

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

In his article on federation funding of congregational and supplementary schools, Steven Kraus provides an overview of the financing of part-time Jewish education, noting recent developments and emerging trends. His findings indicate an increase in federation funding of congregational and communal supplementary schools. He highlights some communities in which federations have provided funding for supplementary schools through funding formulas or allocations linked to school improvement initiatives. This survey of the field will provide context for federations in the process of rethinking their stance on the funding of congregational and communal part-time education.

Federation Funding of Congregational/Supplementary Schools

STEVEN KRAUS

As Jack Wertheimer asserts in his article on Jewish education in the United States (1999), “The 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in reviving and even recreating supplementary education.... Suddenly, the supplementary-school system – long regarded as the most pedestrian, if not hopeless, setting for Jewish education – became ‘hot,’ as Jewish educators rushed to reconceive the entire enterprise in bold, if experimental, terms.”¹

Wertheimer posits several reasons for this turnabout. First, few educators were prepared to scrap the largest school system in the field of Jewish education. The fact that the majority of Jewish children continue to enroll in supplementary schools, and not day schools, made it unrealistic to give up on this form of education. Second, a reexamination of the entire system prompted a reconsideration of basic issues.² Steven Cohen’s contention that “no Jewish education is the least effective, and that a lot of Jewish education helps Jewish identity a *lot*, and a little Jewish education helps Jewish identity a *little*,”³ prompted Donald Feinstein and Barry Shrage, two leading federation professionals, to warn against “writ(ing) off the great middle group of Jewish children who get a ‘limited Jewish education.’”⁴ Third, some educators

argued for a new approach to this type of Jewish education – creating a different set of goals that would nurture a positive attachment to Judaism and Jewish peoplehood, rather than focusing primarily on the transmission of information and the development of skills.⁵ The argument was that this approach would lead to the results actually desired from supplementary school education.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The congregational/supplementary school system is a multi-million dollar endeavor that historically has suffered from insufficient financial resources.⁶ The bulk of financing has come from tuition fees paid by parents and the indirect taxation of all congregational members to cover the costs of the schools. One policy question with which the Jewish community has wrestled over the decades has been whether the larger community should finance Jewish education. A study of the Boston Jewish community in 1975 concluded that “while of great importance to respondents... (the) sponsorship (of Jewish education) may be seen as a synagogal rather than a... federation or communal function.”⁷

Nevertheless, federations have a history of allocating

¹ Jack Wertheimer, “Jewish Education in the United States,” *American Jewish Year Book* (1999): 62.

² Wertheimer, 62.

³ Wertheimer, 62.

⁴ Wertheimer, 63.

⁵ Wertheimer, 64.

⁶ Wertheimer argues that, based on an estimate of \$1,500 per student to deliver a supplementary school education, the system expends \$750 million per year. Wertheimer, “Talking Dollars and Sense About Jewish Education,” *The AVI CHAI Foundation* (2001): 4.

⁷ Wertheimer, “Jewish Education,” 27.

FEDERATION ALLOCATIONS FOR CONGREGATIONAL/SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND DAY SCHOOLS

Year	Federation Allocations For Cong/Supp Schools	Cong/Supp School Allocation as % of Total Jewish Ed. Allocation	Cong/Supp School Allocation as % of Total Local Allocation	Federation Allocations For Day Schools	Day School Allocation as % of Total Jewish Ed. Allocation	Day School Allocation as % of Total Local Allocation
1996	\$4,466,000	7.1%	1.7%	\$26,762,000	42.4%	10.3%
1997	\$5,083,000	7.9%	2.0%	\$27,457,000	42.4%	10.7%
1998	\$6,204,000	8.7%	2.2%	\$34,836,000	48.9%	12.5%

funds for Jewish education. In 1998, between 3%–55.8%, with a median of 27.5%, of total local allocations went to Jewish education. The lion’s share of that amount (between 3%–27.5%, with a median of 10.25%) went to central agencies for Jewish education, the local organizations established to support Jewish education on the community level. A portion of the money did make its way into the schools, as well. In earlier years, federations primarily supported communal schools, often the local *Talmud Torah*. But, as the number of communal schools decreased and the number of congregational schools increased, the question of federation involvement became far more complicated. The sheer immensity of the costs and the potential pitfalls of having to negotiate ideological and denominational issues had to be confronted.

