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We commend the editor of *Jewish Education* for creating this forum for the discussion of one of the most critical problems facing Jewish education today — the shortage of qualified teachers for supplementary schools. While this shortage has existed for many years,¹ several factors combine to make 1987 a potentially auspicious year for addressing it.

As Dr. Schiff's paper indicates, a serious reexamination of many of the premises of public education in the United States is currently under way, and this has resulted in many discussions, experiments and proposals for upgrading the teaching profession. In the Jewish community also there is renewed interest in Jewish education among national and communal agencies. The slogan "Jewish education is the key to Jewish survival" is, perhaps, being taken more seriously; leaders

of the Jewish community are beginning to look beyond enrollment figures to ask about the *quality* of Jewish education, and, consequently, the quality of Jewish teachers. ~

Thus, the climate may, once again, be ripe for a serious effort on the part of all segments of the American Jewish community to study the problem of the teacher shortage, and to take deliberate and concerted action toward its solution.

In 1985-86 we were commissioned by JESNA to conduct an exploratory study entitled *Dealing with the Shortage of Supplementary School Teachers*. In this article we present a summary of our findings, and a set of suggestions for future research and experimentation. Before discussing the study, however, a few words must be said about the critical need for research in this area. Dr. Schiff asks some important questions about

what it would take to attract quality people to the field of Jewish teaching; we have nowhere near the data that would be necessary to offer even a tentative answer to these questions. Unlike policy makers in secular education, who have the benefit of extensive survey data and economic projections, the would-be policy makers in the Jewish world have no data of any sort. We have only an impressionistic idea of who is teaching in Jewish schools, and what their motivations are. We don't even have any reliable figures on the extent of the shortage. At the outset of our study, we asked bureaus throughout North America how many supplementary schools open their doors in the fall with one or more teaching slots still unfilled; most were unable to answer this question with any degree of certainty. While all agree that there is a "crisis in the classroom," and that this crisis is deepening, few have more than anecdotal evidence of the situation, and few have a measure of its dimensions and causes.

It should be stressed, therefore, that the study on which we are reporting is merely exploratory — a very rudimentary first step in surveying the situation, estimating the dimensions of the problem, and collecting some models which point to possible solutions.

Why is there a teacher shortage?

There are approximately 2,066 supplementary schools in North America, enrolling a total of 268,000 students, who receive between two and six hours of instruction per week. Collectively, these schools employ approximately 20,000 teachers.² The typical supplementary school is unable to offer its teachers enough hours of instruction to constitute a full-time job; nationwide, only 7 percent of supplementary school teachers teach for more than 11 hours in any particular setting.³

The earliest supplementary schools, established at the turn of the century, were under communal auspices, and held sessions five days a week. The educators who directed these schools created a cadre of professional teachers, who were trained in newly established Jewish teachers' colleges. Unfortu-

nately, the profession of supplementary school teaching, which appeared promising in the 1920s, was unable to sustain itself, because of two related occurrences: (1) the decentralization of Jewish schooling, with the rise of congregational schools; and (2) the sharp decline in the hours of instruction.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a diminishing pool of individuals willing to make a commitment to work which, despite its low status, low pay, and part-time nature, requires considerable skill. In recent years, the status of Jewish supplementary school teachers has declined further, in ways similar to that of public school teachers. The much documented ambivalence of North American Jews toward Jewish education has exacerbated this problem.⁴ In addition, a growing number of professional opportunities for women in the past ten years has drawn away many of those who, in previous decades, might have been prime candidates for supplementary school teaching.

In our study we distinguished between two types of teacher shortages in American supplementary schools: First, there is the obvious shortage of employable adults to fill available positions. Our survey of bureaus throughout North America revealed that in some areas of the country as many as 15 percent of the teaching positions are unfilled as of the first day of school. Second, there is the more subtle shortage of *qualified* teachers.

For those who equate qualification with certification, the teacher shortage is an objective fact, since fewer than 10 percent of those currently teaching hold a credential from the National Board of License.⁵ Even those who believe that there can be many unlicensed competent teachers also acknowledge that the knowledge, pedagogic skills, and Jewish commitment required of a truly qualified teacher are in short supply.

What can be done to bring and keep qualified teachers in Jewish Supplementary Schools?

There are two broad approaches to resolving the teacher shortage: the professional route and the avocational route. Be-

fore schools and communities can decide on a plan of action for resolving the teacher shortage, they must have serious and honest discussions of a number of issues:

The Professional Route

The professionalization approach to the problem of the teacher shortage looks to the teaching profession in American public schools as its model. Though care must be taken in transposing public school strategies to Jewish supplementary schools, the Jewish community has much to learn from recent research and experimentation throughout the United States.

The most obvious option is *raising salaries and creating full-time positions*, although it is not clear that this alone, even if possible, would be sufficient.

A second promising strategy is *the improvement of recruitment and career incentives* by offering attractive financial inducements, such as college loans or tuition rebates, to young people interested in teaching. A variety of career opportunities, including merit pay, career ladders, and alternative career patterns within teaching could also serve as incentives. A few Jewish communities have created various incentive programs, and these experiments merit careful study.

