

Jesna in Action—Vibrant Jewish Life

For more than three millennia, Jewish education has helped generations of Jews live a meaningful, vibrant Jewish life. As we embrace the challenges of the 21st century, we will need *far-reaching, quality Jewish education* more than ever before. In response to this need, JESNA continues to work actively with **communities, organizations, and funders** across the continent and in Israel to help strengthen the communal commitment and mobilization for excellence in Jewish education. Below is a summary of the initiatives that JESNA is currently involved in and key contacts for additional information about these initiatives.

Jewish Renaissance and Renewal

Jewish Identity Action Project

The Jewish Identity Action Project (JIAP) is a multidimensional initiative that brings together academics, policy-makers, funders and practitioners to explore the linkages between current research on Jewish identity and Jewish education and community building. The JIAP is the first major initiative of the new **Lippman-Kanfer Center for Institutional Renewal** at JESNA. JESNA initiated and manages the project, which is co-sponsored by the **Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at Hebrew University** and was undertaken in cooperation with the **Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies** and the **Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University**.

The first year of project activity culminated in a major invitational conference held at Brandeis University on July 5-6, 1999. JESNA has developed a special page on its website

(www.jesna.org) and is inaugurating online discussions to disseminate research, present material from the conference and future events, and expand deliberations on the theme of Jewish identity and education.

Roundtable Consultation on Community-based Synagogue Change Projects

On October 18, 1999, JESNA's **Lippman-Kanfer Center for Institutional Renewal** convened a roundtable consultation on community-based synagogue change initiatives. The conference brought together facilitators of synagogue change initiatives, primarily federation and central agency professionals, from eight communities to share information about their projects and to discuss the common issues they face. Each of the projects works with some or all of the synagogues in its community and receives financial and/or human resource support from its local federations. JESNA supports the projects by hosting an online discussion to facilitate the exchange of information and materials and by bringing them together for future face-to-face meetings.

Bikkurim: An Incubator to Expand Jewish Organizational Entrepreneurship

JESNA is partnering with the **Kaminer Family Foundation** and the **United Jewish Communities (UJC)** to develop an incubator to house and assist individuals and organizations developing new projects to enhance Jewish identity, education, communal life, and social justice. The incubator will provide four to six participants with workstations in the UJC office complex, computers and access to other telecommunications services, clerical and logistical support, a series of seminars on key topics affecting organizational growth and success, and mentoring from a supportive and knowledgeable senior-level professional. The first “class” of incubator participants will be selected in spring 2000 and take up residence in summer 2000.

Atlanta Shutfim (Synagogue - Federation - Agency Collaboration) Project

JESNA serves as a consultant to the **Atlanta Jewish Federation** as it implements recommendations emerging from the *Shutfim* seminars and planning process. *Shutfim* was implemented in 1998-99, with the goal of strengthening synagogue – federation – agency relations. JESNA was the program developer and facilitator for the *Shutfim* project.

Communities in Transition

At the invitation of the **Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies**, JESNA coedits and publishes a new version of *Communities in Transition*, a periodical aimed at highlighting critical issues, trends, and positive examples of Jewish communal transformation. The first issue of the publication in its new format will appear winter 2000.

Survey of Jewish Renaissance and Renewal Initiatives

JESNA is conducting a survey to gather information about communities’ current projects and programs relating to Jewish renaissance and renewal. Survey findings will be utilized to develop an overview of current North American initiatives, link communities that are engaged in similar projects, and help JESNA and other national agencies develop more responsive programs, services and resources to support local efforts.

Jewish Continuity Handbook V: Next Steps

JESNA is publishing the fifth in its series of continuity handbooks on the theme of “Next Steps.” The handbook incorporates information and exercises from the presentations and sessions at the January 1999 Jewish Continuity Conference, sponsored by the **Avi Chai** foundation, CJF, and JESNA. The publication is designed to help community and national volunteer and professional leadership focus on the current status of the “Jewish continuity/renaissance” agenda and directions for next steps.

