

CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

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Chicago Hosts Colloquium



Special needs educators convene in Chicago to celebrate the bar mitzvah year of the Consortium

About The Consortium

The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education was co-founded by Rabbi Martin Schloss and Dr. Sara Rubinow Simon and is affiliated with JESNA. Marty is the director of the Special Education Center of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. Sara is the Special Needs Department field consultant of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington.

As expressed in its name, the Consortium was developed to strengthen special education through central agencies for Jewish education and to provide a context in which communities' special educators can build a professional network. The Consortium's *Call for Action* appears on page 16.

The Consortium encourages the North American Jewish community to use the Consortium as a resource. Consortium activities include regular correspondence among members, the *Newsletter*, the development of online resources, and an annual Colloquium. Additional copies of the *Newsletter* are available for task forces, lay leaders, professionals, and other community groups. Contact Judith Goldstein at JESNA: phone (212) 284-6894; fax (212) 284-6951; email: jugoldstein@jesna.org

The Thirteenth Annual Colloquium of the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies, held in Chicago in April 1999, was sponsored by the Community Foundation for Jewish Education and the Associated Talmud Torahs, in conjunction with the Hebrew Theological College - Blitstein Institute and Keshet. The Colloquium was coordinated by Shana Erenberg of the Community Foundation for Jewish Education and Associated Talmud Torahs of Chicago.

Participating in the conference were: Diane Brezner, Jewish Federation of Houston; Barbara Brodsky, United Jewish Education of NENY; Shana Erenberg, Community Foundation for Jewish Education; Ellen Fishman, Jewish Education Center of Cleveland; Elliott Fix, Jewish Community Federation of Rochester, NY; Linda Forrest, Englewood, CO; Hindy Friedman, BJE of Baltimore, MD; Karen Gazith, Jewish Education Council of Montreal; Barrie Handelman, United Jewish Federation NENY; Becca Hornstein, Council for Jews with Special Needs, Phoenix; Flora Kupferman, BJE of San Francisco; Lenore Layman, BJE of

Rockville, MD; Caren Levine, JESNA; Dori Levine, BJE of Toronto; Anita Naftaly, Agency for Jewish Education, Detroit; Ken Schaefer, BJE of Los Angeles; Sharon Schanzer, Auerbach Central Agency, Philadelphia; Rabbi Martin Schloss, BJE of Greater New York; Sara Seligson, BJE of Greater New York; Sara Rubinow Simon, BJE of Greater Washington; Rita Schwarz, CAJE, Colorado; Maura Wechsler Linas, Central Agency for Jewish Education, Kansas; and, Linda Zimmerman, JES, Atlanta.

Highlights of the 13th Annual Colloquium

The conference included sessions on Special Education within the Community, Students with Special Needs in the Day School System, Teaching Hebrew, Finding Supportive Resources, and Innovations in Technology for Individuals with Special Needs. There were also opportunities for networking and discussion on topics that included Early Childhood Issues, Inclusion in the Day Schools and Supplementary Schools and Curriculum in Teacher Training.

INCLUSION VS REFORM: AN EMERGING DILEMMA

Rabbi Marty Schloss

After seven years of analyzing the implications of federal and state legislation and litigation for Jewish special education, I have decided to pursue a new area of concern. As the new millennium approaches, there is looming another serious challenge to Jewish special education. This challenge, however, does not relate to services or financial aid, but rather to Jewish day school attitudes towards educating students with special needs. To be sure, this challenge is not only directed at Jewish day schools but to all public and private schools as well. Nevertheless, it will focus specific and intense pressure on the Jewish day school movement. In fact, the educational world is about to experience an educational "head-on collision." This collision will create unusual moral and administrative dilemmas which may result in substantial student casualties. What is colliding? The two deep rooted philosophies of "inclusion" and "standards reform."

Although the famous Public Laws governing the education of students with special needs (PL94-142; PL98-199; PL99-457; PL101-476 and, PL105-17) mandate "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE), the US Department of Education's guidance has been to educate as many students with special needs as possible in the regular classroom - inclusion. The difference between LRE and inclusion is profound and impacts the fundamentals of special education placement protocols. LRE directs the local educational agency to place each child with special needs in a setting as close to where he/she would be educated if not disabled but which best meets the educational needs of the particular child. The LRE structure provides a continuum of service options which range from the regular classroom to a self-contained hospital setting. LRE permits segregated placements if the particular placement best serves the child. Inclusion, on the other hand, directs all placements of children with special needs to the regular classroom together with their non-disabled peers.

Although consensus on this topic is clearly not unanimous, the power and energy driving the inclusion model is enormous. New York State, for example,

has been the focus of numerous requests by the United States Department of Education (USDE) to reduce the number of students with special needs educated in self-contained classrooms and increase the number of those students in the non-special classrooms. This direction represents a substantial challenge for the current education system. First and foremost, inclusion places a substantial educational and management load on the non-special classroom teacher - a load for which

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many teachers are unprepared. It also requires attitudinal changes on all school levels; environmental accessibility; intense and collaborative relationships between special and non-special educators; substantial staff development; redirection of federal, state and city monies for both special and non-special categorical and non-categorical grants; and massive changes in the current educational structure on all levels with all its logistical ramifications. Yet, despite the enormity of challenge, models of successful inclusion programming have been demonstrated.

From another sector of the educational community, the non-special education sector, academic standards reform is gaining extensive strength and momentum. The educational reform movement emanates from the popular notion that the regular education system is producing graduates lacking competency in the very basic skills necessary for success in a new emerging world economy. The New York State Education Department cites research studies indicating that as many as 40% of 4th graders are incapable of basic reading and writing skills (USDE

1998). Jobs and successful functioning in the next century will require individuals with greater skill and ability to match the demands resulting from recent increases in technological advancements. The business sector has already expressed the feeling that too many of the current graduates are difficult to employ due to a lack of necessary basic skills.

In response to this perception, the USDE has begun to discuss national standards and tests assessing those standards. States too, have explored their own standards and assessment. New York State has become one of the leading states in this development, by initiating its own standards movement. It has already begun to assess those standards in both elementary and high school testing programs. The initial elementary standards assessment was conducted in late January of this year measuring the 4th grade English Language Arts skills of reading, writing and listening. The results of that testing were recently publicized in the local media throughout the state: it was not pretty. The NYC Public School scores indicated that only 32% of their students passed this exam. The private schools in the city fared better (48%) - but not much better. The yeshivot and Jewish day schools varied greatly in their scores. Some did very well and some did very poorly. However, for the first time in recent history, the citizens of New York had the opportunity to compare the scores of public and private schools as well as rate the individual private schools against other like private schools.

This last aspect - the public awareness of each school's scores - greatly exacerbated an existing condition in the private sector: competition. There now existed a common and public measuring device by which all schools may be judged. Consequently, parents paid attention. Suddenly, parents sought explanations as to why their child's school failed to match or supercede other local schools. My division at BJE has already received calls regarding the possibility of changing children's schools by virtue of the test results. Needless to say, schools are now scrambling to substantially increase their previous scores and either overtake or maintain superiority over the other com-

munity schools. This pressure is more keenly experienced by the Jewish day school movement whose task it is to successfully prepare students in both Judaic and general studies with the added dimension of multilingual instruction.

With the above in mind, there are some obvious negative potential implications for the inclusion initiative. One unfortunate strategy to increase student performance and test results is to recruit only the more competent and capable students. When competition is so fierce, what motivation exists to encourage principals to enroll at-risk, disabled and/or slower students? The same question exists for those schools who reach out to immigrant students who, for at least some time, evidence language difficulty as a result of their transition - the very skills that are now being tested. Each of these students threatens grade score results and, ultimately, the school's reputation and community standing.

Talmudic literature has provided guidance on this topic for close to a millennium.

