

THE FEDERATION AND JEWISH EDUCATION

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The vision, purpose, and responsibilities of the federation role in Jewish education have changed dramatically over the past century, and accompanying these changes have been some tension and controversy. Today, federations play a strong leadership role in strengthening, enhancing, and funding the entire Jewish education infrastructure. Although generally the federation role has been as a resource rather than a program provider, this pattern seems to be changing as Jewish continuity assumes greater prominence on the communal agenda.

The relationship of the federation to Jewish education is complex and multifaceted and has always been in a state of flux and evolution. As with many relationships, it can be seen in both positive and negative ways or a blend of both, depending on one's perspective.

For example, many in the field of Jewish education, although welcoming federation funding, have often seen the relationship as problematic, particularly what they see as federation meddling in affairs that are out of its purview. School leaders often find certain accountability requirements attached to funding to be onerous and burdensome. And though funding levels have increased dramatically, at least from a dollar standpoint (if not always percentage-wise), educators feel that there is often not enough money to do what has to be done, demands are always increasing, and procuring allocations is often difficult. Others have been more appreciative of federation advocacy, moral support, leadership, and overall efforts to improve the status of Jewish education. The more sanguine perspective about the relationship emanates from looking at communal financial resource limitations with a more realistic understanding that federations have manifold global and local responsibilities in addition to Jewish education, notwithstanding education's pivotal place in maintaining the very existence of the Jewish community.

Federation leadership, for the most part,

is quite proud of what it has accomplished over the years, and hopes, despite increased challenges to the system and diminished campaigns in many places, to continue to play a significant role in Jewish education and continuity well into the next century. At federation too, however, there are various factions that see the relationship either as positive and beneficial or problematic and detrimental. There are still those (too many some would say) who would prefer to give much less and be less involved with Jewish education, but they seem to be losing ground and gradually fading out of the leadership cadres. In general, the consensus seems to be that the relationship has come a very long way in a very positive sense.

Federations have generally dealt with Jewish education through their constituent agencies, and, therefore in addressing the topic of the federation relationship with Jewish education this article covers the interaction of local federations with local Jewish educational agencies during the past century. Traditionally, local federations have considered their bureaus and central agencies for Jewish education, boards, commissions, committees, and Talmud Torahs/communal Hebrew school to be their communal bodies or instrumentalities for Jewish education. In recent years in many communities, day schools, regardless of affiliation or religious sponsorship, have also come to be considered major communal educational agencies in the community with respect

both to funding and status. Throughout this article, the term communal bodies or communal bodies for Jewish education is used to refer to the various types of bureaus, central agencies, and the like.

After a brief review of the history of the relationship between communal bodies of education and the federation, this article addresses these three issues:

1. early federation interaction with Jewish education and questions about funding
2. support for communal bodies for Jewish education, emerging tensions, and current restructuring activities
3. the emergence of the day school as a major communal agency

THE CONTEXT: COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR JEWISH EDUCATION.

Communal responsibility for Jewish education is a vital aspect of Jewish community life that has been assumed by Jewish leadership at different times, in different places, and in different ways throughout our long history. Clearly, on this continent during most of the twentieth century, the primary professional responsibility for Jewish education has been borne by rabbis, teachers, and other educators associated with the various day and supplementary schools operating at the local level. They have been, and will undoubtedly continue to be, the front-line troops, the providers of Jewish education and Torah. Moreover, these institutions have themselves, through parents and private philanthropists, been responsible for providing most of the *kemach*—the financial resources—to maintain their programs. In addition, over the years, the religious movements have provided a range of services to strengthen the educational infrastructure. In 1992 there were more than 600 day schools, about 1,900 supplementary schools and about 140 independent pre-schools with a total enrollment of approximately 470,000, of which 168,000 were in day schools and 287,000 in supplementary

schools.

Today, this communal responsibility is shared by many: the schools, congregations, religious movements, youth movements, camps, JCCs, college Hillels, communal bodies for Jewish education, and federation. One of the critical challenges facing continuity planners is how to enhance the effectiveness of these partnerships.

