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From *Madrachim* to Expert Educators: New Career Ladder for Professional Development for Supplementary and Day School Teachers

by Richard D. Solomon, Elaine C. Solomon, and Hana Bor

There is abundant empirical and documented evidence¹ that we need Jewish educators more highly competent in both Judaics and pedagogy for our supplementary and day schools. That is not debatable.

The JESNA task force on recruitment, development, retention and replacement,² put it succinctly:

(T)here is a chronic shortage of Jewish educators at every level and in every setting. Schools, camps, and youth programs are constantly seeking staff, ranging from entry-level teachers, counselors, and advisors to the senior personnel necessary to administer institutions and programs. In an open society with few barriers for Jews, not enough young people are choosing to become Jewish educators, and not enough of those who make this choice stay with Jewish education as a lifelong career.

The good news is that there are many excellent programs designed to train candidates to become skilled Jewish teachers, administrators and leaders. We have listed a few exemplary programs below:

- DeLeT Program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Rhea Hirsh School in Los Angeles and at the Mandel Center at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts
- Masters in Jewish Education Program at the Fingerhut School of Education, American Jewish University (formerly the University of Judaism), Los Angeles, California
- Masters of Jewish Education at HUC-JIR in Los Angeles, California
- Masters of Jewish Education at HUC-JIR in New York
- Yeshiva University's Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, New York, New York
- Masters in Jewish Education at the Davidson School of Education, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, New York (some online courses offered)
- Masters in Jewish Education at Gratz College (including online courses), Melrose Park, Pennsylvania
- Masters in Jewish Education at Baltimore Hebrew College (including on line courses), Baltimore, Maryland
- Masters in Jewish Education at Hebrew College, Boston, Massachusetts
- Masters in Jewish Education at Hebrew University, Rothberg International School, Jerusalem, Israel
- Masters in Jewish Education, Spertus College, Chicago, Illinois (including online courses)
- Masters in Jewish Education, Siegal College of Judaic Studies, Cleveland, Ohio (including online courses)

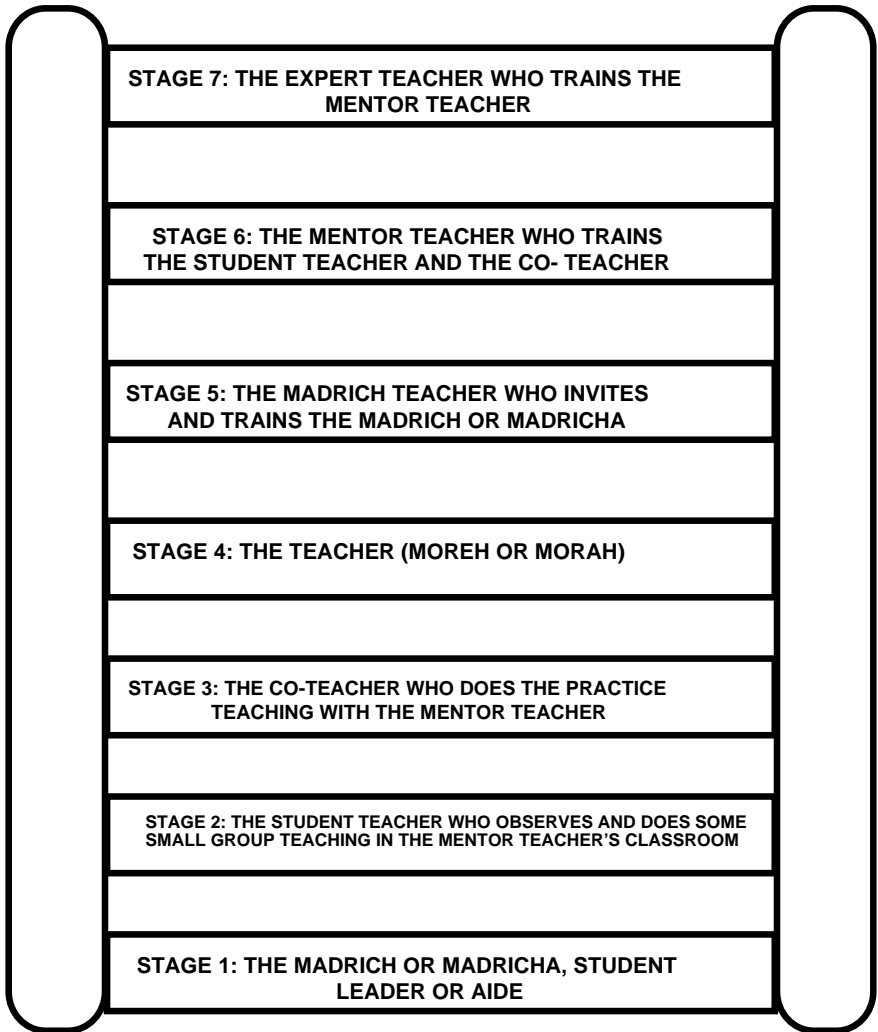
We strongly believe, however, that there is a compelling need to create a new track in Jewish teacher training from the *madrach* to the expert teacher. At the present time, we are missing a