It is clear from our heritage that all children have the right, indeed the obligation, to maximize their opportunities in experiencing the fullness and richness of Jewish life through Jewish education, and that we, the Jewish community, shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that that right and obligation is realized. Translated into current practice, it should mean that every child ought to have a place in the Jewish day school, a primary source of Jewish education, of his/her choice. To achieve this, the Jewish community must assure its members that no child will be left behind.

The challenge that confronts *yeshivot* and Jewish day schools is clear - how to develop inclusive classrooms while not penalizing schools' academic standings in the process. The response to the challenge is less clear. Nonetheless, there are a variety of options worth exploring. One option is to increase remedial opportunities. Currently, the New York State Education Department is engaged in coordinating intensive intervention programs. Traditionally, the varied federal, state and local educational grants fall into categorical and non-categorical designations. Non-categorical designations allow the local educational agency to determine how the funds will be best spent. Categorical designations mean that there are pre-determined rules and regulations that govern how the funds are to be used. Often these two designations pose difficulties for educational agencies as they try to concentrate their efforts on a particular area of intervention. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) find themselves attempting to use streams of funding in a logical, comprehensive and effective manner only to be thwarted by categorical restrictions. The current initiative is to find ways to consolidate the categorical and non-categorical funding sources into a comprehensive intervention strategy responding to the new demands of standards reform. These efforts would also be used to maximize all student efforts which would include those in inclusive educational settings.

While this intervention is helpful to students with special needs, it does not eliminate the lower scores problem. For this, there is another option - differential reporting. Differential reporting would

allow all students within a class to be tested but without penalty. Children with classified disabilities would be reported separately and would not be used in class and school standings. The one problem that remains for the private sector, however, is the mechanism for classification. The only current method for classifying someone as disabled is through the public school's Committees on Special Education. Currently, those students who are evaluated by private evaluation agencies are not recognized as being a special education student. Recent negotiations with the New York State Education Department officials have dealt with recognizing alternative authoritative private agencies to classify students as disabled. If this is approved, then differential reporting can be achieved without penalty to schools.

The above represents some of the current thinking. Clearly, there are other possible solutions to this dilemma. For the benefit of our students they must be explored thoroughly. With quality collaborative thinking, including both public and private sectors, a solution to this dilemma will be achieved - a solution that will enhance the capabilities of children with special needs in the non-special classroom, while simultaneously allowing schools to reach government standards as well.

CONSORTIUM NEWS

Atlanta

JES Chaverim, the Special Education Department of Jewish Educational Services, continues to work towards its goal to "create opportunities to enable every Jewish individual to receive a quality Jewish education." To reach this goal, a variety of services are offered to address the individual needs of each student. Our services evolve yearly, as new programs

are instituted while existing programs change.

Beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, the **Yad B'Yad** program, a class for children with mild to moderate learning disabilities, will change its focus. Instead of a separate classroom, a JES consultant will go on site to each of the participating synagogues on a weekly basis to offer a variety of services including evaluations, education plans, teacher education and some pull-out assistance.

Amit, a Sunday religious school program for children with developmental disabilities, will continue to meet for those families who want their children in a classroom setting designed to meet their individual needs. Research is underway to expand the **Amit** program to include services to our day schools. Again we are looking at a variety of services in order to meet the needs of each individual student. Services will range from a modified self-contained class to

support services allowing for inclusion whenever possible.

In addition to the above programs, **Chaverim** provides services to the 7 day schools, 17 preschools and 17 synagogue supplemental schools in the community through a variety of programs including teacher workshops, full day seminars, professional development courses, consulting services, Disability Awareness & Sensitivity Training program, a resource center, and teacher networks. Again the focus is to provide a variety of services so that all needs are met.

Atlanta is very fortunate to have a Coordinated Network of Services for Persons with Disabilities. This Network is made up of staff and lay people from Jewish Educational Services, Jewish Family & Career Services, and the Atlanta Jewish Community Center. Through this network, individuals receive assistance in a wide array of areas. This past year, we had our first Jewish Disability Awareness Month. In March 1999, we offered a variety of programs from each of our departments to highlight our services. The local Jewish newspapers wrote lengthy articles and we were even the featured guest on a television talk show. We ended the month with a gala honoring our volunteers, entitled "Picture Us Now!" This program met its goal of increasing community awareness and support and will continue as an annual event.

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Baltimore

The Center for Jewish Education's Special Education Services in Baltimore, MD serves the pre-, day and congregational schools as well as families and the community through its various programs, resources, and educational consultants.

Gesher LaTorah, our supplementary education program for individuals with severe special needs, continues to grow in its scope and services. Our focus during the 1998-1999 year was on the Jewish community. We held holiday treasure hunts at local Jewish stores and visited a synagogue, a Jewish museum and other local Jewish institutions. We successfully

completed the second year of our new adult program, **TAG**, which involves students in *Torah*, *Avodah* - prayer and work, and *Gemilut Chasadim*, acts of kindness and goodwill - as the students trained at various Jewish businesses in the community.

We also worked closely with the self-contained and resource programs at our affiliated congregational schools and day schools. Consultants provided support for these and the general education programs through observing classrooms, modeling lessons, suggesting alternatives, consulting with administrations and families and giving workshops.

SNAP (Special Needs Advocates and Parents) is a newly formed group of parents who underwent extensive training provided in conjunction with Parent's Place of MD, a parent advocacy group, and funded through the MD State Department of Education. The training involved a variety of topics concerning the special needs population including an intensive look at the law, community resources and counseling and support techniques. One of these parents is now on staff in the department to coordinate the **SNAP** volunteers who will be available to assist and support parents in locating appropriate resources and educational programs for their child.

Yad B'Yad, our professional development network for Jewish Special Educators and Jewish Advocates for Deaf Education (**JADE**) held some very well attended workshops whose topics included "Reaching the Hard to Teach" and "Shema: What It Means to the Deaf Community." Jewish education classes were held at the Maryland School for the Deaf. **JADE** also held a spirited Chanukah party.

Through extensive advocacy efforts including a myriad of board presentations for the associated and a labored vision process resulting in clearly defined goals and strategies, we have tripled our budget. This *coup de gras* will enable us to hire more people to staff the department, and to thereby increase our response to our community needs. We feel strengthened by the support we received and thrilled at the challenge of a more coordinated and resourceful department.

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Broward County

The *bar mitzvah* celebration of the **Proud and Jewish** class for students with severe developmental disabilities took place on Shabbat *mincha* services at Temple Beth Torah, in Tamarac, where the class has been located for the past two years.

During these years, the class was directed and coordinated by Fran Forman with the aim of meeting the needs of children with Down's Syndrome, autism and other disabilities within the community. Six students have become *bar mitzvah* during that time through a program that places an emphasis on blessings, Shabbat and holiday observances, songs and motor activities.

In addition, Mrs. Forman developed a corps of volunteers mostly from the Judaica High School of the Central Agency for Jewish Education, who provided one-on-one attention to the students every Sunday. Prior to the beginning of the class, Mrs. Forman conducted weekly sessions for the volunteers.

A number of the local synagogues, including Congregation Bet Chaverim and Temple Beth Torah, have invited the students to participate in holiday celebrations on their sites. The program was housed at the Soref Jewish Community Center for many years.

Members of a group at a local condominium, the Holiday Club of Kings Point, Tamarac, have been exceptionally generous to the class over the years. In general, the class derives its funding from CAJE and other generous individuals in the community, including Morris Small, a leading member of Federation and of the Central Agency for Jewish Education, in addition to grants from the David Posnack Foundation.

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Cleveland

The Special Education Department of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland is marking its eleventh year serving the Jewish community's twenty-six affiliated pre-schools, supplementary and day schools. Consistent with agency goals, the department assists in the inte-

gration of students with special needs into the Jewish education system. To accomplish this, it develops curriculum, designs staff development programs and observes and coaches teachers. Additionally, the department acts as liaison between Jewish and public schools, serving as advocate for parents by helping to establish and maintain relationships among teachers and school administration.