A third possibility is *the improvement of training procedures* by upgrading the quality and rigor of pre-service training, by requiring and prescribing certain kinds of in-service training, and by providing emotional and professional support for the probationary teacher. The problem, of course, is that few teachers in supplementary schools receive intensive training prior to teaching. What we need are some models for providing concerted, coordinated, and effective in-service training to the vast majority of teachers. Again, some communal agencies are currently grappling with this problem; we could learn a great deal from studies of their successes and failures.

The Avocational Route

An alternative or additional approach to the recruitment of supplementary school

teachers might involve looking for individuals from within a congregation, who might become lay teachers. These teachers would be differently motivated, differently trained, differently rewarded, and differently regarded than are professional teachers, but they could become very good teachers, bringing important knowledge and skills into the classroom, and modeling for children a variety of ways of being Jewish in America.

As part of the study, we interviewed the directors of 25 supplementary schools which draw all or part of their teaching staff from within the congregations. Twenty-two of these schools recruit adults as teachers; the remaining three have created training programs for high school students to serve as teachers. Although the schools vary greatly as to location and size, there are some features which unite the most successful of these experiments:

1. a strong commitment to avocational teaching by the leadership of the congregation and the school;
2. highly skilled training and supervisory staff;
3. realization by the professional teachers in the school that the avocational teachers do not present a job threat, but are an asset to the school;
4. the conviction, on the part of the avocational teachers, that they are receiving as much as they are giving;
5. careful attention by the senior staff to the interpersonal relationships among teachers, students, and parents.

Differentiated Staffing

The professional and avocational approaches to teacher recruitment are not mutually exclusive. Several schools have combined staffs, in which professional and avocational teachers work together successfully. It is possible to project a number of different staffing models, comprised of varying combinations of professional and avocational teachers. This would come close to the differentiated staffing model advocated by the Carnegie Commission, the Holmes Group,

and other policy-making bodies in secular education.

Next steps in solving the teacher shortage

The many stakeholders in Jewish education have different roles to play in the long overdue process of alleviating the teacher shortage. These stakeholders must work together in some coordinated fashion; but given the decentralized loosely coupled nature of what is not even a "system" of Jewish education, it must be acknowledged that each school may have unique needs requiring unique solutions. The role of citywide, regional, and national agencies may be to provide leadership, present options, and offer financial and consultative support, rather than mandating particular measures.

Decision makers at each congregation or school should be responsible for developing policies at their own site, perhaps assisted by agencies at the communal, regional, and national levels. The latter organizations can assign high priority to the teacher shortage, and demonstrate their concern for its resolution. They can:

1. generate and legitimate new ways of thinking about the problem;
2. bring together various stakeholders (e.g., lay leaders, representatives of the movements, university professors, Jewish professionals, etc.) for informed public discussion;
3. do research and evaluation;
4. identify and disseminate promising practices, and guidelines for their use;
5. create networks along which information can be transmitted;
6. generate and distribute financial and technical assistance.

More specifically, then, we suggest that an ongoing *Recruitment Committee* be

formed at each school experiencing a shortage, to assess the dimensions of the shortage; define desired teacher qualifications; identify financial, technical and human resources available for the recruitment of teachers; create a time/task line for a year-round recruitment effort of either professional teachers or avocational teachers, or both.

At the community level, we recommend that the Bureau form a *Recruitment Advisory Board* which, over time, examines and publicizes the shortage of teachers in the area; surveys the current teacher pool; explores community resources and the potential pools for new teachers; assists schools in defining the type of teachers they want; gains consensus on a number of strategies to pursue; and runs pilot projects to determine the feasibility of ideas such as the creation of hybrid positions, career ladders, master teacher programs, training programs for avocational teachers, and so forth.

On the national level we suggest a *Recruitment Policy Consortium* whose purpose is to organize what is known about the teacher shortage nationwide and about the directions for renewal at the grassroots level; to suggest roles for various segments of the Jewish educational community; to initiate policy research which would be helpful to schools and communities; and to assure that this problem receives the national attention it deserves.

Conclusion

The problem of attracting good teachers into Jewish supplementary schools is not intractable. It requires only that we develop new modes of thinking about what is possible, desirable and appropriate, and then find the leadership, energy, and means to implement and evaluate potential solutions.

NOTES

1. See Susan R. Shevitz, "The Deterioration of the Profession of Jewish Supplementary School Teaching: An Analysis of the Effects of Communal Myths on Policy and Program." Unpublished qualifying paper, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1983.
2. The 1982 Census for Jewish Schools, conducted by the Hebrew University and JESNA, found 18,133 supplementary school teachers in North America. There are two problems, however, with this figure. First, only 67 percent of the schools reported the

number of teachers, so that the actual figure should be considerably higher. A second problem is that this figure includes some unknown number of teachers who work in more than one supplementary school. Thus, 20,000 can be taken only as a very rough approximation.

3. Nitzah Genuth, et al., *First Census of Jewish Schools in the Diaspora, 1981/2–1982/3*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1985. Some teachers are able to piece together additional hours of instruction by teaching at two or more schools. Because of the way in which the census data were collected, the percent-

age who do so is unknown.

4. Charles Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew: Politics, Religion and Family in American Jewish Life*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973.

David L. Schoem, *Ethnic Survival in America: An Ethnography of a Jewish School*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1979.

5. This estimate was given to us by Hy Pomerantz, director of JESNA's Department of Human Resources.