywitz is the author of the book "*Overcoming Dyslexia*." On November 17, 2004, the second Summit featured Dr. Joseph K. Torgesen of Florida State University who is one of the world's leading researchers in reading and special education. On January 11, 2005, Dr. Joanna Williams of Teacher's College, Columbia University, began the next chapter in the Project SIR programming by going beyond decoding to the beginnings of reading comprehension. On November 13, 2006, the Summit featured Dr. Margaret G. McKeown, Research Scientist from the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Along with Dr. Isabel Beck, Dr. McKeown has co-authored, "*Building Vocabulary: Developing Robust Vocabulary Instruction*," the leading text in the field for classroom teachers. The speakers for the 2007 Summit (to take place on March 25, 2008) will be Drs. Shepherd and Uhry presenting on "The Next Challenge: Integrated Literacy Instruction."

Noteworthy is the fact that Project SIR is currently under contract with the New York City Department of Education to provide its three-day Project SIR training program for teachers of Kindergarten, Grade One and Resource Room support personnel for all non-public school teachers.

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

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

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

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

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

The BJE Special Education Department and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCS) are now in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of their joint Child Abuse Prevention Program, *Be'ad Haya'eled* for the Jewish community. The ongoing program provides educators and administrators with critical information regarding child abuse and reporting procedures and protocols. To accomplish this goal, the program presents workshops on topics including indicators of abuse, legal mandates, Jewish and general community resources and Halachic considerations. To date, the program has reached thousands of educators in over 170 settings spanning the Jewish ideological continuum. In addition, the program provides in-service and pre-service courses in child abuse prevention which meet New York State certificate requirements for all human service providers. The program also seeks to prevent child abuse through the development of healthy family living. Towards this end, the program sponsors community seminars dealing with communication skills, conflict resolution and danger signs within the family. These seminars have now been expanded to include students in college and Jewish teacher's 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.

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

Through a grant from the J.E. & Z.B. Butler Foundation, BJE's Special Education Department in conjunction with the New York UJA/Federation's Task Force on Disabilities runs an advocacy program serving persons with special needs and their families. This program provides a comprehensive communal network of information and resources for persons with disabilities. The goal of the program is to provide up to date quality information regarding services and resources available in the area for persons with special needs. A Resource Guide for Jewish Persons with Special Needs is produced each year for parents and social service providers providing a comprehensive listing of services, programs and schools in the New York area for individuals with disabilities. The family advocate is positioned to provide critical information for communal planning agencies regarding existing gaps in services for the purpose of identifying future initiatives. BJE joins the Westchester Jewish Community Services and the Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) in serving as lead agencies for this project. In addition, as a liaison to the UJA Task Force on Disabilities the advocate is BJE's representative on crucial issues to the community at large to enable families to access the most current and comprehensive services available to them.

The Advocacy program utilizes the latest technology to enhance timely responses for those in need. Valuable information is available on the BJE website ([www.bjeny.org](http://www.bjeny.org)), including the Resource Guide for Jewish Persons with Special Needs, which provides a 24/7 information service. To date, the program has responded to over 4,000 requests for assistance.

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

The Association of Jewish Special Educators (AJSE) is beginning its 27th year. The AJSE brings together persons with disabilities, parents, educators, social service providers and other interested parties for the purpose of sharing valuable information regarding special education. During the past 26 years, the AJSE has sponsored numerous conferences for over 16,000 participants. AJSE maintains a distribution list for dissemination of valuable information to its membership including articles about special education issues, upcoming events at the BJE and at other agencies, and government entitlements. Five conferences a year are planned by the AJSE Advisory Committee. This year the topics for these conferences have included: "The Diagnosis & Treatment of ADHD & Learning Disorders" presented by Dr. Jess Shatkin of the NYU Child Study Center; "An Update on Assessment & Interventions in Autism Spectrum Disorders" presented by Dr. Celine Saulnier, Yale University Child Study Center; "Test Taking Strategies: STORM & TOWERR" presented by Dr. Jed Luchow, Director, BJE Special Education Center; "Dealing with Frustration, Anxiety & Hyperactivity in the Classroom: The Yogic Approach" presented by Nancy Siegel, Founder & Director of The Nesheemah Yoga Center and "Taking the Stress out of Testing: Improving Scores by Lowering Test Anxiety" presented by Dr. Joseph Casbarro, author and psychologist.