Working with individual religious schools, the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland has created a strong network of programs serving youngsters from preschool through age twenty-one, with a broad range of needs. These students are served in a variety of settings including the **ETGAR** and **Shadow** projects.

The **ETGAR** program, which is entering its tenth year, continues to serve children with significant disabilities. Youngsters served in this supplementary program gain familiarity with prayers, Jewish music, and art. Hebrew vocabulary is included in the instruction. Dedicated personnel with highly specialized training are available to help each youngster participate as fully as possible in a wide range of Jewish learning. The holiday curriculum is multi-modality and multi-level, designed specifically for the needs of these individuals.

The **Shadow** project, now in its fifth year, continues to grow, as increasing numbers of families request inclusion as the educational option for their children. **Shadow** teens, providing one-to-one support to students with special needs, are trained by the special education staff to learn about disabilities, social or academic tutoring and to understand behavior. These "shadows" are typically identified by their synagogue schools and are assigned to work with one or two students throughout the school year. The **Shadow** project allows students to be full participants in Jewish educational life who would otherwise be unable to do so. Recently, the Jewish Education Center received a grant from the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland to strengthen work in this area.

During the past year, the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland has set out to implement a set of recommendations to allow our community to better serve the needs of students with special needs enrolled in our day schools. This panoply of services enables students with special needs greater opportunities to participate in the day school community. With financial assistance from the Jewish

Community Federation's Philanthropic Funds, day school teachers participated in "Schools Attuned," a national education initiative. Teachers spent the first of two week-long intensive seminars learning about the latest brain research and its effect on learning.

The Special Education Department continues to offer a series of Jewish Educator Services Program staff development opportunities related to special education. These classes include a host of topics which address the needs of learners with special needs and their families. These offerings are an effort to effect change in teachers' understanding of and attitudes toward their students.

The Special Education Department works cooperatively with other local agencies to support special education initiatives throughout the community. "Coffee Talk," a networking group for parents of children with special needs, meets to share the parents' challenges and triumphs. Over the year, professional staff from three agencies have designed programs to respond to these needs.

The special education materials contained in the J.E.C.C. curriculum library are available to the education community as well as parents. These texts, videos and other curricular tools promote a deeper understanding of special education issues and related topics. The special education department is always acquiring new resources.

Jewish special education in Cleveland continues to grow and develop. In so doing, it makes every effort to respond to community needs.

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Denver

Denver's CAJE had a subtle name change, but the special education programs continue to focus on inclusion opportunities in the metro area's growing Jewish community for all individuals with special needs. The name of the agency changed to the Colorado Agency for Jewish Education. Rita Schwartz became the Coordinator of Special Education in March 1999.

Chaverim (Friends): Jewish Programs for Adults with Disabilities

Enhancing Jewish identity is the goal of bi-monthly programs for adults with special needs. Activities include holiday study and celebrations, field trips, projects, concerts, plays, guest speakers and aleph-bet classes. Through the Special Education Department's affiliation with ArtReach, free tickets to cultural and sports events are available for adults with disabilities.

In collaboration with the Robert E. Loup Jewish Community Center, the Sunday Fun Club provides weekly opportunities for art, study, cultural, and social activities in a Jewish setting.

On June 1, 1999, a festive community *siyyum* (completion celebration) was held at Congregation BMH-BJ to honor the achievement of five years of study by the **Chaverim** learners. Over 100 people attended a buffet dinner for participants, their families, rabbis and Jewish educators. The evening received much coverage in the Denver press.

Kochavim (Stars): Supplemental Religious School Education Inclusion Program

Now in its ninth year, the **Kochavim** program coordinates support services for students at synagogue education programs and at the Community High School for Jewish Studies. The magnet Sunday program is housed at Congregation Emanuel and offers children and teens opportunities to participate in classes, services and special projects with staff assistance as needed. A coordinator and assistants are on site each week.

Individualized educational planning is also offered for families whose children attend classes in their home synagogue. This option provides the Jewish community with the opportunity to become familiar with inclusion of people with special needs. Consultation services are available as needed for synagogue programs and schools. At CAJE's extensive evening Community High School for Jewish Studies, teens are involved in an exciting variety of educational programming and community service activities. Support services are provided as needed to ensure inclusion opportunities.

Kibbutz, Kvell and Coffee: Family Networking and Mentoring

Meeting during the school year, this group provides parents of children with special needs a chance to meet and share information, triumphs, and assistance. A

priority this year is outreach to families in the metro area.

Just Us: Sibling Support Club

This club has developed a life of its own and provides its teen and pre-teen members with the opportunity to share with other siblings in an informal setting. Creation of a web page at the CAJE web site (www.caje-co.org) for sibling outreach is a current goal.

Summer Magic: Camp Programs

CAJE collaborated with the JCC's **Camp Shai** to provide inclusion opportunities for children with special needs. Intervention strategies, sensitivity training, and other supports were provided by CAJE to the counselors and administrative staff. In addition, two day trips to the Shwayder Camp in the scenic Colorado mountains provided opportunities for horseback riding, lunchroom sing, art projects, and other "sleep-away-camp" activities.

Day School Consultation Services

Expanding opportunities for inclusion in the Denver metro area's day schools are an exciting component of the CAJE Special Education Department. Consultation is available on a continuing basis for day school and preschool staff regarding IEPs, adaptation of materials, therapeutic services, etc. Parent contact, referral, and advocacy services are also ongoing. On May 13, 1999, attorney Randy Chapman of the Legal Center for People with Disabilities met with Jewish educational leaders to discuss support service options available to students in Jewish day programs. The Legal Center is working with CAJE to maximize resources available to children with special needs who attend Jewish day schools in Colorado.

Workshops/Teacher Training

Teacher training programs, formal and informal, are provided at schools and Jewish educator conferences regarding strategies and trends in the education of children with special needs. Inclusion techniques were discussed at the annual Mini-CAJE conference (including a special program that focused on teenage assistants), the Early Childhood Educators Conference, and the Day School Teachers Conference.

Special Education Resource Center

Hundreds of books, videos, and computer software items on Jewish topics are

available to the community to assist teachers and families in meeting special needs. Current periodicals, articles, and updated agency information are also available.

Preschool Inclusion/Speech/Language Services/Screenings

CAJE coordinates an itinerant speech/language therapy program and provides Child Find screening assistance and referrals for children in Denver's Jewish preschools. Consultation, advocacy, and parent support are also available.

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Detroit

Our 1998-99 academic year has been an exciting and productive one!! We're pleased to report that our **Opening The Doors Special Education Partnership Program** continues to open the doors of opportunity, enabling children with learning disabilities and other special learning needs to receive a quality and appropriate Jewish education. Beginning as a pilot program in 1996, this year marks 4 years of operation.

Supporting our efforts and recognizing the special needs of these children has been the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. Their deep commitment has enabled us to serve seventeen schools this past year and to expand to include six additional schools beginning in September 1999. Thus we have managed to enter the new millenium with a special education delivery system to *twenty-three* schools in our Metropolitan Detroit community!

We have established partnerships with our seventeen schools - early childhood, day schools and congregational schools - across the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Humanistic spectrum. Last year, 526 children were served. Each partnership school received funding from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit to provide for the hiring of qualified special educators to implement services within their schools. Schools in turn demonstrated their commitment by providing internal challenge funds in their school budgets.

The Agency for Jewish Education (AJE) Special Education Director coordinates the **Opening The Doors** program and provides support and consultative services to our school directors, special education teachers, classroom teachers and parents. Our services include: recruitment, placement and supervision of special educators in partnership schools; development of school program models (such as pull out, inclusionary, resource room, zero and tenth hour); on-site seminars and teacher-training workshops. A variety of seminars were provided to enhance the skills of the classroom teacher to meet the needs of the diverse learners within their classroom. A sampling of learning opportunities included: *The Young and the Restless: ADHD in Preschool Children*; *Building Children's Brains: How You Can Help*; *Communication Birth to Five: When Should I Be Concerned?*; *Designing An Effective Learning Environment for the ADHD Student: A Blueprint for Success*; *To The Max: Maximizers to Enhance Learning*.