Generally, the federation role has been as a resource rather than a program provider, although this pattern seems to be changing in more than a few communities where federations are becoming extensively involved not only with continuity planning but also with continuity programming.

EVOLUTION AND CHANGE: FEDERATION AND JEWISH EDUCATION

The vision, purpose, and responsibilities of Jewish communal organization and the federation role with Jewish education have changed dramatically over the years, but the process was not an immediate one nor one without controversy.

Although Jewish education was not among early American Jewry's communal responsibilities, it was one of its permanent concerns. The periodical literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century laments its status and cites attempts to arouse the community to improve Jewish schools. In Philadelphia, in 1851, and New York, in 1865, for example, early expressions of collective responsibility for Jewish education focused on trying to organize the local schools. During the decades preceding World War I Talmud Torahs were established in many communities.

The creation of the federation movement at the turn of the century and the emergence of the principle of federated communal services and joint fund raising benefited Jewish education. Within two decades the federated system became the norm across the continent. At first, the newly formed federations were wary about recognizing Jewish education as a communal activity qualifying for communal support. Some argued

that it belonged within the religious and sectarian domain, others viewed it as a divisive element, and others associated it with the *heder*, which they saw as socially and professionally inferior. In a few communities, especially where the federation itself was struggling for acceptance, there was great reluctance to embrace an area that generated controversy and discord.

New York was the first American Jewish community to translate its recognition of the principle of community responsibility for Jewish education into developing educational policies on a community-wide basis. Soon after the Kehillah was created in 1909 it commissioned a study of Jewish education that led to the establishment of the New York Bureau of Jewish Education in 1910. When the New York Jewish Charities federated in 1917, it first kept away from supporting educational institutions, but within a year reversed that position. In doing so it laid out some ground-breaking principles that influenced other communities. In a special report it asserted that

- Jewish education is a communal need.
- Jewish schools are agencies for ethical instruction that foster an intelligent self-respect through Jewish history, promote family solidarity, and promote good citizenship.
- Jewish schools fulfilling the above are within the scope of Jewish communal activity worthy of communal support.
- The federation must have nothing to do with the content and policy of funded schools.

The establishment of this bureau served as a model for others. Similar bodies, providing a range of school services, and communal Talmud Torahs were created around the country over the next decade or so.

By the 1930s there was considerable concern about the federation's capacity to deal simultaneously with cultural, educational, and worldwide situations and to go well beyond merely dealing with local charitable needs. The dominant struggle during those

times and the early days of the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF) was between those who wanted to retrench in the face of new challenges and those who wanted to proceed boldly with an expansion of their agenda and a commitment to strengthening Jewish life and experience. A key issue was how extensively Jewish education should be funded.

In 1932, during the Depression, in the face of critical financial cuts, Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, on behalf of the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, wrote a scathing letter to federations and congregations emphatically protesting the action of various federations in discriminating against Jewish education and other character-building activities. He referred to reductions of appropriations to schools, communal bodies of Jewish education and to community centers that were far beyond the reductions made in any of their other activities, and saw them as destroying the vital functions and morale of those institutions. He expressed indignation that some federations were attempting "under the pressure of certain subscribers, to release themselves entirely from the responsibility for the communal aspects of Jewish education." While acknowledging their role as a unifying force, building confidence and trust in the community, he saw their actions as unjust, unwise, and dangerous to morale and the future welfare of the American Jewish community. Many others also reacted with anxiety and responded similarly, although not as eloquently.

By mid-century substantial changes had taken place. A variety of emerging ideas on Jewish survival, pluralism and ethnic diversity, anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust solidified communal support for Jewish education. Eventually, the notion of putting more resources into Jewish education was widely endorsed by these leaders in principle, if not always in practice. In 1959, the American Association for Jewish Education (AAJE) released its seven-year National Study of Jewish education. It urged federations to become directly responsible for

planning for community and educational quality in addition to funding. There developed a broad agreement that reform of the educational system was necessary. About that time the issue of Jewish identification and commitment, especially among young Jews, started to become a key concern at the CJF's General Assemblies.