Program Banks

JESNA is updating and expanding its Renaissance and Renewal/Continuity Program Banks. This initiative, which includes upgrading JESNA’s electronic capabilities and website, will enable the Program Banks to be comprehensive and easily searchable.

UJC Jewish Renaissance Pillar

JESNA’s executive vice president Jonathan Woocher co-chaired the Transition Planning Team that worked on the design of UJC’s Jewish renaissance pillar. In keeping with its history of collaboration with CJF in this arena and its role in shaping the vision and plan for UJC’s renaissance pillar, JESNA also partnered with UJC to plan and implement all of the Jewish renaissance pillar programming at the **1999 UJC General Assembly**.

For additional information about JESNA’s renaissance and renewal initiatives, contact Amy Amiel, director of project development, at 212-284-6878 or amamiel@jesna.org.

Research and Evaluation

Evaluation Studies

Through its **Mandell L. Berman Jewish Heritage Center for Research and Evaluation in Jewish Education**, JESNA continues to conduct evaluation study projects. Five projects are underway or recently completed:

- Machon L’Morim, a professional development and school improvement program for early childhood educators in Baltimore, MD, supported by the **Children of Lynn and Harvey Meyerhoff Foundation**
- Continuity programs of the **Jewish Federations of Bergen County and North Hudson**
- Teen retention grants of the **Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles**
- Day School Jewish Civics Initiative of the **Washington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values**, commissioned by the **Jim Joseph Foundation**.
- First-year interim evaluation of La’atid: Synagogues for the Future of the **Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford**

Building Evaluation Capacity in Local Communities

To help build evaluation capacity in local communities and among organizations, JESNA is developing expertise in the use of virtual consulting through video conferencing and online discussions. JESNA also currently provides direct consulting and mentoring support to:

- MASHKON, a constellation of pilot projects designed to improve supplementary education in **Washington DC**
- TIME (Teen Initiative of **MetroWest, NJ**), particularly its teen mentoring program
- the **San Francisco** and **Denver** communities to develop an ongoing evaluation process for their teen initiatives
- professionals and lay leaders in **New York** and **Los Angeles** about the use of evaluation for program enhancement
- **Covenant and other foundations** (e.g., **San Francisco's Community Foundation**) to develop and improve evaluation mechanisms and processes

Database of Jewish Schools in North America

JESNA has completed an up-to-date searchable database of Jewish schools in North America, with funding from the **Jewish Agency for Israel Department for Jewish Zionist Education**. The database continues to be maintained and expanded.

Network for Research in Jewish Education

JESNA serves as the secretariat for the **Network for Research in Jewish Education**, publishes the Network's newsletter, and hosts the Network's website.

For additional information about JESNA's research and evaluation initiatives, contact **Leora Isaacs**, director of the **Mandell L. Berman Jewish Heritage Center for Research and Evaluation in Jewish Education**, at 212-284-6899 or leora@jesna.org.

Schools of Excellence—Day Schools

UJC/JESNA Task Force on Day School Viability

The Day School Viability and Vitality Task Force, chaired by JESNA past president **Bennett Yanowitz**, issued its final report in June 1999, which was subsequently approved and adopted by the full JESNA board. The task force's recommendations call for federations locally and the federated system nationally to take an expanded leadership role. To this end, JESNA is likely to partner with UJC's new Jewish renaissance committee to advocate for substantial new financial resources and to enhance the quality of day school education in North America.

Day School Management Consulting Service

JESNA has received grants from the **Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE)** and the **Schultz Family Foundation** to prepare a business plan for a Day School Management Consulting and Technical Assistance Service. The service would ensure that schools and communities have access to high quality, expert assistance in

addressing a wide range of issues that affect day school quality, growth, leadership, and financial viability. The business plan is scheduled to be completed by May 2000, at which time JESNA expects to work with PEJE and others to bring the plan to fruition.

Phoenix Leadership Forum on Day School Education

JESNA is working with the **Phoenix Jewish Federation** to design and implement a series of programs and a planning process that will help community leadership support local day school growth. Leadership forums will be held in December 1999 and February 2000, followed by local planning and a possible regional forum for communities in the western U.S.