Our second **Jewish Day School Conference** brought together teachers from our four partnership day schools to discuss and learn from Dr. Larry B. Silver, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry from Georgetown University Medical Center. He presented *The Critical Role of the Classroom Teacher: Recognizing and Helping the Student with LD/ADHD*. Following his presentation, teachers divided into small discussion groups within their specific grade cohort to share common concerns. This was a day of learning and dialogue for 150 classroom teachers. Our third annual conference, held in November 1999, featured keynote speaker Rick Lavoie, Executive Director of Riverview School in Massachusetts.

The Special Educators Network met periodically to discuss relevant issues and invited specialists to share current thought. A sampling of topics included *Understanding and Using Psychological Test Data, and Sensory Integration*.

The Family Circle, our annual community program, was a two-day event entitled *Let's Talk: Parent/Professional Communication*, featuring Nina S. Butler, a Wexner Graduate Fellow and Doctoral Candidate from University of Pittsburgh. A consultant on Autism, Cystic Fibrosis and Special Education issues, she presented parent/school communication models and ways to dialogue as a community.

AJE worked with a local school district to bring state-mandated services for special needs children into the day schools. To supplement the public school services, a clinical psychologist was hired on a limited basis to provide psycho-educational evaluations for those in need.

A Disabilities Awareness curriculum entitled *You and I were Made B'Zelem Elokim*, written by Bayla Landsman and Sheva Locke was made available for 3-4th grade students community wide. The curriculum culminated with a *Kids On The Block* puppet performance by volunteers from the Michigan Metro Girl Scouts.

We continue to act as a community resource by providing a collection of current materials - resource files, student assessments, books and videos for use by both teachers and parents. Our growing collection continues to provide up-to-date information in the field of special education.

As we progress through the year 2000, we look forward to our expansion of the Opening the Doors Special Education Partnership Program and hope we can go *from strength to strength* in meeting the special needs of our children!

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Houston

What an interesting and wonderful first year this has been for me at the Bureau of Jewish Education in Houston! Obviously, many services and special education classes were already in place due to the fine work of my predecessors, Samantha Rosenthal and Susan Mesches. The Bureau continues to offer consulting services, teacher training, resources for information on special education in the community and around the country, and modifications of materials used in the classroom.

One of the demands being met by the Special Education Consultant is the provision of more intensive teacher training for the teachers in the regular supplemental school programs. This year, at the community-wide **Yom Limmud, Day of Learning**, the BJE Special Education

Consultant addressed Jewish educators on the topic of modifications with special needs children entitled, "Working with Special Needs Children - And Liking It!" Another program, which has official endorsement from Very Special Arts, was also arranged for *Yom Limmud*. It focused on increasing awareness and sensitivity to those with special needs. *The River*, a barrier-free extra-curricular theater-arts enrichment program for all children ages 3-19, performed. This musical performance by the teenage group helped heighten awareness of all those attending of the feelings and hopes of people with special needs.

The Special Education Consultant helps supplemental schools deal with the impact that inclusion has had on our schools. More consultative demands have arisen as a result of inclusion: the need to obtain information from the student's secular teacher is imperative. Release forms giving the BJE consultant permission to observe, recommend and dialogue with all those professionals having a possible impact on a child's needs is essential and has been made more definitive this past year. The special education consultant of the BJE works closely with *Kesher*, a support and advocacy group for parents of children with special needs. Together they have built a cohesive presence in School Class that began in Fall 1999. This class is in addition to the already existing Intermediate Special Needs Sunday School Class. These classes are established, community-wide, to service those children with moderate to severe developmental delays. Also, the BJE consultant encouraged the formation of a special needs Hebrew class to service children attending a specific congregation. The pilot class was opened to those children, grades Gimel-Hey, for whom modifications and pull-out tutoring was not successful.

The response from many parents has shown that a need had existed and a possible solution has been offered. An expansion of this type of program will take place in other congregations once the need has been identified.

Plans for the coming year include the formation of the Jewish Special Educators' Council, monthly newsletters informing teachers of upcoming in-service training and conferences, expansion of special needs classes throughout the community, and improving communication between secular and religious school teachers in helping to create a consistent

approach in the student's day to day strategy in his/her learning environment.

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Kansas City

Funded by a generous grant from the Jewish Heritage Foundation of Greater Kansas City, special needs has had a very successful second year. Students and families receiving services from this program have more than doubled. Inclusion facilitators are providing services for all community schools and congregations, firstly by creating programming access to individuals not currently involved or actively participating due to unmet needs, and, secondly, in aiding existing programming to better meet the needs of children with disabilities. Child advocacy, parent and family support, consultation services, transition assistance, crisis intervention and parent training have also been made available. Included among our current programming is tuition assistance for teachers, **Jump Start Hebrew, Re-Charge Hebrew**, consultation services to schools and congregations, and public school partnership.

Tuition Assistance

Because of the inclusive nature of the philosophy of our program, we are continuing to offer special education training to interested regular classroom teachers. In this vein, CAJE Special Needs has offered every community teacher in a Jewish setting tuition reimbursement for an approved graduate special education methods course. This one-time per career offer has been made to those teachers deemed eligible by virtue of their having been actively involved in classroom education in a Jewish community for a minimum of three calendar years. It is hoped that many teachers will take advantage of this offer, thereby increasing the personnel available to work with students with disabilities.

Jump Start Hebrew

We are again offering this community-wide course, taught by qualified special education teachers, to all children in the community with a disability that makes

learning Hebrew in a supplementary school challenging. Students have been invited to participate in this daily Hebrew class for three weeks prior to the beginning of the fall term. This should provide them with foundation knowledge, which will enable them to begin their Hebrew education with success.

Re-Charge Hebrew

This community-wide course, taught by qualified special education teachers, is offered to entering second year midweek Hebrew students who, because of a disabling condition, struggled in first year Hebrew. Students identified as eligible by teachers, religious school directors and CAJE inclusion facilitators are invited to participate in this daily Hebrew class for two weeks prior to the beginning of the fall term. This intensive review should re-charge their knowledge, and allow students greater success in the new school year.

Consultation Services

We have been successful in securing the services of highly qualified and experienced Special Education coordinators. All community preschools, religious schools and day camps receive consultation services on a regular basis. CAJE Special Needs also provides para-professionals in all three settings to facilitate better learning outcomes for our children with special needs.

Collaborative Goals

A three-way partnership involving CAJE Special Needs, our Jewish day school, the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, and a public school district, Blue Valley Schools, has been successfully created for the 1999-2000 school year. With CAJE Special Needs' support, the district will place qualified, certified special education personnel in the day school to provide special education services for identified Academy students. It is hoped that this model will promote student service without categorization while providing teacher support and training leading to enhanced skills, better assessment tools, and new strategies.

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MetroWest

This year, the Jewish Education Association's Center for Special Education has grown exponentially in its ability to provide services to the Jewish developmentally challenged and at-risk population. Thanks to funding support from The Turrell Foundation and The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, the following three community services have been made possible. We continue to pursue funding that will enable us to provide these essential services on an on-going basis. Our Center continues to improve and expand its offerings. These programs are: A Team of Early Childhood Consultants, Yaldeinu Tots / Kinder/Innovative Technology; and Solving Social Problems. Our major successes in each area are summarized below.

A Team of Early Childhood Consultants

A team of psychologists are subcontracted by the JEA Center for Special Education to provide comprehensive services to the preschool children in Jewish early childhood programs who are thought to be at-risk for future learning and/or developmental problems.

