

COMMUNITY TEACHER RECOGNITION
CEREMONIES

A BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

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The Harold Grinspoon Awards for Excellence in Jewish education, established in 2000, were conceived and designed to give teachers recognition on a national level. In 2002, Michael Steinhardt joined the partnership and the Awards were renamed the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education. Just as important as national recognition is for communities to honor their teacher on a local level. This conveys to the teacher and to the community the value of Jewish educators and the lessons they teach. The following guide was compiled as an outgrowth of the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards in order to encourage and improve local teacher recognition in communities across North America. We hope you will use this guide to:

- Create a teacher recognition ceremony in your community
- Revamp or renew existing ceremonies
- Explore diverse ways to meaningfully recognize the teachers in your community (consider the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education)
- Encourage community-wide enthusiasm for such recognition

This guide was compiled with the assistance of local central agencies for Jewish education across North America. If your community has a ceremony that was not included in this guide, if you have new ideas for ways to recognize teachers or if you would like more information about planning a ceremony in your community, please contact Amy Amiel at JESNA (202-223-6963 or amamiel@jesna.org).

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TEACHER RECOGNITION CEREMONIES: BEST PRACTICES

- Plan the event at an *appropriate time of year*. The end of the school year is the most popular time to hold these events. However, some communities choose to hold ceremonies around Jewish holidays (Rosh Hashana, Lag B'Omer) or significant community events (annual board meetings). Consider school calendars as well as local agency calendars to maximize recognition and attendance.
- Make a *personal connection* between the agency staff planning the event and the teachers. Teachers and principals can often be helpful with planning and publicizing the ceremony and teachers are more likely to attend if they feel personally recognized.
- Start a "*Thank-you Teacher*" *fund* in your community. Parents, former students and members of the community can donate to the fund in the name of a specific teacher. At the end of the year (or at the ceremony), give the teachers a certain percentage of the money that was donated in their name, either for their own use or for professional development.
- Try and get a *named local philanthropist* to endow an award for \$1,000. This can serve as a match to your national Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award.
- Honor teachers with *public recognition* and with an award or awards that not only honor teachers but that provide an incentive for them to work hard and be creative. Some examples are cash prizes, a trip to Israel or money for professional development.
- Have the *teachers invite their own guests*, making it a personal and well-attended ceremony. Provide teachers with invitations and postage.
- Include as much *personal information* about each teacher as possible. Consider having a teacher's peer, colleague or former student deliver that information.
- *Include students* in the program. This boosts attendance and encourages parents to attend.
- Put together a *take-away program booklet* with short biographies or statements about the teacher(s) being honored, or ask the teacher's current and former students to put together a book of memories to present at the event.
- Start a *program bank*. Ask Educators of the Year, Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award winners and Creative Teaching award winners to submit curricula that can be used by any teacher in the community.

- *Offer childcare* or a parallel program for small children to allow older students and their parents to attend.
- *Honor outstanding community and/or school youth at the teacher recognition ceremony* to attract them to the field of Jewish education and to attract their parents to the ceremony.
- Encourage principals to have *informal celebrations* with their staff in addition to a community event, especially if your community is large. Ask principals to write notes to their teachers and present teachers with a gift, either every year or at milestone years.
- *Don't charge* for the event. If you must charge admission to guests, subsidize the cost of tickets for any teacher who would like to attend.
- *Invite agency executives and professional leaders in the community.* This publically demonstrates the support of community leadership.
- *Publicize, publicize, publicize.* Place ads in local Jewish newspapers, send invitations home with children, to the teachers, agency executives and board members. Ask local synagogues and schools to announce the ceremony and hang up fliers in places frequented by members of the Jewish community.
- *Evaluate* your ceremony for improvements and successes each year.
- *Try new ideas.* Your event should gain a reputation not only for honoring deserving teachers but for being fun! Beginning on page eight, you will find models for teacher recognition ceremonies from communities around North America.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Where should we hold our ceremony?**

Each community has different feelings about what works. Some suggestions for places to hold the ceremony:

- At the central agency or federation. Members of the community know the space and are comfortable with it. It is a central location and is trans-denominational. In addition, utilizing this space saves money because no rooms need to be rented.
- Each year the event rotates to a different synagogue or school. Many communities will hold their ceremonies in the home school or synagogue of the Educator of the Year. This gives local synagogues and schools a chance to showcase their location, it is a familiar location to the award winner and his or her guests. Planning the event requires close contact between the agency and the leadership of the location hosting the ceremony.
- In a hotel ballroom or hall. This is a neutral, and often a special and beautiful location where the teachers feel that their recognition is truly valued by the community. This kind of space often allows for a large number of people and more diverse programming.