For the last two years, AJSE has awarded the Rabbi Martin Schloss Special Education Teacher of the Year Award. Through the generosity of Dr. Jed Luchow, the 2005 award winner of the J.E. & Z.B Butler Foundation Award for excellence in work in the field of disabilities, a teacher is chosen among the AJSE members and awarded a plaque and cash prize at the last AJSE workshop of the school year. This yearly award is given to the individual who exemplifies outstanding service to individuals with special education needs in a Day School, Yeshiva or Congregational educational setting.

**The Jewish Parent Advocate Coalition (J-PAC) (Coordinated by Phyllis Miller)**

The Jewish Parent Advocate Coalition (J-PAC) is a program funded through a grant from the J.E. & Z.B Butler Foundation. J-PAC is an advocacy consortium of 27 not for profit organizations and social service providers. Its aim is to expand and enhance opportunities for Jewish individuals with disabilities, their families and the professionals who work on their behalf. J-PAC is designed to heighten parent knowledge, understanding and involvement in advocacy and empowerment. The Jewish Parent Advocate Coalition sponsors an annual Parent Empowerment Conference and Resource Fair to help parents access important and necessary services for their disabled family members. The conference is geared toward parents and social service providers and the workshop speakers have been lawyers, psychologists and social workers who speak on issues such as guardianships and trusts, independent travel training, transitioning from high school to college and beyond and relaxation techniques for the stressed parent. This year over 25 agencies displayed informational packets and brochures and took time to speak to parents individually. The all day conference is offered at no cost to participants it and includes a copy the Resource Guide for Jewish Persons with Special Needs given to each participant.

**The Jewish Heritage Program (JHP) (Coordinated by Rabbi Martin Schloss, Rabbi Ellis Bloch, Emily Aime Witty & Cheryl Edelstein)**

BJE is currently developing a JHP Jewish Holiday Cycle Curriculum Guide for use in Congregational educational facilities, informal special education programs and residential homes for individuals with developmental disabilities.

**Government Relations (Coordinated by Rabbi Martin Schloss, Sara Seligson & Judy Oppenheim)**

BJE staff serves on federal, state and city government councils and task forces representing Jewish education programs, issues and concerns. BJE advocates for

Jewish education interests on the federal level in the US Department of Education's Office on Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and National Leadership in Private Education. The Department contributed to the development of the regulations associated with Public Law 105-17 (IDEA). On the New York State level, BJE serves as a member of the NY State Education Department's Advisory Panel on Special Education Services and as chairperson for the NY State Education Department's Commissioners Advisory Council on Non-public Education, the NY State Taskforce on Educational Technology as well as on the NY State Board of Practitioners which reviews all innovative programming to meet the new regulations of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. These roles allow BJE to play a significant role in advocating for the needs of the Jewish day schools. This past year, BJE joined Agudath Israel and the Catholic Conference in rewriting NY State legislation as it related to special education services for children with special needs enrolled in private schools at parent choice.

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

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

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

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

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

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York is committed to enhancing learning through the use of technology. Research indicates that the use of technology can improve learning for those children with learning and other disabilities. Included among the many activities that BJE runs are: professional development programs to support educators and educational leaders in the use and integration of technology guidance to Judaic and general studies educators in educational hardware and software; consultations with program developers and distributors of Judaic and general studies software; advocating for government funds and services; facilitating in the selection and distribution of federally funded educational hardware and software to NYC Jewish schools; evaluating education technology grant proposals for the NY State Education Department; and collaboration with organizations and companies in the development of educational software and programs.

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### **Philadelphia, PA**

#### **Lasko Fellowship for Teachers in Special Education**

The Auerbach Central Agency is proud to present a new concept in special education training for teachers. This program was created to expand the special education knowledge base and skill sets of teachers in ten schools in the Greater Philadelphia area. Special education teachers and/or directors of nine schools are being trained this year to facilitate teaching sessions focused on special needs education. Each Fellow

will receive 32 hours of extensive training, knowledge, hands-on materials and resources to enable them to conduct turn-around training. This program gives support to the staff so that all schools are able to best meet the needs of the children who have special needs.

Each Lasko Fellow receives a stipend of \$800.00 and each participating school receives a \$1,000 grant to enhance its special needs program. Each Fellow attends 32 hours of training and is obligated to conduct at least three workshops with their staff. The Lasko Fellow is also available as a resource for the teachers s/he trained.

By the end of the 2007-2008 school years thirty workshops will be conducted in the nine participating schools. The impact of the program is definitely being felt by the schools. This program has greatly increased the number of training sessions and the knowledge of special education in the Greater Philadelphia area. We are looking forward to reporting a summary of the evaluations done by both the Lasko Fellows as well as the teachers they have trained.