The program is designed to:

- (1) help staff (directors and educators) *identify at-risk children*
- (2) begin to *train teachers* regarding classroom strategies for working with and main-streaming special needs children
- (3) *provide observation and consultation services* to educators with students thought to be at risk for special education
- (4) *support parent education in early child development* and to provide appropriate strategies to assist them with problem solving issues of concern that provides prevention
- (5) educate and help parents of special needs children to *obtain appropriate referrals and services for their child*.

Plans are in the making to continue this service, while offering a course for educators on "Educating A-typical Children in the Mainstream Environment."

Yaldeinu Tots/ Kinder/Innovative Technology

The Jewish Education Association's Center for Special Education is so pleased with the success of its *Yaldeinu Tots (3's & 4's) Music Therapy Program!* This Mommy- Daddy-and-me program is

generously funded by The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, and continued in September with a classroom full of new attendees.

All seven graduates of the program have been promoted to the newly funded *Yaldeinu Kinder Program (4's & 5's)*. These youngsters will have the benefit of music therapy, in addition to computer technology and art therapy. Both programs are supervised by a behavior therapist and meet bi-weekly for 21 sessions on Sunday mornings. Parents will also benefit from the educational support group entitled Parent Talk. Most exciting is the fact that The Children's Institute will house the Yaldeinu Program in a newly designed state-of-the-art special education facility in Verona, NJ beginning in October 1999.

Solving Social Problems In The Jewish Classroom

This program was devised to assist teachers with the professional growth needed to deal with problematic issues in schools, and to reach out to children who desperately need to deal with behavioral issues that interfere with their ability to learn and function socially. This project was undertaken to accommodate the growing behavior management problems in schools which in turn oblige educators and principals to enforce disciplinary action instead of focusing on learning.

This problem-solving conflict resolution workshop program deals with the broad category of students including youngsters from divorces or dysfunctional families or who are ADD/HD, learning disabled, withdrawn, depressed, impulsive, angry, or aggressive towards others. These children when faced with issues need to learn strategies that will enable them to strategize rational and clear-headed decisions.

This year the JEA Center for Special Education has provided 40 child, teacher and parent workshops to the MetroWest community. The year culminated a conference on "Solving Social Problems in the Jewish Classroom and at Home." It consisted of a panel of speakers and authors of the book entitled "Emotionally Intelligent Parenting – How To Raise a Self-Disciplined, Responsible, Socially Skilled Child." Authors Dr. Maurice Elias, and Dr. Steven Tobias spoke about their book and "Facilitation of Positive Problem Solving & Decision Making." Dr. Bruce Ettinger, Executive Director of The Children's Institute spoke on "Teaching

Torah Utilizing a Problem Solving Approach" and "How To Develop a Comprehensive School-Wide Program Promoting Social/Emotional Learning." Seventy-three parents and educators attended.

Next year we are advocating continuing this program and providing a course for teachers entitled "Applying the Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution Model to Everyday Classroom Challenges."

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Montreal

The Jewish Education Council of Montreal has had a busy and exciting year filled with a variety of new programs and initiatives. In August 1997, Karen Gazith was hired as the Special Education Consultant. Her primary focus is in the area of inclusive education, providing teachers with training to enhance the inclusion of children with special needs within the regular classroom. Dr. Gazith has given workshops to teachers and administrators in the areas of: multiple intelligence, multi-level teaching, understanding learning difficulties, specific strategies to support children with special needs, and managing the inclusive classroom.

McGill University and the Jewish Education Council have embarked on a joint teacher training program for the regular and special education teachers in the Jewish day schools in the community. Upon completion of the program, teachers will receive a McGill certificate in inclusive education. The courses include: Exceptional Students, Assessment for Instruction, Instruction in Inclusive Schools, Managing the Inclusive Classroom, Students with Learning Difficulties, Talented and Gifted Students, and Family, School, and Community. In addition, there are two elective courses, and many educators have chosen to develop and implement interesting projects within their own schools as requirements for the elective courses.

Together with the Jewish Education Council and Jewish Family Services, Federation CJA (the Federation of the Jewish Community Services in Montreal) is in the process of examining the issues around the education and early support of infants and children with special needs. Parents have been very instrumental in this process and they have been working very closely with the various agencies in the examination of prevalent issues, needs and desires.

Finally, we were excited to have Thomas Armstrong as our guest speaker on 'Multiple Intelligence' at our JEC professional day in October. Dr. Armstrong has written many books on the area of Multiple Intelligence and has been instrumental in bringing Multiple Intelligence into the classroom.

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New York

NEW INITIATIVES

Preschool Reading Disability Prevention Program

Based on twenty years of special education research, BJE's Special Education Center in conjunction with BJE's Early Childhood Center and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCS) is planning a reading disability prevention program aimed at kindergarten and pre-1A youngsters in Jewish day schools. The program will attempt to replicate the recent federally supported work of Dr. Frank R. Vellutino and Dr. Donna M. Scanlon. Vellutino and Scanlon developed both an assessment tool and intervention program geared to detect and correct potential reading problems in youngsters. In a recent article reviewing their research, Vellutino and Scanlon demonstrated that as many as 50% of students classified in fourth grade as having learning disabilities in the area of reading actually had no real disabilities other than, perhaps, poor instruction. Current plans include Vellutino and Scanlon serving as general program consultants with Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd of Columbia University as the on-site

consultant. To date, the Center has run a Yom Iyun by Dr. Vellutino and Dr. Scanlon explaining their work and a joint summer graduate school course with Long Island University (LIU) on reading in preparation for this year's program.

Special Educators Administration Certificate Program

BJE's Special Education Center's Institute for Special Education Enrichment (I-SEE) continues to negotiate a certificate program in Special Education Administration and Supervision with a number of colleges. The 30 credit post-graduate program will provide participants a New York State Certificate allowing them to run NY State Approved special education programs. This initiative builds on the already successful Center's Master's Degree program in special education.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

School Inclusion Program

Based on last year's initiative, the Center will be continuing its pilot project of inclusion for students with special needs in regular classrooms. The program incorporates intensive staff development, on-site assistance, seminars, workshops and conferences. The program's goal is to enhance teacher abilities in educating a class of students with varied abilities and needs. This year, the program will work with a community school network and a number of independent schools. The project is open to both day schools and congregational schools.

Government Relations

BJE's Special Education Center serves on federal, state and city government councils and task forces representing Jewish special education programs, issues and concerns. The Center advocates for Jewish special education interests on the federal level in the US Department of Education's Office on Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and National Leadership in Private Education. The Center contributed to the development of the latest regulations associated with Public Law 105-17 (IDEA). On the state level, the Center representative is a member of the NY State Education Department's Advisory Panel on Special Education Services and serves as chairperson for the NY State Education Department's Commissioners Advisory Council on Non-public Education. The Center is also a member

of the NY City Committee of Non-Public School Officials. The most recent issues include: the impact of PL105-17 on non-public and parochial school programming, inclusion vs self-contained placement and the participation of students with special needs in the developing NY State Regent's standards and testing initiatives.

Child and Family Advocacy Program

The BJE Special Education Center in conjunction with the New York UJA/Federation Task Force on Disabilities runs an advocacy program serving persons with special needs and their families. The program seeks to develop a comprehensive communal network of information and resources for persons with disabilities. The goal of the program is to have a one call system that will provide callers with up to date quality information regarding services and resources for persons with special needs. In addition, the family advocate is positioned to provide critical information regarding existing gaps in service for the purpose of identifying future initiatives. BJE joins the Westchester Jewish Community Services Agency and the Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) in serving as lead agencies for this project.

The Advocacy program utilizes the latest technology to enhance timely responses for those in need. Valuable information is available on the BJE website (www.bjeny.org). This provides a 24 hour information service. To date, the program has responded to approximately 2,000 requests for assistance.