The proliferation of day schools helped to complicate the debate about federation funding for Jewish education. Initially there was strong opposition to communal support for day schools on the grounds that they served only a narrow segment of the population and the interests of particular denominations, rather than the total community. And even day school advocates conceded that if federations wanted to make a serious dent in day school costs by assuming responsibility for half their budgets, the entire domestic spending of the federated system would have to go solely to fund Jewish education, a completely unrealistic option.⁸

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

So, where are we today? The table above compares fed-

eration allocations for congregational/supplementary schools and day schools for the years 1996-98.⁹

The table illustrates the ratio of allocations to congregational/supplementary schools and day schools. Day schools received five to six times the share of federation funding that congregational/communal supplementary schools received in 1996–98. It is important to keep several things in mind when interpreting these figures. More than 66% of students who are currently enrolled in Jewish education are in congregational or communal supplementary schools. Although enrollment in day schools is much lower, annual per capita costs for day school education are nearly seven times supplementary school costs. It is estimated that the average annual cost of a day school education is \$10,000 per student compared to \$1,500 per supplementary school student.¹⁰

Furthermore, the table above only reports funding to schools provided through the federation allocation system. Day schools, in particular, also receive significant amounts of communal funding from other sources (e.g. restricted funds and endowments). In addition, although data for years later than 1998 are not available, it is likely that the level of allocations to day schools in recent years is even higher than listed in the table above.

EMERGING TRENDS IN FEDERATION ALLOCATIONS TO CONGREGATIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION

Currently, there is some evidence that federations are beginning to re-examine and modify their approaches to

⁸ Wertheimer, “Jewish Education,” 29.

⁹ Based on allocations reports published by the Council for Jewish Federations from 1996-1999.

¹⁰ Wertheimer, “Talking Dollars and Sense,” 3-4.

funding congregational supplementary education. The subsidization of congregational schools by federations signals a significant change in federation-synagogue relations.

JESNA began to update information about federation allocations to congregational supplementary schools by sending an email query to directors of central agencies for Jewish education during the summer of 2001. The directors were asked to provide information about funding that was distributed through the central agencies as well financial support going directly to the schools. Thirty-one of the 66 central agency directors who are members of the Association of Directors of Central Agencies (ADCA) responded to the query.¹¹

Although the data gathered from the central agency directors is preliminary and incomplete, several noteworthy trends emerged that merit attention:

- Community schools (compared to congregational schools) continue to receive higher levels of financial support from the federations.
- Most communities that fund congregational schools seek to link allocations to factors that will positively influence the quality of education (e.g., contact hours for students, professional development for teachers, written curricula) in addition to any per capita allotments. In a few communities, funding is also provided to the congregations for scholarships.
- Many communities offer special grants to spur development in designated areas (e.g., creating and upgrading family education programs, use of technology).
- Several communities are funding “school improvement initiatives” to support transformational change in congregational schools. Such initiatives are organized on the local level (e.g., Philadelphia’s Designated Schools Initiative or Hartford’s *La’atid* Initiative) while others are national (e.g., the Experiment in Congregational Education or Synagogue 2000).

Federation Allocations to Congregational Schools

Central agencies administer the distribution of communal funding to congregational supplementary schools in 14 of the 31 responding communities. The total allocations to congregational schools in these communities

range from \$300 to \$700,000. The ranges vary greatly, even when broken down by community size. Criteria for determining the allocations include:

- Meeting community standards for minimum number of hours of instruction per week (e.g. six hours/week)
- Formulas based on teacher salaries and number of students
- Formulas based on number of students who receive tuition assistance
- School enrollment and grade levels served
- Money spent by schools on school programming
- Grants through RFPs

Congregational supplementary schools receive funding directly (without central agency involvement) in 17 of the 31 responding communities. Mechanisms for providing financial support to congregational supplementary school in these communities include:

- Grants through RFPs
- Grants to support school improvement/change initiatives
- Formulas based on teacher salary and number of students
- Support for technology initiatives
- Funding for family educators
- Support for special education programs
- Initiatives directed toward specific geographic areas

Scholarship Support for Congregational Schools

Two communities, Philadelphia and Detroit, provide funds ear-marked for scholarship assistance to each school in the community as part of their annual allocations to supplementary schools. Both of these programs began within the past five years. In Philadelphia, the amount is dependent on the school enrollment in the previous year and the range of assistance allocated is between \$300 and \$5,000 per school. Detroit also uses a formula that is based on need and is related to synagogue dues. This year Detroit is disbursing \$500,000 for this program.

¹¹ Based on results from an email survey of the Association of Directors of Central Agencies conducted by Steven Kraus of JESNA, July 2001.