#### **A Collaborative Process to Bring Special Needs Agencies Together**

All Jewish agencies, schools and camps that offer services to people who have special needs was held in December, 2007. The goals of the meeting were:

- To find out if we are meeting the needs of all those who have special needs.
- To increase inter-agency communication by working in a collaborative manner.
- To help families navigate the Jewish special needs system.

The meeting was attended by 35 people and represented 24 agencies. It was decided to create a survey to go out to all families who are in need of special needs services. A second survey will be created to go out to agencies. The goal will be to access all that is offered and all that is needed to determine if we are indeed meeting the needs.

The attendees also agreed they would like to work together collaboratively. An email program was implemented to develop a way to communicate with each other. It was also decided to meet on a regular basis, 3-4 times per year.

#### **Teen Training Program**

Our Teen Assistant Program, TAP, trained teens to work with children who have special needs. The teens represent eleven schools. We currently have about 90 teens working in our synagogue schools. The reputation of the TAP program is now out in the community. Parents and teens call to find out how to become a part of the program before the announcements for the program have been made. After the week of training, the TAP teens continue to learn about working with children who have special needs in the monthly seminars. The parents of the children who have special needs are delighted that their child has a TAP teen that has been trained so well.

#### **Community School Classrooms:**

This is the 7th year of the community special needs classrooms. It continues to be a wonderful program with children attending from Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform synagogues. It is a wonderful example of a community working together to meet the needs of children who would be excluded from a typical classroom. The Jewish Federation continues to be dedicated to funding this program. The students have made continual progress. Several are now beginning to prepare for a bar or bat mitzvah in their home synagogue. The parents' wishes for their children to become part of a community have actually happened.

#### **Advisory Committee**

The Special Needs Advisory Committee is very active and involved with all of the special needs program. The committee has been involved in the creation of the Lasko Fellowship program. They review both the TAP and Lasko applications to help determine who should be accepted into the programs. They are an extremely dedicated and hard working group of individuals.

## **OROT**

OROT, the special needs initiative in Philly's Jewish day schools, continues to grow and itself to the special needs of its host schools. Many OROT classes remain self contained in the younger grades, but as the child matures and strengths become evident more mainstreaming occur. OROT continues to be a member of the PEJE Community of Practice for Diverse Learners. OROT teachers continue to broaden their horizons by going to various teacher conferences both in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. OROT's student population of forty five is dispersed among the five day schools in Philadelphia. This year's fundraising event which will be held in May will celebrate OROT's tenth anniversary.

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## **Phoenix, AZ**

The Council for Jews with Special Needs in Scottsdale, Arizona began in 1985. The agency provides resources and support to children and adults who have a variety of disabling conditions to enable their full participation in the activities of the Jewish community. Using the "single point of entry" approach, the Council provides intake interviews for children and adults. In collaboration with all of the Jewish groups in greater Phoenix, the Council staff then assists the clients in locating the appropriate resources to meet their spiritual, educational, social and recreational needs in the Phoenix Jewish community.

## **Special Education**

All local Jewish preschools, day schools, congregational schools, camps and recreation programs and youth groups receive observation, consultation and teacher training to facilitate meaningful and successful inclusion. Adults with special needs also receive assistance in Jewish educational programs.

## **Social and Recreational Programs**

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

## **Support Groups**

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

## **Jewish Genetic Diseases Education & Screening**

In 2005, the Council began offering an annual Jewish genetic diseases education and screening event for the first time in over 25 years. An aggressive fundraising campaign yielded sufficient funds to subsidize and make affordable the costly tests for the nine most prevalent diseases including Tay-Sachs, Canavan, Cystic Fibrosis and Familial Dysautonomia. At the first event, 134 people were screened for being carriers of the most prevalent Jewish genetic diseases. 16% of the individuals tested positive as carriers of Jewish genetic diseases; one person tested positive as a carrier of two Jewish genetic diseases. In subsequent years, the annual educational and screening event has yielded similar percentage of results (16-19% tested positive as carriers of Jewish genetic diseases). The genetic diseases project has become an independent agency with non-profit status, The Jewish Genetic Diseases Center for Greater Phoenix. Efforts are underway to establish a large endowment fund to eventually support the cost of subsidizing affordable testing in the future. This project received the 2006 Belle Latchman Community Service

Award from the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix.