BJE/Chai Lifeline Telecommunications Network

BJE and the Chai Lifeline organization administrate a technology-based communications program linking hospitalized and homebound children with their schools, tutors, families, and/or friends. The program uses video telephones, the Internet and other technology to provide children with cancer and/or other critical illness the opportunity to maintain ongoing educational, remedial, and social activities. The technology prevents the loss of an academic school year while the child is recuperating from a bone marrow transplant or other forms of treatment. From the hospital room or bed at home, the child is in sight and sound of the classroom where he/she can fully participate in school activities. The program also maximizes the use of tutors for

homebound children. Instead of working with three to four students a day and having to spend substantial time in traveling, the homebound teacher can double his/her tutoring load without moving from his chair. The motto of the program is, "Your classroom is only as far away as your telephone." The video phones can be attached to large TV monitors as well as camcorders for varied educational use. To date, close to 40 youngsters have benefitted from the program. Last year the program was the subject of a Ch.12 Long Island Cable News report.

In addition to the above, the program seeks to link a big brother/big sister program as well as family communication through email and chat programs on the Internet. To accomplish this goal, the program has developed a relationship with the National Christina Foundation which provides a number of computers to children and their families for the particular use of this project.

JETNET Website

For the past few years, the BJE Jewish Education Telecommunications Network (JETNET) has maintained its own website. The website provides viewers with extensive information regarding Jewish special education organizations, services, job and placement opportunities and links to other valuable websites. The BJE website continues to explore the feasibility of a chat area for a variety of online real time discussions and bulletin board that allows educators to post information, suggestions, and questions. Ongoing planning includes the potential for staff development through stream video and distance learning.

Council of Jewish Special Education Programs

BJE's Special Education Center staffs a council of special education schools and self-contained programs serving students with learning disabilities. The Council plans joint educational programs and special projects and initiatives. This past year, the Council chose writing skills as its target activity. Dr. Elaine Fine provided the key in-service sessions and also served as the project advisor. The coming year's activities will continue the projects of "Self-Advocacy" (through language) and "Writing Skills" and initiate a reading comprehension program.

Child Abuse Prevention Program

The BJE Special Education Center and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCS) are now in their 5th year of their joint Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP) for the Jewish community. The ongoing program provides educators and administrators critical information regarding child abuse and what to do when it is suspected in a student. To accomplish this goal, the program presents conferences, seminars and workshops on topics including indicators of abuse, legal mandates, Jewish and general community resources and Halachic considerations. To date, the program has reached thousands of educators in over 85 settings spanning the Jewish ideological continuum. In addition, the program provides in-service and pre-service courses in child abuse prevention which meet New York State certificate requirements for all human service providers. The program also seeks to prevent child abuse through the development of healthy family living. Towards this end, the program sponsored community seminars dealing with communication skills, conflict resolution and danger signs within the family. These seminars have now been expanded to include students in college and Jewish teachers seminars. Another aspect of the program is the creation of an educational curriculum and resource center to assist teachers in helping their students recognize and respond to inappropriate relationships.

The Child Abuse Prevention Program has recently expanded its services to include a classroom management project for Jewish educators. The project began with a conference dedicated to the area of classroom management followed by on-site school workshops. The conference featured Lee Cantor who demonstrated his program of behavior management.

Special Education All-Star Courses

Following the success of the last four year's All-Star courses, the Special Education Center and Long Island University (LIU) ran a 5th course. The three graduate credit courses provided sessions on a variety of special education topics. Each session was conducted by an expert in his/her particular topic. Thus, students had the unique opportunity to encounter leading professionals in their field. This year's topics included: *Early Reading Success*, *Pre-reading Strategies*, *Research on Dyslexia*, *Intervention Models*, *Cognitive Reading Strategies*, *Linking*

Writing to Reading Strategies, Diagnosis of Hebrew Reading, Remediation and Resource Room Programming in Reading, and Comprehension Skills in Judaic Studies. The course instructors included: Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd, Dr. Lisa Robbins, Dr. Edward Pieper, Rabbi Dr. Avraham Granick, Dr. Jed P. Luchow, and Dr. Herschel Fried.

Models of Excellence

The BJE Special Education Center's program for gifted and talented students directed by Dr. Abraham J. Tannenbaum is beginning its 6th year. In its first year, the program helped two Jewish high schools start programs for gifted and talented students. During the past four years, six Jewish elementary day schools explored a variety of programs for gifted and talented students under the guidance of Dr. Tannenbaum meeting the unique needs of each school. Two years ago, four schools presented their own unique designs and rational for each school's selection in a *yom iyun*. Last year, plans for a new special school program were initiated. This year, the plans for the new class will be refined with the goal of beginning the new program in the fall of 2000.

JETNET

The BJE's telecommunications network, JETNET, is beginning its 6th year. In addition to providing Internet access to schools and homes at discount prices, JETNET creates international inter-school projects and provides ongoing Internet workshops, seminars, and conferences for Jewish educators. JETNET also continues to develop education / technology sessions at the annual New York State Education Department's Non-public School Conference. This year, JETNET will assist in bringing new cutting-edge technology models to the conference.

JETNET continues to maintain its telecommunications lab. This allows JETNET members to explore a variety of hardware, software and Internet innovations and functions. Plans for this year include expanding school and community training sessions and exposing new technology options for Jewish day and Congregational schools. JETNET's technology initiatives serves as the basis of the BJE/Chai Lifeline's project of developing socialization programs for home-bound children.

Association of Jewish Special Educators

The Association of Jewish Special Educators (AJSE) is beginning its 19th year. During that time, the AJSE has sponsored numerous conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposia for over 16,000 participants. It has published a newsletter entitled *Special Edition* and a professional journal entitled *The Jewish Special Educator*. The latter is a recognized professional publication addressing important topics and issues in Jewish and general special education. Last year, the AJSE published its fourth edition of *The Jewish Special Educator*. *The Jewish Special Educator* is now indexed in ERIC and has received recognition from professional organizations as a new exciting special education publication.

Guidance and Consultation Services

The Special Education Center provides ongoing help to organizations, schools, administrators, teachers, parents and persons with special needs. The Center provides assistance to day and supplementary schools in starting various special education programs, to parents seeking appropriate schooling for their children with special needs, to educators looking for positions, and to government agencies and organizations in their special education initiatives. The Center regularly assists graduate school students in their quest for a doctorate or master's degree in special education. It has also assisted in the creation of a private college's department of special education.

The Institute for Special Education Enrichment

The Institute for Special Education Enrichment (I-SEE) sponsors two basic activities: a graduate school tract and a religious teacher seminary tract. In the graduate school tract, the Center sponsors a master's program in special education jointly with the College of Staten Island of the City of New York (CUNY). This project, originally funded by the J.E. & Z.B. Butler Foundation, has graduated close to 250 students with graduate degrees in special education. Well over 90% of the graduates are currently teaching in Jewish or public school special education programs. Many have gone on for additional certificates and degrees in bilingual extension, school administration, and doctoral programs. I-SEE is currently seeking to develop alumni programs that follow the graduates through their professional careers.

The Teacher Seminary project provides special education courses in three seminars and sponsors special education courses in additional Jewish teachers' seminars. The goal of this program is to develop more day and supplementary school teachers who are sensitive to the needs of children with special challenges in their classrooms. The program also helps develop a more supportive Jewish community for Jewish persons with special needs.

The Vocational Preparation Program

The Vocational Preparation Program (VPP) now in its 16th year, continues to assist disabled and non-disabled individuals in planning a viable and meaningful career. Although the program has a particular focus of providing a smooth transition from high school to the world of work, VPP is open to people of all ages. VPP networks with government, federation and private agencies to provide a most comprehensive array of potential vocational opportunities. To date, VPP has served over 1,800 individuals.

Additionally, VPP offers monthly career aptitude tests throughout the school year. The aptitude tests seek to provide individuals with important information regarding their skills and abilities for realistic and successful employment.