Six years later, at the 1965 General Assembly in Montreal, the CJF on its own initiative appointed a Committee on Planning for Jewish Education. The committee recognized that such planning called for the commitment and involvement of top community leaders. This planning body became an instrument of the federation for national planning and assistance for Jewish education. The keynote at the 1968 General Assembly portrayed education as the heart of the Jewish future, and by 1970 education had risen to the top of federation's priorities, permeating the General Assembly discussions that year. The CJF planning committee, with the help of AAJE, made 28 recommendations regarding Jewish education as part of a long-term agenda. These included the primacy of local communities dealing with educational quality, maintaining unity in communities, respecting different ideologies, doing comprehensive planning for both formal and informal modes of education including stronger support for day schools, and stronger cooperation between federations and the religious movements.

Since then much progress has been made in many of these areas both continentally and locally, albeit much work remains. And although the role and funding levels of local federations vary from community to community, the federation movement has provided leadership, energy, and resources to help make Jewish education more effective and improve its quality. It is now moving in high gear through the era of Jewish continuity, dealing with a complex set of educational and related issues in a changing world.

In sum, over a period of three quarters of a century, the federation has moved from an

ambivalent attitude toward Jewish education and other restricted funding to a pattern of comprehensive communal planning that profoundly influences Jewish education at virtually all levels (Table 1). It is to the credit of federation leadership that it has achieved this both through a continuous reappraisal of both the nature of Jewish experience in America and abroad and an ongoing assessment of its own role and response to changes in the environment. It is also interesting to note history repeating itself in federation's dealings with Jewish education and its agencies, as early ambivalence is followed by virtually full acceptance. These patterns reveal the elements of an evolving institution.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: FEDERATION AND COMMUNAL BODIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Local federations' acceptance of the principle of communal responsibility for Jewish education led to their establishing and funding communal bodies of Jewish education and/or communal Hebrew schools. Since federations were not directly involved in Jewish education and did not wish to be, these bodies were designed and created to be an instrument for educational advocacy to set educational standards, to deliver centralized services to schools, and to promote coordination of activities. In some communities it was determined that the communal body would be a communal school or school system, sometimes assuming additional coordinating responsibilities for other autonomous schools.

Communal bodies, for example, were established in Boston in 1917, and in Buffalo, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Omaha, and St. Louis in the 1920s. Communal Hebrew schools were set up in Detroit (1919), Minneapolis (1915), Pittsburgh (1916), and Philadelphia (1921). It is of interest that the federation movement and the emergence of the communal bodies of education developed about the same time, with the federations starting a

Table 1. Federation Allocations to Jewish Education

<u>Year</u>	<u>Dollar Amount</u>	<u>Percentage of Local Allocations</u>
1937	528,831	5.45
1947	2,215,911	8.89
1957	3,902,299	10.15
1980	34,523,849	24.0
1990	76,293,322	26.2
1993	60,055,520	23.2

bit earlier and at a faster pace. In many instances, the federations were catalysts, stimulating their communities to develop mechanisms for addressing Jewish education from a communal perspective, often through AAJE. Before AAJE came into existence in 1939 this was done by the CJF's division of social research.

Federation support for communal bodies constitutes a major component of the Jewish education allocation. At one time it was the major component, although the growth of the day schools has changed that. Some relevant facts and figures may be informative.

- **1968:** For 26 communal bodies, federation allocations were the only or major revenue source, constituting 100% for such places as Boston, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Paterson, Philadelphia, and St. Louis and above 80% for such places as Atlantic City, Baltimore, Camden, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Miami, Oakland, Providence, Rochester and Washington.
- **1984:** Eleven large city and 12 intermediate city communal bodies report independent income that in most cases amounts to not more than 10% and in a few cases not more than 30%, coming from membership, grants, investment, bequests and user fees.
- **1992:** For 13 reporting communities, more than two-thirds of budgets came from federation allocations, with the balance from membership, enrollment and program fees, contributions, grants, bequests, and interest income.