Funding Linked to School Improvement Initiatives

Four communities, Los Angeles, Broward County, San Francisco, and Columbus, have created funding models that seek to maximize contact hours, encourage professional development, and promote school improvement.

- *Los Angeles, CA.* The BJE of Los Angeles has been allocating funds to qualifying K–12 supplementary schools on a per-pupil basis for over 40 years. To qualify, schools must meet a variety of institutional requirements and the students must enroll for the equivalent of six hours per week. Schools enrolling approximately 5,000 of the 14,000 supplementary school students in Los Angeles qualify. Recognizing that continuing Jewish educational involvement in the high school years is vital and that supplementary secondary schools rarely meet for six hours weekly, a per pupil subsidy was also established for those studying fewer than six hours per week. In 1994, the allocation system was expanded beyond per-capita grants to include program grants for implementing activities recommended through a newly initiated school accreditation process. Schools can receive grants ranging from \$3,750 to \$7,500 to implement school improvement initiatives that are recommended through the accreditation process. Los Angeles' allocation process achieves several programmatic goals, such as increasing the number of hours of instruction per week and encouraging improvement through the accreditation-related grants.
- *Broward County, FL.* Broward County's Synagogue School Funding program has two requirements: 1) the educational director, or a designated synagogue professional, must attend the monthly meeting of the Council of Education Directors; and 2) teachers in the schools must attend professional growth workshops equal to twice the number of hours/week they teach, up to a maximum of eight hours. Teachers are given an hourly stipend, beginning with the third hour of professional growth. The balance of the funding allocated through a formula that takes into account the number of hours of instruction and the number of students in each school. In addition, schools receive an additional \$125 for each licensed teacher they hire. Broward County's process, which has been in place for more than 12 years, ensures the participation of teachers and principals in ongoing professional growth opportunities.
- *San Francisco, CA.* San Francisco allocates approximately \$150,000 to its 23 congregations in two ways: 1)

all schools that meet basic criteria (or minimum standards) may apply for school improvement funds based on student enrollment and the number of hours of instruction. A smaller sum of money is available for innovation grants.

- *Columbus, OH.* Columbus' Jewish Federation implemented an allocation system in 2001 that establishes minimum standards and seeks to foster innovation. In order to receive federation funding for students in grades K–12 congregations must meet the following standards:
 - There must be a responsible lay structure that meets regularly to establish policies and procedures.
 - There must be a clear written statement of educational goals and objectives for the school program.
 - Faculty must use written curricula that include learning objectives, subjects, texts, and resources. There must be a formal process to review curriculum.
 - The school must have a paid professional leader.
 - There must be adequate facilities, equipment, and supplies for educational programming.
 - The school must have a formal process, outlined in writing, for the assessment of student progress.
 - The institution must have a written Professional Development Plan for all staff that is approved by the Education Committee. This should include a process for each member of the staff.
 - Classes must meet for at least six hours per week.
 - The school must have a written student attendance policy.
 - The institution must have a written statement of required and desired qualifications for teachers.
 - The school should adhere to a consistent and appropriate salary scale for teachers and aides in writing.
 - The school must provide regular reporting to Federation, as requested.
 - The congregation and school must regularly acknowledge Federation in material promoting the school and other appropriate publications.

Once schools meet these eligibility standards, potential funding is divided into two pools. First, schools receive allocations based on a formula that factors in the number of students and the hours of instruction. Second, incentive grants are available for projects to enhance the quality of the educational programs.

CONCLUSION

Congregational supplementary schools have traditionally received a minimal percentage of federation allocations, both in absolute terms and compared to allocations to day schools. However, some evidence is beginning to emerge that federations are increasing their financial support to congregational schools. This signals the community's renewed interest in congregational supplementary education as well as new thinking about ways to

improve the quality of this form of Jewish education. Additional research will be needed to document the effects of linking standards and professional development to the allocation process, providing scholarships for needy families and providing incentive grants for improvement and programming.

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Editor's Suggested Discussion Guide:

- Kraus presents a variety of models currently used by federations to provide funding for part-time Jewish education in their communities. Some are aimed at increasing access to Jewish education, while others are directed to improving the quality of that education. Should communal funding be contingent on cri-

teria related to educational quality? What criteria would you choose?

- Shrage writes that "any serious effort to engage the federation in the work of educational change and Jewish continuity would...require a serious working collaboration with congregations. What role could funding play in building this partnership?"