Volunteers in Special Education

The Volunteers in Special Education (VSE) continues to recruit, train and place qualified persons in Jewish schools to help students with special needs keep up with their school work. To date, VSE has placed approximately 1,200 volunteers in over fifty educational settings serving over 3,400 students. VSE is planning the development of a manual of its volunteer program so that other communities can replicate its success.

The Parent Education Program

The Parent Education Program (PEP) funded through a grant from the Butler Family Foundation, is beginning its 7th year. PEP is designed to heighten parent knowledge, understanding and involvement in special education. PEP continues to sponsor and cosponsor ongoing parent workshops, seminars, and conferences. PEP, in conjunction with the Jewish Parent Advocate Coalition, sponsored a special services conference and fair last fall to help parents access important and necessary services for their children. The Conference keynote speaker was Dr. Turecki who presented on effective

behavior management strategies for parents.

The Jewish Heritage Program

The Jewish Heritage Program (JHP) is beginning its 21st year. Currently, JHP is in four Jewish community centers throughout the greater New York area, serving approximately 100 developmentally disabled individuals. In addition to the ongoing Sunday school program, JHP conducts an annual Pesach Model Seder and other special events. JHP publishes special materials including a Siddur and Haggadah for its students so they will be successful in joining in Jewish communal ceremonies and celebrations.

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Philadelphia

The Greater Philadelphia area has had another exciting and productive year in special education. All of our successful programs are not only continuing, but also expanding, and we have started several new initiatives of note.

OROT, Greater Philadelphia's new special education initiative in the day schools, began in January at Perelman Jewish Day School's Forman Branch. Designed for children who could not otherwise learn in a day school environment, the program began servicing two children, one diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) and the other diagnosed with severe Learning Differences. The children were included in their mainstream classes whenever feasible and given academic support by the OROT teacher either in the mainstream room or in the OROT classroom.

Next year, OROT plans to increase the number of children serviced at Perelman Forman and to expand its program to Politz Hebrew Academy and Torah Academy. At Politz, OROT will service children diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Down syndrome, Developmental Disabilities and severe Learning Disabilities. At Torah Academy, OROT will work with children whose learning disabilities fall on

the moderate to severe end of the continuum.

In addition to the strides the children have made academically, they have also made gains socially. And, what is more, the teachers have found that the "typical" children are learning to accept differences among people and learning to give of themselves to help their friends with special needs.

OROT's lay committee has worked long and hard to raise the funds for this expansion. Over the course of the first year, OROT's advisory committee has written a mission statement, created a logo and selected stationery, and written guidelines by which OROT will operate. Everyone, from parents to teachers to committee members, has been delighted by the opportunity to kindle the lights of OROT.

The first edition of a new *Hebrew Phonics Inventory* by Sharon Schanzer, Ph.D., is available for distribution. This phonics inventory will be useful for teachers to help diagnose the progress of phonics learning. It is an individual test, which takes about 10 to 15 minutes to administer. It provides the teacher with specific information about what a child has mastered and what he or she needs to learn. The test uses "made-up," rather than real words, so that true decoding is assessed. It is most useful for aleph, bet, and gimel teachers who want to monitor the progress of their students.

We continue to sponsor speakers of interest to the lay and professional communities. This year we hosted two special programs. In January, Mitchell Greene, Ph.D. spoke on childhood and adolescent depression to audiences of teachers and parents. On March 11, 1999, Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education was privileged to have Temple Grandin, author of *Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports from My Life with Autism and Emergence: Labeled Autistic*, as our guest speaker. She spoke to an audience of 550 parents, grandparents, educators, and therapists of all kinds. She described herself as having Asperger's syndrome, a high functioning form of autism. She told of her experiences and struggles with such issues as sensitivities to noises and touch as well as relationships with people. Describing therapies and approaches for teachers and parents, she strongly urged parents to help their children develop careers, rather than only emphasizing the development of social skills.

A video was produced of this extraordinary event, and is available for purchase. To purchase a copy, please contact Sharon Schanzer.

We continue to work with over 30 synagogue and supplementary schools, as well as two informal education programs, which have started or expanded their programs for children and adolescents with special needs. SIMCHA and SIMCHA WEST (named for its location in the city) have expanded their informal family education programs. This year, one new resource room program was begun at a synagogue school and a kosher cooking class for adults with special needs was initiated through a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia at the Gratz College High School. Four additional schools also received similar grants for expansion of their special needs programs. A second Bar/Bat Mitzvah-Confirmation for adults with special needs on Memorial Day is the highlight of their special program.

Dr. Schanzer trained members of the Gratz College High School Service Learning Program to be able to work with residents of Elwyn Institute, a residential facility for mentally retarded adults.

We continue to publish our *Tekiah* newsletter, containing up-to-date articles of interest to parents and professionals alike.

Finally, we consult with early childhood programs, three of which now have programs for children with special needs. This has enabled us to work with people throughout the age-span, from early childhood through adulthood. And, with the start of our new OROT program, we now work with children with a wide range of disabilities, from minor learning problems through severe educational, emotional, behavioral and physical disabilities.

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Phoenix

The Council For Jews With Special Needs provides programs and services for children and young adults who have developmental, physical and sensory impairments as well as learning disabilities and attentional problems. The Council is an independent agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix and is funded both by the Federation and private donations.

Joining the cyber-network at year's end, the Council started its web site in December 1999. Construction of the web site will continue in early 2000. Please visit us at www.cjsn.org for more information about the agency.

The Council has provided disability-related information and referral both locally and nationally since its inception in 1985. After two years of preparation, the Council has just published the North American Disabilities Resource Directory of Jewish Agencies. This 180 page book includes agencies, schools, camps, support programs, residential and vocational services that assist persons who have disabling conditions. Agencies not presently listed are encouraged to contact the Council to be placed in the next printing of the directory. The directory can be purchased for \$25 by contacting the Council at (602) 277-4243.

This was also the year that the Council produced a professional videotape of its programs and services. Featuring the children, adults, parents and grandparents who use the Council's programs, the ten minute tape is available for \$15.

The Council began a Teen Social Club similar to the Adult Social Club that has flourished in the past 6 years. Teens who have severe disabilities and thus would not benefit from the fast-paced synagogue youth group activities now have a monthly lunch and activity directed by a special education teacher.

The Council offers consultation and assistance to all of Phoenix's Jewish schools (pre-school through Hebrew high school), as well as consultation and assistance to all of the local Jewish camps. In the past year, the Council received a grant to provide both staff training and one-on-one counselors at Camp Pearlstein, a residential camp in Prescott, AZ. Although the camp's rugged terrain still makes it inaccessible to children who use wheelchairs, the camp program now offers a one week inclusive setting for

children with developmental or sensory impairments.

The Council's support groups for parents, grandparents and siblings continue to grow. In the coming year, the Council will begin offering Educational Forums on topics such as "Transition for Students with LD and ADD" and "Making Friends." These forums will be co-sponsored by local synagogues.

Other programs and services include sign/oral interpreters, disability workshops, speakers bureau and advocacy assistance. For more information about the Council, contact Becca Hornstein at the address below.

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Rhode Island

A three year grant from the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island has been awarded to the Special Needs Department for the expansion of programs and for additional resources. Due to this generous grant, more personnel have been hired, extension of on-site programs expanded and materials purchased.

We now have an extensive collection of Special Needs books, videos and kits housed in our library at the BJE. Our Media-Resource Director, Toby Rossner, has produced a comprehensive list of our materials. If you would like a copy, please drop or fax me a note.

This past year, a program for the entire community was given on Attention Deficit Disorder by Pamela Charles Rubovits, Ph.D. More programs are being considered for the season to come.

On-site resource programs now take place in nine supplementary synagogue placements. The Bureau program provides resources and materials for all teachers and aides in the community. Observations and consultations with parents, teachers and principals are also held.