2. **Who should be invited to attend the ceremony?**

The answer to this question depends on the size of the space and the number of people in your community. However, it is always best to invite as many people as possible to give teachers the widest recognition. Be sure to invite all teachers and principals, agency executives and board members, and any guests of the teacher being honored. If space and money allow, open the event to the entire Jewish community, including parents, students and synagogue lay and professional leadership.

3. **What is a good structure for the ceremony?**

The structure depends mainly on community preference, size and budget, but some structures work better than others. Some suggestions for structures for the ceremony are:

- Agency annual meeting. Having the ceremony at the meeting ensures the attendance of many prominent members of the Jewish community and showcases the importance of teacher recognition. If the ceremony takes place at the meeting every year, people become accustomed to it as an annual event. However, having the ceremony as part of the meeting often means that the presentation of awards is restricted to limited time. One solution is to hold the ceremony at a reception following the meeting.

- Luncheon, dinner or banquet. This is the most formal structure, but it allows the agency unrestricted time to honor teachers. A luncheon, dinner or banquet will often include a keynote speaker, a d'var Torah by a local Rabbi or community leader and speeches by agency executives, the honored teacher and an awards presenter. This is a wonderful way for teachers to be showcased and to have a very personal awards ceremony. It also gives educators from around the community a chance to come together. However, this formal structure can be long and tedious, especially if there are many speakers. To remedy the problem, communities have used student performances or teacher workshops in lieu of keynote speakers.
- Reception. A reception allows a lot of personal contact between teachers, agency executives and other guests. Often, communities will follow a reception with workshops for teachers and lay leaders. This is a successful format because it maximizes the teachers' time, bringing them together to both honor and enrich. Some communities will display curricula developed by the winning teacher and/or pictures of his or her classroom.
- Don't be afraid to try new ideas when creating a plan for your ceremony. Communities have done everything from picnics to afternoon tea with great success because of the uniqueness of the ceremony. The key to a good ceremony is fun!

4. How many teachers should be honored at the ceremony?

This varies depending on the size of the community. Most communities have an Educator of the Year award and also honor retiring teachers. Some communities present creative teaching awards and recognize teachers who have reached "chai" (18 years teaching) or double "chai" (36 years teaching). Some communities honor one teacher from each school, while some single out one teacher of excellence from among the whole community. Teachers who have participated in significant continuing education or professional development opportunities are often recognized.

5. How should we honor teachers? What if my community has limited funds with which to present teachers with gifts?

Many communities will present the Educator of the Year with a significant cash prize either for his or her own personal use, a trip to Israel or professional development. Judaica, books or some kind of plaque is a meaningful way to honor teachers who have reached a milestone year. A small cash prize to buy materials or a trip to an in-state educational conference is an appropriate way to honor creative teachers. Each teacher being honored should receive a certificate and a copy should go to their school as well.

Another relatively inexpensive way to honor all teachers is to provide them with corsages or boutonniere to wear during the ceremony.

It is important to make this ceremony personal for the teachers being honored. Have people who know the teacher give speeches and present the award, inscribe books, engrave Judaica, present a slide show of the teacher. Ask students to write letters to their teacher and present the book at the ceremony.

6. Who should speak at the ceremony?

In order to make the ceremony as personal as possible for the teacher, the person presenting the award to the teacher should be someone he or she knows well, such as a school principal, colleague or Rabbi. Agency executives often make opening remarks or act as master of ceremonies and a local Rabbi or colleague often gives a d'var Torah. The award winner should also make a speech. If you have an endowed award, it is customary for a member of that family to offer brief remarks. If multiple awards are being presented, speeches should be kept to a strict time limit and a lengthy keynote speech should be avoided.