golden opportunity to plant the seeds of a teaching career as early as high school if we do not create teacher training programs for our 11th and 12th graders in their supplementary schools and day schools. Moreover, we need to provide undergraduate Jewish Studies majors with a structured for-credit program to learn the pedagogical knowledge and skills to become Jewish educators.

In addition, Jewish teacher training in the 21st century will not be dependent upon proximity to a college or university. With the advent of distance learning, high school, undergraduate, and graduate students will be able to take courses in Judaics and pedagogy from any location that has Internet services. Indeed, at the present time Gratz College offers online courses for these learners.

Below you will find a graphic organizer that depicts a seven stage ladder of career development for Jewish supplementary and day school teachers.

SEVEN STAGE CAREER DEVELOPMENT LADDER FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS IN A SUPPLEMENTAL OR DAY SCHOOL



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To make this career ladder a reality, we would like to offer the following recommendations:

1. Supplementary and day schools consider implementing *madrich* programs that offer some of their 11th and 12th participants a two-year paid teacher internship program. In the 11th grade, these teacher-candidates would strengthen their knowledge base of Judaics and receive classes in best practices in teaching. During the first semester of the senior year, in addition to performing the duties of the *madrich/madricha*, the student teacher would have an enhanced responsibility. He or she now would observe, reflect, and do some small-group teaching in preparation for becoming a co-teacher during the second semester. During the co-teaching phase, the teacher-candidate would now be engaged in co-planning, co-instructing, and co-reflecting with his or her mentor teacher. Together they may be engaged in team teaching where they alternate instructing the whole class or they might divide the class into small learning groups that each one directs. Ultimately, the goal of co-teaching is for the teacher-candidate to assume most, if not all, of the responsibilities of the mentor teacher.
2. Colleges and universities that offer undergraduate programs in Judaic Studies consider providing for-credit courses in pedagogy. These courses also can be offered online to 12th grade supplementary and day school students who receive the recommendation from their respective schools.
3. Colleges and universities that offer master's programs in Jewish Education and Administration consider providing online courses for mentor teachers in supervision, mentoring, staff development, and models of teaching.
4. Supplementary and day schools, bureaus and central agencies of Jewish education, and Jewish educational foundations consider funding this new track for professional teachers.

There is no question that there are excellent graduate and some undergraduate programs to develop Jewish educational leaders. Our point is that the state of Jewish education today requires that we begin this initiative while students are still in their supplementary and day schools.

Endnotes:

1. See, for example, Wertheimer, Jack. *Linking the silos: How to accelerate the momentum in Jewish education today*. NY: The AVI CHAI Foundation, 2005.
2. Flexner, Paul A. and Sandra O. Gold. *Providing for the Jewish future: Report on the task force on professional recruitment, development, retention, and placement*. NY: Jewish Education Service of North America, 2003.

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