## **Shabbat Program**

The Council's newest program is "Simchat Shabbat." In response to the frustration felt by many of our clients who have developmental disabilities and find it impossible to sit quietly through a lengthy service, the Council collaborated with Congregation Beth Israel to adapt a Shabbat morning service to meet their needs. The 40 minute service is held once a month and is followed by a 20 minute oneg. The joyous services draw 35-50 participants. There is a "no shushing" rule that discourages parental frowns when a participant makes noise or gets up to dance in the aisles. Many of the parents have expressed their appreciation for creating the opportunity to pray together with their children (of all ages), secure in the knowledge that they will not be disrupting others or asked to leave the sanctuary. The next steps for this program include making sturdy, laminated copies of the special illustrated siddur and putting the prayers and songs on CDs to give to all participants to enable them to practice at home.

## **Disability Awareness**

Disability awareness and sensitivity workshops are available to all Jewish agencies, schools, camps and other organizations. The Council's website continues to draw numerous e-mail inquiries from metropolitan Phoenix as well as outside of Arizona and the US. A newsletter is printed three times a year and distributed throughout the Jewish community.

## **Residential Program**

In 2001, the Council opened its first supervised Jewish residence, Shalom House, for three adult men who have autism or developmental disabilities. Shalom House is also the meeting place for Yad B'Yad adult social club and continuing Jewish studies class every month. It has become the adults' gathering place for holidays and Shabbat events. Six other families are planning two additional future residences based on the Shalom House model to open in 2008 and 2009.

The Council receives a small annual allocation from Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix but raises most of its operating budget through an annual fundraiser event, a membership drive and private donations. The agency employs three full-time staff members and a dozen part-time employees.

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### **ROCHESTER, NY**

The Jewish Community Federation of Rochester, New York underwrites programming in the community for people with developmental disabilities. In partnership with Temple Brith Kodesh, the Federation sponsors a thriving adult education and inclusionary program, "Jewish Living," which is now in its tenth year of services to individuals who live in group homes and independent living situations throughout the city. Elliot Fix, the Federation's special needs consultant, is the coordinator/instructor for the program. According to Judy Azoff, Assistant Executive Director, the curriculum is both creative and interactive where adult learners develop practical skills to become more committed Jews. Some of the participants have been coming to Elliot's classes since they were children. The program promotes the principle that Jewish learning is a life-long process. One student remarked that the program is a "chance to socialize and learn the history, music and culture of my people. The class refreshes my memory about the holidays." Guest presenters augment the program by enabling the participants to learn more about the roles and talents of people in the community, and the former get to know and appreciate the interest and enthusiasm of the students. An "Ask the Rabbi" session personalized the role of the Rabbi by answering questions on Jewish practices and concepts. Other presenters have included a cantor, Israeli dance instructor, craft specialist, mitzvah clown at Purim, Klezmer musician, and Jewish paper cut artist. Attendance at synagogue services, concerts and holiday dinners enables the

students to experience the diversity of the Jewish community, and the community in turn gets to know that people with disabilities are a valued part of Jewish life. During Sukkot, for example, they enjoyed "Pizza in the Hut" at the Chabad Center.

The Jewish Living program insures that Jewish special educational services extend well beyond the adolescent years, enabling the adult learner to participate according to their abilities and to make their own choices about how to be Jewish.

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### **San Francisco, CA**

The Special Education program at the Bureau of Jewish Education, established in 1988, continues to address the needs of children with disabilities, their teachers, principals, families, and other members of the community. It is funded primarily by a grant from the Jewish Community Endowment Kohn Fund and receives additional grants for the weekend camp program.

Special education has become an integral part of the congregational and day schools. Many sites have special education teachers on staff that provide individual tutoring, administer pull-out programs or provide in-class support to students with mild disabilities. The special education consultant spends a significant amount of time providing consultations to parents, teachers and principals who are seeking out the best solutions for successful educational experiences for their children. The special education consultant also collaborates with individuals in other programs and agencies to provide referrals and other information.

As part of the BJE's professional development opportunities in the congregational schools, the special education consultant provides workshops

tailored to the needs of the particular site. In 2008 she also made presentations at two local early childhood educators' conferences.