HARTFORD, CT

The Hartford, CT Jewish community recognizes teachers in May at a dinner at the local JCC. Community members, teachers and the board of the central agency for Jewish education all attend the dinner, which is followed by the award presentations and entertainment. Retiring teachers, teachers moving to other communities, teachers who have passed away, teachers who have reached milestone years and teachers who have begun intensive training are all honored. In addition, schools that have received grants are recognized. Schools that received grants the previous year bring display boards with pictures, flyers and reports on the program for which they received the grant money.

Teachers are recognized through speeches by agency executives and the agency's lay chairperson and receive a certificate. The booklet that is given out at the ceremony lists all the teachers being honored, as well as community education events that will take place at the beginning of the following year. In addition, a list of CAJE participants from the previous year is enclosed.

Success Factors of the Hartford ceremony:

- It recognizes teachers who remain committed to the field of Jewish education
- It showcases the creative curricular initiatives of some schools
- The speeches are broken up with entertainment

Contact: Jane Rubin, Events and Program Coordinator of the Commission on Jewish Education [jrubin@jewishhartford.org] for more information about the Hartford ceremony.

ATLANTA, GA

The Atlanta, GA Jewish community recognizes teachers with a program and reception every year on Erev Lag B'Omer. Community members, teachers, parents, students and agency executives are invited to attend the program, honoring one teacher from each of Atlanta's 42 day and Hebrew schools. The teachers are recognized in a deeply personal ceremony which includes speeches, a certificate with the teacher's prayer and a power-point slide show that highlights each teacher in his or her classroom. Each year, there is a D'var Torah and one of the honorees speaks for the group about Jewish education in Atlanta. This event, which is a community wide evening to recognize educators, is very well attended. Ads are placed in local papers, sent home with children and posted in schools far in advance of the event, making everyone in the community aware of when and where it is happening. In an effort to encourage all teachers to attend, not only the teachers who are being honored, the agency solicits donations from families in honor of any teacher in the school, not just for the teachers being honored.

The printed program is designed to be a treasured keepsake for all the honored teachers. In addition to letters from agency executives, a take-away booklet includes a personal statement from both the winning teachers and their nominators. The teacher's statements discuss their commitment to Jewish education and the paragraphs from the nominators highlight why this teacher was chosen as a teacher of excellence. A list of donors appears in the back of the program. Teachers are listed by school along with the names of families who have made donations in their honor. The program also honors new teachers and those teachers who participated in continuing education opportunities.

Success Factors of the Atlanta Ceremony:

- It is well planned. Atlanta puts together a committee of community volunteers each year to work on planning the ceremony months in advance
- It is personal, but it recognizes many teachers at once
- It is an annual event, so the community is familiar with it

Contact: Janice Alper, Executive Director of Jewish Educational Services [execdir@jesatlanta.org] for more information about the Atlanta ceremony.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

The Indianapolis, IN Jewish community recognizes teachers at the Board of Jewish Education annual meeting in June. Board members, teachers, community leaders, Rabbis, Federation representatives, friends, families and colleagues of the winning teachers all attend. Indianapolis recognizes teachers who have been in the community for 18 years and selects one Educator of the Year to receive the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education. The board president and an agency executive present certificates and gifts to the teachers. The check for the winner of the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award is also presented at the ceremony.

The ceremony is publicized primarily through the local Jewish newspaper and the Federation newsletter. The newsletter carries photos of the winners and articles and ads promoting the event.

The Federation in Indianapolis sponsors a lunch for teachers on a separate day near the end of the school year. This is an opportunity for teachers to see colleagues whom they may not see at any other time of the year. This lunch is more informal and social than the annual meeting.

Success Factors of the Indianapolis ceremony:

- The community awards teachers who have remained committed to the field of Jewish education
- It is well publicized
- There are two separate events, one for formal teacher awards and one where teachers can informally meet and share ideas

Contact: Ora Leivant, Director of the Bureau of Jewish Education [oleivant@bjeindy.org], for more information about the Indianapolis ceremony.

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

The Winnipeg, Manitoba Jewish community recognizes teachers at the Gray Academy of Jewish Education (central agency) annual meeting in September at the agency. The ceremony is open to the public and it is attended primarily by the board of directors of the agency and teachers. The Winnipeg community awards an Educator of the Year prize, which is the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education. Retiring teachers are also honored at the ceremony.