Western Regional Day School Initiative

JESNA has joined forces with the **UJC Western Region and Planning Department** to help connect communities in the western areas of the U.S. that want to address the issues that influence federation support for day school education. A video conference was held between JESNA and UJC staff in October 1999, and plans have been developed for a series of teleconferences among communities. The initiative may culminate in a regional conference on advancing day school education in spring 2000.

Consultation on Day School Tuition Subventions

In March 1999, JESNA teamed with the **Harold Grinspoon Supporting Foundation** to bring together four other foundations (**The Avi Chai Foundation, Paul and Jerry Gottesman Family Foundation, The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, and the SAMIS Foundation**) that offer tuition subvention programs for Jewish Day Schools. The consultation enabled participants to share information about their programs and to raise questions for research needed to guide future directions and decisions. A summary of the deliberations has been distributed to federations, central agencies for Jewish education, national education organizations and day schools throughout North America.

For additional information about JESNA's day school initiatives, contact **Saul Andron**, associate executive vice president, at 212-284-6886 or saul@jesna.org.

Schools of Excellence—Congregational and Supplementary Schools

Association of Directors of Central Agencies (ADCA): National Diffusion Network for Supplementary Education

Building on nearly two years of dialogues, a proposal to create a National Jewish Diffusion Network for Supplementary Jewish Education has been prepared, and initial funding has

been secured. The initiative is cosponsored by the **United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and Jewish Reconstructionist Federation**. JESNA is taking a lead role in promoting and implementing this initiative, which will support new pilot projects, evaluate new and current initiatives, and disseminate successful models to other institutions and communities.

JESNA Task Force on Congregational Education

The Task Force on Congregational and Communal Jewish Education, which includes grass-roots participation as well as active support of the central agencies for Jewish education and religious movements, has completed a comprehensive review of strategies that can help achieve “excellence” in part-time Jewish education. Draft recommendations have been prepared for review in November 1999 by the JESNA Board and other key constituencies. A final report will be issued in winter 2000.

For additional information about JESNA's congregational and supplementary schools initiatives, contact Paul Flexner, director of human resources development, at 212-284-6879 or flex@jesna.org.

Jewish Youth

Community Youth Resource Workers

With support from the **Yanowitz Foundation**, JESNA organizes activities for a network of community youth resource workers – individuals responsible for coordinating and assisting local youth programming. The network met for the first time in March 1999 and now involves more than a dozen communities. The group will hold a second annual conference in March 2000 in conjunction with the **North American Association for Jewish Youth**.

Engaging and Empowering Jewish Youth (“Community Genesis”)

JESNA is working with **Brandeis University** to offer communities elements of the *Genesis* program, which provides Jewish learning and community-building experiences for teens. Through funding provided by the **Righteous Persons Foundation**, strategies are being developed to serve as a model for local programs. A second grant from the **Nathan Cummings Foundation** will enable JESNA and Brandeis to continue developing programs, resources, and training modules based on *Genesis* and to bring the **Washington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values** on board as a third partner in the project. In winter 2000, JESNA is scheduled to begin discussions with communities interested in benefiting from the new resources.

Peer Networking Youth Outreach Project

JESNA has been engaged by **MetroWest, NJ**, to guide it in implementing a peer networking training program that will prepare teens to be “outreach workers” and program leaders for their peers. Funding for the project has been provided by the **Brody Fund for Youth Initiatives**. Curriculum development and training will be undertaken by JESNA, with assistance from **Brandeis University**. In addition, the **Mandell L. Berman Jewish Heritage Center for Research & Evaluation** at JESNA is working with local professionals in MetroWest to develop and implement an ongoing evaluation process to guide the project. **Minneapolis** will also be making use of this model to design a similar program as part of its youth initiative.

Teen Volunteering

JESNA is working with several agencies to convene a consultation in early December 1999 among professionals from national agencies, selected Jewish communities, and the teen volunteer field. The consultation will assess the current state of Jewish teens volunteering; determine what would inspire more teens to volunteer; and explore possibilities for partnerships and programs that would promote teen volunteering efforts.