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

The most popular program we run is the Shabbat Weekend for Children with Disabilities and Their Families. Begun in 2002, the weekends are held at a local URJ camp, and up to 30 families attend each one. Structured like a typical Jewish family camp, the weekend features recreation, "no-shush" family Shabbat services, Havdallah, Israeli folk dancing, singing, arts and crafts, hiking, swimming, paddle boating, campfire, talent show, yoga and more. Counselors and specialists come from many parts of the community and include special educators, people with disabilities and interns from the psychology department of a nearby university. Many people feel so strongly about this program that they volunteer their services. Our campers, who have Autism, Fragile X, Cerebral Palsy, Bipolar Disorder, Down Syndrome and a variety of other developmental disabilities, flourish in the relaxed, accepting, and encouraging environment. Their siblings love not only the camp activities but also the sibling groups we schedule. They are thrilled to spend time with others who share the unique experience of being Jewish and having a disabled sibling. Discussion and play groups have blossomed into lasting friendships. In the camp setting, the parents have found their peer group, and they have so much to share. Structured discussion/support groups, led by therapists or other specialists, have become the highlight for many of the adults. Over the past six years, they have formed a large extended family who eagerly looks forward to seeing each other again and who warmly embrace newcomers. Some families now celebrate Shabbat, Pesach,

Chanukah and birthdays together. For the past two years, two thirteen-year-olds have become Bar Mitzvah in very moving camp ceremonies, and another camper is preparing for his Bar Mitzvah in May 2008.

Our Jewish Community Federation is embarking on a process of exploring how to meet special needs in a larger and more systematic way, and we are very excited about the prospect of increased opportunities to touch the lives of children and families who are all too often on the fringes of the Jewish community.

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### **Washington, D.C.**

The Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning is a catalyst for innovation and transformation in Jewish educational and identity building experiences in the Greater Washington area.

We partner with communal institutions, agencies and individuals to design, implement and evaluate educational approaches that engage all people across the lifespan. Our agency helps to increase the level of services and opportunities in our Jewish community for individuals with special needs and disabilities in Jewish schools, youth groups, and camps and works to increase the level of inclusion in synagogues and community agencies. Our goal is to help ensure that every member of the Jewish community, children and adults alike, have access to the range of social, educational and religious opportunities that the Washington area has to offer.

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

The Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning plans a yearly conference focused on raising the level of awareness in our synagogues, Jewish communal institutions, schools and youth groups

about inclusion. Close to 350 people attended our 5th annual conference where Jacob Artson, a teen with autism, and his dad, Rabbi Bradley Artson, Dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies and Vice President of the American Jewish University, delivered the keynote address. Synagogue professional staff and lay leaders as well as community professionals, people with disabilities and parents of individuals with disabilities attended the conference. This conference continues to be a focal point of various initiatives that our agency is involved in, related to synagogue inclusion.

### **Jewish Disability Awareness Month**

In addition to the community inclusion work our agency is involved in related to the Opening the Gates of Torah conference, we also plan a yearly Jewish Disability Awareness Month, directed to area synagogues. For the sixth year, synagogues in our community participated in Jewish Disability Awareness Month by having speakers at Shabbat services on related topics and/or planning programs for adult study or students in the religious school. Participating synagogues received our community Jewish Disability Awareness Month Resource Packet which is available for purchase to other communities for \$25.

### **Synagogue Inclusion Committees**

Our agency works with area congregations to help them start and maintain inclusion committees. Over fifteen congregations have started inclusion committees dedicated to meeting the needs of people with disabilities within their own congregation. A network of chair people from these committees get together throughout the year to network, share ideas and problem solve together. Congregations that have committees have received copies of the Jewish Community Guide to Inclusion of People with Disabilities and chair people from a number of these congregations have attended training sessions with Shelly Christensen, Director of the Minneapolis Jewish Community Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities.

### **Community Interpreter Fund**

The Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning has partnered with area congregations and Jewish agencies to raise money to start a community interpreter fund. This fund will help synagogues and local agencies pay for the cost of interpreters for one time events. Subsidies from this fund can be requested by professionals at area synagogues and agencies as well as directly from individuals who are deaf and in need of an interpreter.

### **From A – Z - Special Needs and Disabilities Resource Guide**

This new resource guide was published as a joint project with Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and our agency. It lists services for individuals with special needs that are available in the Jewish community and includes information about accessibility at area congregations.

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

Our agency created and runs the Special Needs Assistance Program which trains typical teens to work with children with special needs. Each summer a group of high school students spend four days learning about Jewish special education and disability awareness. The SNAP teens work throughout the year as assistants to students with special needs in congregational school classrooms and as buddies to kids with disabilities in youth groups. The group of teens continues to meet with our staff on a regular basis throughout the year to continue their learning. This program has opened up possibilities for congregational school students with special needs to have extra assistance and the ability to be successful in a typical classroom.