The winning teacher is presented with the money from the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award and retiring teachers are given a plaque and a gift. In addition, one of the Educator of the Year's colleagues gives an overview of what the teacher has done to merit this award. A peer speaks about each retiring teacher and the honoree then responds. The president of the BJE then presents the award.

The Winnipeg community is considering expanding the ceremony to offer a "chai" award to teachers who have been working in the community for 18 years.

Success Factors of the Winnipeg ceremony:

- The ceremony is an annual event, so it is a permanent part of the community
- The speeches about the winners are made by their peers, which are personal and often contain information that no one else would know
- The Winnipeg community evaluates their ceremony each year to try and make it more meaningful for the community and attract more people

Contact: Miriam Maltz, Executive Director of the Gray Academy of Jewish
[dsimard@aspercampus.mb.ca] for more information about the Winnipeg ceremony.

GREATER SPRINGFIELD, MA

The Greater Springfield, MA Jewish community recognizes teachers at an annual banquet at the local JCC. Teachers and guests of the award winners, agency executives and community members are invited to attend. Four teachers of excellence are recognized at the ceremony. The winners receive \$1,000 for a trip to Israel and \$1,000 as a cash award. Two of the four teachers also win the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education.

The event is a banquet that recognizes all educators in the community. The banquet includes presentations by a representative from each school and student performances. Many teachers come to see colleagues that they do not see any other time of the year. A small fee is charged for guests to attend the ceremony, but tickets for teachers are subsidized through the agency. The invitation is colorful and eye-catching, ensuring that as many people as possible notice it.

Success Factors for the Greater Springfield ceremony:

- Teachers are asked to invite their own guests, making it a personal recognition
- The award provides teachers with an incentive to work hard and be creative
- The awards are endowed, making them a permanent fixture in the community

Contact: Esther Kosofsky, Director of the Resource Center for Jewish Education [rcje@map.com], for more information about the Greater Springfield ceremony.

ST. PAUL, MN

The St. Paul, MN Jewish community recognizes teachers at the agency annual meeting and spring concert at Talmud Torah of St. Paul in the end of May. The annual meeting, which includes the Awards presentation takes place first and then a concert is performed by children from Talmud Torah. Students, parents, teachers, community members and executives all attend the evening. Following the concert, there is a dessert reception.

Teachers are honored based on years of service, in increments of five years. Each milestone year has a gift that is associated with it. At five years, the teachers receive a tote bag with an inscription about teaching, at ten years they receive some type of Judaica. The board president gives the gifts to the teachers and an agency executive reads a biography of each teacher. The biographies are very well received because they are filled with interesting, new and personal information about the teachers.

Success Factors of the St. Paul ceremony:

- Biographies include information that people don't know about teachers, making them interesting and informative
- It is an annual event, so it becomes a permanent part of community life
- Large numbers of students attend the evening because they perform in the concert

Contact: Amy Alch, Development and Marketing Coordinator of the Talmud Torah of St. Paul [Amy.Alch@talmudtorah.pvt.k12.mn.us] for more information about the St. Paul ceremony.

GREATER KANSAS CITY, MO

The Greater Kansas City, MO Jewish community recognizes teachers twice yearly, in February and in August. At the February ceremony, the Creative Teaching Award and the Educator of the Year are both awarded. The Creative Teaching Award is run in a contest format. Individual educators or teams of teachers submit curricula and lesson plans to a panel of judges and four winners are announced at the February ceremony. The winners are awarded a \$100 stipend. The winning curricula are then placed in a program bank that the entire community has access to.

In August, all educators in the community are invited to a back-to-school conference in the Jewish Community Campus social hall. All teachers, youth professionals and early childhood educators are invited free of charge, along with some agency professionals, the directors of the Federation and CAJE and a representative from the JESNA board to present the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award. The Award winning teacher's family is also invited. After a prayer for the State of Israel, the Educator of the Year is presented with the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award and is recognized with speeches by the executive director of CAJE, a representative from the JESNA board and their school nominator. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the teachers participate in professional development workshops. Approximately 150 people attend the ceremony.