For additional information about JESNA's youth initiatives, contact Rabbi Art Vernon, director of educational development, at 212-284-6897 or art@jesna.org.

Educator Recruitment and Development

Lainer Israel Interns and Graduate Seminar Programs

In October 1999, the eighth cohort of the Lainer Israel Interns for Jewish Education began their programs at **Hebrew and Tel Aviv Universities**. A record number of 29 students are participating at HU, and 8 students are enrolled at TAU. The Israel-based portion of this program is funded by the **JAFI Department for Jewish Zionist Education**.

The Graduate Seminar Programs, which involve 20 graduate-level students at **Pardes; Conservative, Reform, and Orthodox yeshivot**; Hebrew University, and a special track for 29 **Otzma** participants are also underway. The Israel-based portion of this program is funded by the **Joint Program for Jewish Education**.

Preparations are underway for the annual winter seminar in California for the students who participated last year in the Israel component of the program. These students have been assisted in finding teaching or youth work positions in their campus communities and have been matched with a mentor who can guide them toward graduate study or positions in Jewish education after they graduate. Second-year activities are funded by a grant from the **Lainer family**.

In addition, an independent evaluation of the Lainer

Israel Interns program is being conducted by through a grant from the **Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation**.

Jewish Educators Corps

JESNA has prepared a proposal with national **Hillel** to create a new program on North American campuses, modeled after the Lainer Israel Interns. The program, which would recruit and nurture students for careers in Jewish education, is slated to be piloted on at least one campus in the 2000-2001 academic year. JESNA is also working to expand recruitment activities for the field of Jewish education as part of Hillel's campus recruitment initiative.

JESNA Task Force on Personnel Recruitment, Development, Retention, and Placement

The task force held its initial meeting in March 1999, and four work groups were established to examine important areas of the field. The titles of the groups are: Defining the Profession; Developing the Profession; Supporting the Profession; and New Visions for the Profession. Each group has met via conference call over the past several months to prepare a set of recommendations for the JESNA Board and the field at large. The task force is expected to issue its report in the spring 2000.

Leadership Institute for New Principals of Jewish Schools

In the mid-1990s, JESNA and **Brandeis University's Hornstein Program** partnered to develop and conduct a highly successful Leadership Institute to help new principals of Jewish congregational schools acquire the skills and perspectives they need to function successfully in their roles. Funding for two cohorts of principals was provided by the **Wexner Foundation**. Brandeis and JESNA are now pursuing new funders to work with additional cohorts. Central agencies and the religious movements will be partners in the revived Leadership Institute.

Grinspoon Excellence Awards for Jewish Teachers

The **Harold Grinspoon Supporting Foundation** has made a grant to JESNA to create and administer a new national awards program that recognizes outstanding Jewish teachers. The awards will be given in partnership with local communities to up to fifty teachers nationally and will include a \$1500 cash award from the Grinspoon Foundation. The award will be contingent on a local match of at least \$1000, and a portion of it must be used by the teacher for some form of professional development. The process will begin this year, with presentation of the first awards to take place in September 2000.

Association of Institutions of Higher Learning for Jewish Education (AIHLJE)

JESNA works in cooperation with and provides staff support for AIHLJE, an organization established by the

graduate and undergraduate academic training programs for Jewish educators in North America. In October 1999, AIHLJE held a two-day conference in Toronto to work on an agenda for strengthening the effort to build the Jewish education profession.

For additional information about Jesna's educator recruitment and development initiatives, contact Paul Flexner, director of human resources development, at 212-284-6879 or flex@jesna.org.

Media and Technology

JEWEL: JEWish Electronic Learning

JEWEL is an interactive resource for Jewish educators, planners, and lay leaders maintained by JESNA on the World Wide Web (www.jesna.org). Highlights include the Jewish Educators' Electronic Toolkit and links to extensive Jewish and educational resources. The JESNA website was revised during summer 1999 and is updated on a regular basis. JEWEL receives financial support from the **Sosland Family Foundation**.