### **Youth Director Training**

Our agency is working closely with five area youth directors to provide them with training in the area of inclusion and disability awareness. The goal of this ongoing training is to enable youth directors to reach out to individuals with disabilities and to welcome and accommodate their needs in their youth groups. Funding is available for these youth groups through a grant to enable

them to hire and provide shadows or extra staff to help support kids with disabilities that participate in their youth groups.

#### **Friendship Circle**

We partner with our local Friendship Circle which pairs typical teens with kids with disabilities. The buddies meet each week for an hour. Financial support, publicity and outreach for this initiative is provided by the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning.

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

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

#### **Differentiated Training Initiative**

For the second year in a row, our agency has partnered with the Azrieli Graduate School of Education at Yeshiva University and the area day schools to provide training in differentiated instruction. The year long training initiative was composed of seminar training, classroom observations, individual feedback sessions, meetings with day school administrators and action research projects that each teacher worked on to help them differentiate the instruction in their classroom. Teachers who participate in the first year of the project are continuing their work in this area to learn to mentor teachers in their school in differentiation.

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

Our agency runs this network where learning specialists from area day schools meet together on a regular basis to share ideas, network and plan professional development initiatives together.

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

A council of parents, professionals and individuals with disabilities meet on a regular basis to share ideas, help shape

the direction of the special needs and disability services department and advocate for the needs of individuals with disabilities in the Jewish community.

#### **Teaching Hebrew Reading to Students with Learning Disabilities**

This book for educators was published by our agency and is available for sale for \$30 a copy. It provides strategies and a step by step approach for teaching Hebrew to students with diverse learning needs.

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#### **West Palm Beach, Florida**

#### **Volunteers Make All the Difference**

The YAD Program provides a Jewish education for the special child. Our premise is that every Jewish child has a right to learn about his/her heritage. Our program offers a formal Jewish school for children with special needs. We serve children ages 5-16 in our Sunday morning program. The children we serve primarily attend self-contained classes in public or non-public special education facilities and who, because of their special needs, do not learn effectively in a regular religious school environment.

The program is staffed by dedicated, creative teachers who bring a wealth of formal training and life experience in Jewish education to the classroom. They are ably assisted by responsible volunteers who are intuitive, enthusiastic and creative. And there lies the difference!

With our volunteer staff outnumbering our teaching staff by 2 to 1, we are able to provide the attention and assistance that leads to successful learning. Our volunteers over the years have spanned the generations. Our volunteers have included high school students considering the field of special education

and/or needing community credit to comply with their high school requirements arising early on Sunday mornings to be with us. We have also had senior volunteers, who want to make a difference in their community, volunteering their time to be with YAD on Sunday mornings. Sometimes these volunteers are with us during their sophomore, junior and senior years in high school; sometimes a volunteer is with us for one year and sometimes for many years. The students greet our volunteers each week with smiles and hugs. What a reflection of the nurturing and support they receive while they learn!

We recently experienced the kindness of a different kind of volunteer. A student at Spanish River Community High School, Xander Robin, who is moving in the direction of a career in film-making, was approached by us to do a promotional video of our YAD Program. He accepted the challenge. He came to YAD to film segments of our program, and with additional materials furnished to him – slides of our students from other weeks, photos of our students' artwork and text – produced a magnificent DVD that we will be able to use to promote our excellent program.

Lynne Lieberman, Assistant Executive Director of the CJE, wrote to Xander on his very recent completion of this project: "It is an incredible piece of work and will once and for all bring awareness of the need, and the school to our community. It will bring the program to the people and the people to the program. The CJE, although a beneficiary agency of our Federation, is a very small entity without the access to the same high tech and otherwise marketing opportunities that the Federation has. We are so very grateful for your talent, skill, and time to provide us with such an invaluable tool to help special needs children in our community be able to learn Hebrew and Judaism. Thank you very much. You did a great mitzvah."

The acts of loving-kindness that all our volunteers bring to our community through their talents and their time have a very strong and lasting positive impact on our children and on us.

The J.N. Somers YAD Program of the Lorraine & Jack N. Friedman Commission for Jewish Education of the Palm Beaches is located at 3267 North Military Trail in West Palm Beach, Florida. We may be reached at 561-640-0700 or at [w.turk@cjebp.org](mailto:w.turk@cjebp.org). Our website may be viewed at [www.cjebp.org](http://www.cjebp.org) and you may view our video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrCeXzmud3I>.

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## JESNA

### Organizational Background

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

### Partner Organizations

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

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

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## Call for Action

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

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

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

CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR

### *JEWISH EDUCATION*

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