Success Factors of the Greater Kansas City ceremony:

- Teachers are recognized in a personal way with speeches from people who know them and know their work
- The structure of the program encourages the participation of most educators in the community
- The program bank of creative teaching ideas and the professional development seminars both encourage teacher's to develop and hone their skills

Contact: Hilary Lewis, Director of School Services, [hilaryl@jewishkc.org] for more information about the Greater Kansas City ceremony.

NORTH JERSEY, NJ

The North Jersey, NJ Jewish community recognizes teachers every two years on Erev Lag B'Omer. The location varies from year to year but it has been held at the agency annual meeting, at a reception and at a dinner. The ceremony honors all Jewish educators with speeches, gifts and flowers. Ceremony planners have found that honoring all teachers works better in their community than presenting individual awards.

Each ceremony includes a keynote speaker and speeches by agency executives. During the ceremony, one representative from each of North Jersey's day schools and Hebrew schools speaks. The representative gives highlights of the schools year and talks about the achievements of the teachers in his or her school.

Success factors of the North Jersey ceremony:

- It honors all teachers, so no teacher feels that his or her work has gone unrecognized
- It gives schools a chance to showcase the curricular initiatives they are most proud of
- It is a bi-annual event, so it becomes a permanent part of the community agenda

Contact: Miriam Mayer, the Director of Jewish Education of the Commission on Jewish Continuity [JFNJ07460@aol.com] for more information about the North Jersey ceremony.

NEW YORK, NY

The New York, NY Jewish community, in combination with the Suffolk Association for Jewish Educational Services (SAJES) recognizes teachers with a ceremony and reception at UJA-Federation of New York. The winning teachers, their families and nominators and executives from Federation, the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (BJE) and SAJES are all invited to attend the event.

The structure of the ceremony is the presentation of the Awards followed by a reception and some kind of entertainment, usually a local school choir. The winning teachers are recognized by speeches from the executive directors of the BJE, SAJES and UJA-Federation. Each teacher is called up individually and recognized in front of the community. In the program, there are quotations from the nominators and from each teacher's statement of purpose. The teachers are then presented with the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education.

Success factors of the New York ceremony:

- It brings all the winning teacher together under the UJA-Federation umbrella and showcases their work to the Jewish professional world
- It allows teachers to be recognized among their families
- It is an annual event, so it becomes a part of the community and leadership's consciousness

Contact: Rabbi Neal Kaunfer, Director Secondary School Services at the BJE, [nkaunf@bjeny.org] for more information about the New York ceremony.

ROCKLAND COUNTY, NY

The Rockland County Jewish community has recognized teachers in a variety of ways with varying degrees of success. In 2001, teachers were recognized at the Federation annual meeting. On the positive side, the Federation invited the entire community as well as the teachers, their families and Federation board members and executives. On the negative side, the ceremony was kept to a strict time limit of six minutes for the entire ceremony. In 2000, the Rockland community honored teachers at a reception at the JCC-Y. Teachers and their family were invited, as were agency board members and executives. This reception was much smaller, but the agency had total control over the time and planning for the event.

Both years the agency presented an Educator of the Year award (The Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education) and creative teaching awards. The creative teachers are recognized with a \$200 cash award, speeches by their nominator, students and agency executives. The Educator of the Year receives \$1,000 dollars for themselves \$1,500 for professional development from the Grinspoon foundation and Jewish Life Network and their school receives \$500. The program consists of speeches by executives and the award-winning teachers.

The printed program includes biographies of each winning teacher along with the evening's schedule.

Success Factors of the Rockland County Ceremony:

- The award given provides a strong incentive for creativity by teachers.
- It is personal
- Students are given a chance to recognize their teachers

Contact: Laurie Hoffman, the Executive Director of the Center for Jewish Education of Rockland [lahoffman@qed.net] for more information about the Rockland County ceremony.

SUFFOLK COUNTY, NY

The Suffolk County, NY Jewish community recognizes its teachers with an annual “Salute to Educators” evening in May. They have a *Yom Limud* (day of study) followed by the teacher recognition ceremony and a reception. Community members, teachers, principals, agency executives, rabbis, cantors and some parents and students attend the ceremony where three or four teachers, one principal and one volunteer are honored. Agency executives, a rabbi, the principal of the honored teachers’ schools and the honored teachers speak at the ceremony. The award winners are then presented with a certificate, a gift from their school with a personal inscription and a corsage or boutonniere. Two teachers also win the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education, but this award is not presented at the ceremony.