CHALLENGES AND CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FEDERATIONS AND COMMUNAL BODIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Structural and Functional Ambiguity

Communal bodies for Jewish education have played many different roles and functions, and there have been, and continue to be, significant differences of opinion by communal leaders about them. Considering the range of structural models and possible programmatic areas, it is not surprising that communal bodies today often operate within an environment of functional and structural ambiguity. Moreover, structurally there is no single model of how a communal body for Jewish education should be configured or how it should be linked to the federation. Functionally, the situation is equally unclear. Most provide a variety of services, but it is not always clear to the agencies themselves, or to the federation, what the programmatic priorities are or should be. This has led not only to tension and confusion but also to ineffective service. The emerging role of federation in the field of Jewish education has been a significant factor in these developments.

Federations' Changing role

The growing involvement of federation in educational—and more recently continuity—planning and programming, bringing with it new direct relationships with schools and congregations, has added further ambiguities to the communal body's role and to the federation/communal body relationship.

There are different perceptions and views about who should be doing what. Some leaders argue that where a communal body for Jewish education exists, the federation should address *all* of its educational activities and institutional relationships, including its financial support to schools, through that communal body. Other leaders maintain that most communal bodies are not viewed, nor view themselves, as agencies commissioned or equipped to undertake planning and funding. They observe that community planning, especially where the service delivery system embraces multiple institutions, has become primarily a federation responsibility. Federation, they feel, is the only agency able to mobilize the broad participation, quality of leadership, and resources necessary for effective planning. They maintain that if the federation is to allocate a quarter or more of its local funds in support of Jewish education it should be involved directly not only in determining to whom those funds are distributed but also in shaping how they are used. This direct involvement makes it difficult, even where a federation might wish it to be so, to preserve the communal body as the sole focus and conduit for expressing federation's interest in Jewish education. To be sure, in several large and intermediate communities communal bodies are taking a lead or key role in continuity planning, and in others they are members of the coalition. However, again, more often than not, the federations are becoming much more involved, as continuity processes generally operate independently of the communal bodies.

Strains on the Relationship

Active involvement by federation in Jewish education subjects the relationship to numerous strains and tensions.

- Overall planning for Jewish education is not always as far reaching, coherent, or as effective as it should be. Many federations expect communal bodies to do more planning and expand their horizons beyond the schools, but have not always provided clear guidance as to what this means or made available the resources to do so.
- The communal body often finds itself caught in the middle between the needs and expectations of federation and those of the educational institutions. In some places, the federation wants the communal body to focus more on the larger continuity agenda and informal educational modes, although many still want school-related services. In contrast, schools often want the agency to increase school services. In mediating between these two worlds, the communal body has the added disability of lacking any real leverage over either.
- The communal body must live, prosper, and justify itself in an environment of responsibility without authority. As *the* communal agency for Jewish education in a community, it is expected by federation and the institutions to make a demonstrable difference in the Jewish educational life of that community. Yet, the communal body's perception of what is needed and desirable to make the difference educationally may not correspond to what the institutions want, nor to what the federation sees as needed to make that difference, nor to what the federation sees as desirable politically. Thus, communal bodies today often find themselves on the defensive, having to justify that they are worth the investment being made in them both to the schools and federation.
- Because the boundaries among planning, coordination, operations, and services are often fluid and indistinct, federations may find themselves duplicating or infringing on the role of communal bodies. Occasionally, when communal bodies have launched new planning initiatives, they have been pre-empted by the federation.
- Often a service that is viewed as a priority by one community is not seen that way in another. This makes comparison (or for example, the development of uni-

form standards and accreditation) difficult. Also, it underscores that many of the differences are based on perceptions and values, rather than absolute truths about what communal bodies should or should not be doing.

- Federation control of allocations may put the communal body in the position of being a perceived competitor with the institutions it is mandated to serve.
- Many feel that the entire matter is linked to "people" issues. Many federation leaders have negative perceptions about the expertise and competency of communal body professionals and the quality of communal body boards. Communal body lay leaders and professionals often feel that their federation counterparts do not have sufficient knowledge and training in this area and should not therefore make education decisions without communal body involvement. Federation leaders frequently express concern that communal body lay people and professionals do not understand the broad context in which decisions must be made and see only the narrow interests of their agency.