Jewish Educators' Electronic Toolkit

The Jewish Educators' Electronic Toolkit aims to expand the effective utilization of media, multi-media, and computer-based resources to enhance Jewish learning and teaching. The Toolkit features resources and links to websites that include curricular resources and templates for lesson planning; distance learning opportunities; sample technology plans, and software reviews for secular as well as Jewish education. Periodic informational mailings are sent to directors of central agencies, media-resource center directors, and other stakeholders. **Baltimore, Kansas City, and Los Angeles** are the primary partner and "lab" communities that are working with JESNA on this project. Funding for the Toolkit comes from the **Becker, Kaminer, and Macks Foundations**, as well as the **Sosland Foundation grant**.

Jewish Educator's Guide to the Internet

This seven-week, interactive, online workshop for educators in Jewish settings, codeveloped with the Distance Learning Project at the **Jewish Theological Seminary**, is now in its third successful semester. The workshop is designed to help Jewish educators integrate the Internet into their work in a meaningful way.

IsraeLive Website

The website is a companion piece to *Israel in Our Lives* guides. The site includes online versions of the guides as well as additional annotated resources and is periodically updated. Funding for the site is provided in part by the **Joint Program for Jewish Education**.

Jewish Funders Network Jewish Education Working Group

JESNA is working with the **Jewish Funders Network** to identify resources and experts for their Jewish Education Working Group website. JESNA will provide tools for effective educational granting, resources for effective granting, “state of the field” summaries, a listing of “hot grants” to serve as models of promising new initiatives, and a question and answer panel for funders and experts in the field.

For additional information about JESNA’s media and technology initiatives, contact Caren Levine, director of media and technology, at 212-284-6898 or caren@jesna.org.

Central Agencies for Jewish Education and the Association of Directors of Central Agencies (ADCA)

JESNA continues to serve as the secretariat for the **Association of Directors of Central Agencies** and to coordinate closely with ADCA on a range of issues, including congregational and supplementary education, relationships with Israel-based organizations, and professional and leadership development for central agencies. In February 2000, JESNA and ADCA will again jointly sponsor the Jewish Education Leadership Kallah for JESNA Board members, central agency presidents and volunteer leaders, and central agency directors.

JESNA was created in 1981 as the Jewish Federation system’s educational coordinating, planning, and development agency. JESNA is widely recognized for its leadership in the areas of research and program evaluation, professional recruitment and development, media and technology, organizational change and innovative program design and dissemination.

OUR PURPOSE: Vibrant Jewish Life *through* Jewish Learning

OUR VISION: Leading *the* Communal Commitment *and* Mobilization *for* Excellence *in* Jewish Education



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Special Education

JESNA continues to provide staff support for the **Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education**, a professional network of consultants in central agencies. JESNA edits and publishes the annual newsletter of the consortium. This year’s colloquium will be hosted by the **Los Angeles Bureau of Jewish Education**, May 7-10, 2000.

Early Childhood Education

In addition to its evaluation work with the *Machon L'Morim* program in Baltimore, JESNA has been asked to help convene a conference for communities, educators, and funders engaged in innovative work in the area of early childhood education. This conference is tentatively scheduled for late Spring 2000.

In addition, JESNA continues to work with the **JCC Association** to facilitate participation of central agency early childhood specialists in the JCC’s major new initiatives.

Israel Experience

JESNA and the **JCC Association** have written a joint proposal to spearhead an initiative aimed at expanding and improving community-based, post-trip programming. The proposal has been submitted to **Birthright Israel North America** for funding in conjunction with an initiative that will target high school age students.

JESNA is a national, non-profit agency governed by a board of directors comprised of lay and professional leaders in Jewish education from across North America, including individuals from the major Jewish religious movements. JESNA is a beneficiary of Jewish federations throughout North America and other private and communal funders.

For additional information about JESNA, contact Marjorie Sussman, director of marketing and communications, at 212-284-6896 or masussman@jesna.org.

The information contained in this report is general in nature and subject to change. It is not intended to provide comprehensive information about JESNA’s programs or capabilities.