The printed program is deeply personal for the award winners. It lists the winning teachers and the principals of their schools and an extensive biography of the winner. The biography focuses on the teacher’s achievements and qualities that make him or her a teacher of excellence. In addition, the program lists upcoming community educational events to remind the community that Jewish education is an ongoing process, not just something that happens on this one night.

Success Factors of the Suffolk County ceremony:

- It is personal
- It is a well planned, annual event which is a fixture in the community
- It is an evening to enrich teachers and educators as well as honor them

Contact: Ronni Ihm, the Jewish Education Center Director at SAJES [rihm@sajes.org] for more information about the Suffolk County ceremony.

CLEVELAND, OH

The Cleveland, OH Jewish community recognizes teachers at a ceremony in November. A ceremony and dessert reception for the teachers including some form of performance, following the annual meeting and dinner of the central agency for Jewish education. The ceremony is open to the community and is usually attended by teachers, parents and agency executives. Four teachers are honored each year with the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education. Central Agency executives and board president present brief remarks and the awards committee chair acts as master of ceremonies.

Cleveland has three named awards. The first, the Ratner-Goldberg Israel Fellowship, is awarded to two teachers. They receive \$3,000 each for a trip to Israel. The second and third awards, the Steiger Family Education Grant and the Libbie Braverman Award, are each presented to one teacher. The winner of the Steiger award receives \$2,500 for professional development and the winner of the Braverman award is given a \$1,000 Israel bond.

Each year, the Cleveland Jewish community recognizes other teachers who have made significant impacts of the lives of children and families in the community. In addition to the named awards, the ceremony honors supplementary school teachers, principals and teachers who have reached milestone years. These teachers receive a certificate and a gift.

Over 400 people attended the 2001 ceremony.

Success factors of the Cleveland ceremony:

- The award is substantial, which motivates teachers to work hard and think creatively
- It is an annual event that has become a permanent part of the Cleveland education system
- It is well planned and well publicized

Contact: Allison Weinberg at the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland [aweinberg@jecc.org] for more information about the Cleveland ceremony.

COLUMBUS, OH

The Columbus, OH Jewish community holds an annual dinner for Jewish educators every fall. After the dinner, there are workshops for teachers and lay leaders, or a speaker. Teachers, friends and family of the honoree, agency executives and lay leaders attend the event and the workshops. Columbus honors one “Educator of the Year”; the winner is selected over the summer. The winner receives \$500 towards professional development to attend a conference of his or her choice. The Educator of the Year also wins the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award. The winner also gets a personalized gift such as a tzedakah box in addition to a certificate. Speakers include individuals with a special connection to the honoree, the award recipient and agency executives.

Every two or three years, at a January *Yom Limud*, awards are presented to teachers based on the length of time they have been teaching in the community. Teachers are honored at “chetzi chai” (9 years), “chai” (18 years) and double chai (36 years).

Success Factors of the Columbus ceremony:

- It provides an opportunity for teacher development as well as for teacher recognition
- Teachers are asked to invite guests to make the ceremony more personal
- Teachers are honored for a long commitment to the field of Jewish education

Contact: Ed Frim, Executive Director of the Commission on Jewish Education [efrim@tcjf.org] for more information on the Columbus ceremony.

HOUSTON, TX

The Houston, TX Jewish community recognizes teachers at a reception towards the end of the school year. The venue of the reception varies annually based upon synagogue or school from “Educator of the Year” is nominated. In addition to honoring the “Educator of the Year,” Houston recognizes those teachers who chose to participate in a teacher incentive program to continue their Jewish learning. Community members, teachers, parents, students, agency executives, Rabbis and the people who endow the “Educator of the Year” award are invited to the event. The “Educator of the Year” receives the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education, \$800 for professional development, \$250 to purchase classroom materials and a *yad*. A plaque recognizing the winning teacher is given to the school and the BJE.

The teacher is honored by his or her principal, students and friends. Speakers include agency executives, the rabbi of the synagogue or school where the ceremony is held and the lay chairperson of the BJE. A dessert reception follows the awards ceremony.