Among federation professionals, such judgments may reflect differences in professional backgrounds, training, and styles that separate them from their communal body colleagues. Federation professionals are inclined toward thinking in terms of planning, evaluation, accountability, and fiscal matters. Communal body heads, on the other hand, are more inclined to focus on substantive educational issues, such as program content or learning and teaching modalities. Many, not without justification, see education as a system and culture that operates with different assumptions, ground rules, and values than does federation.

- Many believe that communal bodies are no longer the only repository of vision, passion, and expertise for Jewish education. They feel that these capacities, especially the ability to advocate effectively for Jewish education, now exist in the

federations as well. Some federations also lack confidence in the ability of their communal bodies to do planning and/or implement broad-based communal programs.

Restructuring for the Future

Looking toward the next century in a changing environment, with a massive agenda of Jewish continuity and education needs, many see the need to develop new communal body models to address current and emerging challenges more creatively and to transform the current system. They maintain that communities must consider not only how to provide effective programs for broad segments of the population but must also address issues of personnel, financial resources, and leadership for Jewish education—all while adjusting to dynamic changes in the Jewish community, Israel, and American society. This broad agenda suggests the need for a different type of communal body for Jewish education.

As a result, many federations have started to modify or reorganize their communal Jewish education service delivery systems with an emphasis on structure. These developments have been underway now for quite a few years. In all cases, the federations in these communities are playing a much more significant role in setting educational priorities and becoming much more active in planning for Jewish education. There are communities where the federations are taking over the roles of formerly independent communal bodies—instead of an autonomous agency, there now may exist a functional federation committee with one or more educators as staff. In other cases, the restructuring has been more dramatic. Several communities have entirely reshaped their communal bodies and are experimenting with novel structural arrangements that they believe will be more effective in dealing with planning and the provision of services. Some separate planning and funding from services; others bring the two closer. Some have changed the board and institutional components to

achieve their goals, and others have changed the staffing arrangements involving the mix and relative roles of federation and educational professionals. The four most distinctive new operational models are as follows:

1. The first model is structured as a commission with different functional committees. Former bureau staff and federation staff share responsibilities and committee assignments. The unified commission does educational planning and service delivery, budgeting and grants review, and financial resource development. The commission blends the educational activities of the former bureau with planning and budgeting previously done by the federation.
2. The second model has created two distinct bodies. The former bureau operates as a service agency and focuses primarily on teacher services. A new continuity department within federation does educational planning and provides other services.
3. The third model is structured as a supporting foundation of federation. The board is an independent body consisting of many former bureau board members, representatives from the religious movements, and federation. The leadership responsibilities are shared by an educational professional and an administrative top executive. All services of the former bureau are continuing with additional services as needed through three divisions: the first dealing with resource development, the second with direct services, and the third with planning.
4. The fourth model is structured as a federation center for central planning and coordinating. Leadership is shared equally by two executives: a Jewish educator as director of educational services and a federation planner as director of administration.

It is too soon to assess the effectiveness of

the new structures, but many feel that structural modifications are not where the critical changes need to take place. In any event, in one of the communities there are already questions about why there is a need for duplicate structures and staff.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FEDERATION AND DAY SCHOOLS

The Struggle of the Day Schools for Recognition and Funding

Day schools have become the newest communal agency in the federation family, but achieving this status took several decades. Obtaining support from federations for day schools in the 1940s and 1950s in a largely hostile environment marked by vehement opposition from many in the establishment was not unlike the initial struggle for financial support for Jewish education in the 1910s and 1920s. Before the 1960s, federations challenged the wisdom of organizing day schools (and in some cases the right to do so). Initially, AAJE was not very supportive, and day school proponents gave it mixed reviews for its role. The gradual inclusion of day schools as beneficiary and/or funded agencies was accompanied by many pressures and difficulties and fraught with many disappointments. The notion of complete withdrawal from the public school was viewed as anathema, particularly since the first modern day schools were under Orthodox auspices.