The program for the Award outlines the spectacular achievements of the award winning teacher and gives a brief biography of Irving L. Samuels, for whom the award is named. The program also lists the activities of the BJE, contact information for programs and the names of past winners of the Educator of the Year award. In this way, teachers are continually recognized.

Success Factors of the Houston Ceremony:

- The award is endowed, so it is a permanent fixture in the community
- The location of the award rotates, which makes it easier for the colleagues and students of the winning teacher to attend
- The award given is substantial so it provides an incentive for teachers to work as hard as possible and be as creative as possible

Contact: Lisa Klein, Resource Center Director/Teacher services at the Bureau of Jewish Education [Lklein@houstonjewish.org] for more information about the Houston ceremony.

NEWPORT NEWS, VA

The Newport News, VA Jewish community held a ceremony to recognize teachers for the first time in 2001. In June, the community held an outdoor picnic and then made formal award presentations inside the JCC building. The entire Jewish community was invited, including the award recipient's family, friends, present and former students and colleagues. The event was a surprise for the teacher, who won the Harold Grinspoon Award for Excellence in Jewish Education.

In addition to honoring the recipient of the Grinspoon Award, Newport News also honors teachers who have been in the system for 20 years. The community offers any teacher the opportunity to attend the CAJE conference and other educational events in Virginia by paying all or part of their expenses.

Since this was the first year for Newport News' teacher recognition ceremony, they will evaluate it and possibly revise it in the future.

Success Factors of the Newport News Ceremony:

- It is an original and fun way to recognize teachers
- It was well publicized
- People close to the award recipient were invited, making the ceremony personal

Contact: Rochelle Portnoy [757-930-1422] for more information about the Newport News ceremony.

TIDEWATER, VA

The Tidewater, VA Jewish community recognizes teachers at a special program in late May at one of the local synagogues. Community members, teachers, agency executives, Rabbis, JCC executives and friends and family of the award winning teachers are invited to attend the ceremony. In order to increase the number of people who attend, Tidewater plans to add child programming during the event in future years to encourage participation of more parents. The ceremony takes place at a reception with a D'var Torah and the presentation of the awards. Awards are presented to an Educator of the Year, teachers who have reached "chai" (18 years), teachers who have participated in continuing education, creative teachers, a family educator and a community educator. Students are also presented with Youth Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education. In addition to the award winners, the printed program for the event also lists continuing education opportunities and community events.

Award recipients receive a cash prize for the creative teaching award, gifts certificates and a plaque. All honored teachers receive a framed certificate and the "Educator of the Year" receives \$1,000 for his or her own professional development. Speakers include community professionals and a keynote speaker. In 2001, a graduating high school senior spoke at the ceremony instead of a keynote speaker to try and remedy complaints that the ceremony has been too long in the past.

Success Factors of the Tidewater ceremony:

- Planners of the Tidewater ceremony have been responsive to complaints about the ceremony and are constantly modifying it to try and attract more people
- Youth are presented with awards, which can help keep them interested in the field of Jewish education
- The ceremony rotates location to give every synagogue a chance to showcase itself

Contact: Betsy Karotkin, the acting Jewish Education Council Director [Betsyk@ujft.org] for more information about the Tidewater ceremony.

MILWAUKEE, WI

The Milwaukee, WI Jewish community recognizes teachers towards the end of every school year. The location for the ceremony varies. It has been at the agency annual meeting, a reception and an afternoon tea. Many people who know the teachers being honored attend the ceremony, with a lower attendance rate for community members, other teachers, parents, students and agency executives.

Milwaukee honors one “Educator of the Year”, presents one or two incentive teaching awards, individual and group mitzvah awards and recognizes teachers who have been in the field of Jewish education for “chai” (18) or “double chai” (36) years. The “Educator of the Year” receives a personalized gift and a plaque. Incentive and mitzvah award winners receive cash prizes of \$100-150. Agency executives present the awards to the winners, followed by a D’var Torah and entertainment.

Success factors of the Milwaukee ceremony:

- It honors teachers who have remained committed to the field of Jewish education
- The gift for the award winner is personal
- Milwaukee has tried new structures for the ceremony to determine the best format

Contact: Alice Jacobson at the Coalition for Jewish Education [alicej@milwaukeejewish.org] for more information about the Milwaukee ceremony.