Today, with the proliferation of day schools of all streams and ideologies, there exists an almost universal acceptance of the day school concept and a recognition of its important, if not vital, role in addressing the continuity challenge. In 1949 there were 123 day schools in 42 American communities, with 55 of these established between 1945 and 1949. Currently, day schools exist in all large and large intermediate, most intermediate, and some small communities. There are about 630 day schools in the United States, including about 500 Orthodox day schools, 65 Con-

servative day schools, 50 transideological day schools, and 15 Reform day schools. Moreover, enrollment in day schools has grown substantially in recent decades even as supplementary school enrollment has dropped. The number of students in all day schools in the United States has grown from 60,000 in 1962, to 99,000 in 1981, to 130,000 in 1986 to 170,000 in 1988, to the current enrollment of 181,000.

Based on the overall educational quality and intensity of both general and Jewish studies in the vast majority of day schools, it is considered an exemplary and highly desirable form of schooling. The consensus across all segments of the community is that the day school is *the* most effective formal Jewish educational mode.

In recognition of this assessment, federation allocations to day schools have increased steadily in recent decades and now represent a major portion of the local communal Jewish education dollar. They not only receive the lion's share of the Jewish education allocation but are also accorded prestigious communal status in many communities. Although many day school leaders would like to increase allocation levels, especially where the percentage of individual school budgets covered is low, federation believes that overall the system has been quite responsive to day school needs and interests. Moreover, many federations have strengthened their local day schools through quality assurance procedures and by addressing specific day school administrative and/or educational needs (often through their local communal bodies for Jewish education).

Allocation Levels

Although the overall trend is upward, allocation levels often fall short of what the day schools need or request, despite the overwhelmingly positive assessment they receive. Enrollments have risen dramatically, and the number of schools has increased. As enrollment has risen so have costs, primarily due to increased educational ex-

penses, grants in financial aid, and capital expansion. At an average per-pupil cost of more than \$5,300 the annual cost for day school operations (excluding the bulk of capital costs) amounts to about a billion dollars annually nationwide. Federations cover a sizeable portion of that amount (Table 2). As expected, there are variations in funding levels from community to community, as well as different allocation methods that are determined within a context conditioned by communal history and dynamics (especially previous relations with the day school and its leaders), other Jewish education and communal needs, and, above all, the fluctuating levels of available funds. In the current environment the availability of funds is becoming *the* key element, with major concerns now beginning to surface about the prognosis for the future of day school funding. As always, educational needs must compete with other communal needs, and the current situation continues to present many challenges to budgeting and allocations committees.

A FINAL WORD

It is evident that federation has played and continues to play a critical role in strengthening, enhancing, and, not in the least, providing financial support, often at significant levels, to ensure the viability of the entire Jewish education infrastructure. Federation has exhibited the competency, leadership, resources, interest, and authority to direct the communal planning process for Jewish education and has increasingly used its capacities to do so. A strong leadership role by the federation is vital to the success of the planning process for Jewish education, and it is hoped that it will continue to take a leading role in initiating, convening, and guiding the planning processes at both the local and continental levels. This is especially important because the continuity landscape covers a wide range of areas involving many stakeholders. Through the continuity agenda, Jewish education has been broadened beyond schooling to include

Table 2. Federation Allocations to Day Schools

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Schools Receiving Allocations</u>
1948	11
1953	24
1958	86
1964	111, of which only 35 received over \$1,000
1983	Most, with a mean of \$619 per pupil and covering about 14% of school budgets
1993	Virtually all, covering about 12.5% of school budgets; represented about half of federation allocations to Jewish education

both formal and informal modes and settings of education. This encompasses both traditional and new programs, such as day and supplementary schools, family and adult education, congregational and youth group experiences, summer camping and Israel trips, services to college students, and expanded outreach activities. Federation must promote this full constellation of programs for the largest number of people in the most collaborative, synergistic, and community-building ways. In doing so, it must marshal the resources necessary to implement this broad educational agenda while balancing allocations in a manner that meets many different but very, legitimate needs. This herculean task will be nothing less than responding, as federation has in the past, to a changing world and a changing environment.

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