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San Francisco

The Special Education program at the Bureau of Jewish Education continues to address the needs of children with disabilities, their teachers, principals, parents, and other members of the community. It is funded by a grant from the Jewish Community Federation Endowment Kohn Fund, and also receives support from the Pinkus Sugarman Fund for Exceptional Children with Special Needs in Jewish Education. For the past eleven years, children attending synagogue schools have been receiving special education services. At ten schools, one of the staff members is a special education teacher.

This teacher provides individual or small group instruction, usually in a "pull-out" model. In some schools, the special education teacher assists students inside their classes. The special education consultant at the Bureau of Jewish Education works in partnership with the synagogue schools, assisting in the hiring, training, and support of the special education teachers, subsidizing a small portion of the special education teachers' salaries, helping to choose the model of service delivery that most appropriately meets the school's needs, providing standardized forms for student referrals, evaluations, and IEP's, and being available to principals and parents when questions arise. Last year, ten synagogue schools directly met the needs of 170 children who had learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, and other disabilities. Indirectly, all the other children and teachers benefited from the presence of the special educator on staff.

In December 1998, the Bureau of Jewish Education published a revised edition of the *Handbook for Special Education Programs in the Synagogue Schools*. It contains policy statements, procedures for setting up or maintaining a special education program, and forms that can be copied and/or adapted for use by individual schools. The new online version features over forty links to related websites. It is available at no charge on the Internet at the BJE's website (www.bjesf.org) or can be ordered from the BJE for \$10.

The special education consultant also works with the local day schools. In addition to purchasing special education materials for some of the day schools, the consultant co-taught sensitivity workshops for third grade students and consulted with principals and teachers. A

collaborative special education project for all the day schools is in the planning stages.

As part of the BJE's professional development opportunities for congregational school teachers, the following topics were offered: discipline techniques for children with learning disabilities, lesson planning, teaching Hebrew to students at different levels, and writing progress reports.

During the 1998-99 school year, the special education consultant conducted a small study to locate families of children with developmental disabilities. We are hoping to begin providing services to this population by offering monthly social activities for the children, their parents, and siblings.

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St. Louis

The Central Agency for Jewish Education in St. Louis has had another year serving children with special needs. Forty-two students were enrolled in the **Three Rs Program** ("Recognize, Refer, Remediate") during 1998-1999. This program provides Hebrew education for children, who, for a variety of reasons, have difficulty in a classroom situation. Admission into the program is based on parental input, teacher recommendations, CAJE recommendations, and the approval of the rabbi or educational director at the student's congregation. The program serves students from third grade through seventh grade. Each student receives either 24 one-hour private tutorial sessions or 32 forty-five minute sessions. Individualized flexible goals are developed for each student, which are based on the curriculum the student would have in the afternoon Hebrew school curriculum. We continue to emphasize that this program is *not* a Bar and Bat Mitzvah tutorial. Since 1990, over 40 students have finished the program and have become B'nai Mitzvah in their congregations.

The tutors receive specialized materials to help with the individual needs of the students at our orientation workshop in September and throughout the year. A

Tutors Forum is held in January to share ideas and provide further support. In addition, we encourage our tutors to attend Special Education workshops sponsored by CAJE. Tutors are also included in the CAJE **New Beginnings** Program in August, attend the "Educator's Fair" in November, and participate in special workshops throughout the year.

"Three Rs" tutors are encouraged and trained to be effective with mainstreaming and inclusion. Where appropriate, "Three Rs" students are included in Hebrew School Shabbatonim and other programming. Students with special needs attend their home-based synagogue and temple religious school classrooms on Sunday and Shabbat.

The "Three Rs Program" continues to grow and have an impact on many students and families. During the 1999-2000 school year, 15 tutors will be servicing over 40 children. Some strides have been made in outreach to the community as well.

Another program in the St. Louis community that was facilitated by CAJE staff, but which is independent from CAJE, is **Ohr Atid - Light of the Future**. Two years of intense organization by concerned parents of children with special needs resulted in a formal Jewish Sunday school begun in September, 1997. According to President Albert Glassman, "Ohr Atid's mission is to promote, facilitate, develop and maintain the maximum potential of school-age children with disabilities both at school and at home through a community partnership, within a Jewish environment." The two hour a week Sunday school program began with six students, increasing to eight in the 1998-1999 school year. Students from various Jewish high school programs are trained to be *madrachim* in the school to facilitate the learning environment. The class is self-contained but some integration with Congregation Nusach Hari B'nai Zion's regular religious school students for specific activities, such as Tfillah, takes place. The children in the Ohr Atid Sunday School represent all denominations of Judaism: Conservative, Reform, Traditional, and Orthodox. *Madrachim* are also assisting one child with special needs in a religious school preschool program. Two students have successfully been mainstreamed into their home-based congregational religious school programs.

Computers, donated by Monsanto Corporation, are used in Ohr Atid's ther-

apeutic computer lab, which meets weekly for sessions of five weeks, two hours per session.

In addition, Ohr Atid has developed Project PRISM (Parents Resources Information Sharing Mission), a resource-sharing network. Project PRISM also includes a family referral project to match one family with another family caring for a child with a similar disability.

Ohr Atid has also developed a list of resources for parents - tips on social services and financial resources, Jewish educational data, entitlements from federal, state and city governments, and Jewish experiential opportunities as part of this project.

A professionally-run support group for parents caring for Jewish children with special needs, hosted by Ohr Atid, meets monthly. This is a wonderful environment for parents to share their feelings and help one another face the stress and anxiety of meeting the needs of their children.

We are looking forward to the exciting success and continued growth of Ohr Atid—a very important addition and educational asset to the St. Louis Jewish Community.

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Greater Toronto

Just over a year ago, UJA Federation of Toronto created a new position in its Board of Jewish Education agency - that of Special Education Consultant. I was hired in a three-day-a-week capacity, to refine and fulfill a board-initiated mandate. As each school affiliated with the BJE is autonomous, there are many services offered within a number of differing structures, varying according to the need that has arisen at any particular time in any particular school. My initial responsibilities included: 1) ascertaining the level and range of services presently provided in each of the day and supplementary schools, 2) determining the gaps existing within the schools that affect their ability to provide proper services to children presently enrolled, and 3) identifying the needs of children currently not being serviced by the day and/or supplementary

schools, resulting in a group of "disenfranchised" families, not at all a part of the Jewish school system. In addition, some teacher training has been provided throughout the year.

My lay committee (made up, interestingly enough, of a number of professionals) and I have spent much of this first year concerned with the first and second of these enterprises. The initial task was to devise a grid, comprised of categories such as: range of services needs, personnel required, gap analysis, recommendations, and timeline for implementation. The second was to create a questionnaire to be sent to day school administrators and/or resource coordinators for the purpose of collecting quantitative information regarding services provided and needs perceived. Information received from the questionnaires will be collated during the summer with the intention of integrating the results into the grid categories.

Prior to sending the questionnaires, I conducted an extensive number of personal interviews during the course of the academic year. I visited each of the Hebrew day schools affiliated with the BJE to determine their special education structure, concerns, priorities, recommendations, etc. This information will also be added to the grid.

Without any more than the most superficial of contact with any school, it became clear that one of the most glaring needs was for teacher training, specifically for Hebrew/Judaica teachers. To this end, I set up a pilot program for one of the schools' three branches, delivering a series of five workshops to the Hebrew/Judaica resource teachers over the course of the winter and spring terms. My focus was on weaving practical intervention techniques into a theoretical framework. These workshops will continue in the fall.

Many services and resources exist already in the community. Jewish Vocational Service has a long history of providing psycho-educational assessment and remediation services to the day schools. Jewish Family and Child Service also has a presence in the schools. Many schools also have their own internal teams. In the supplementary school system, there are a handful of programs for children with special needs. Toronto boasts a unique institution in the form of the Abraham Shore Academy She'arim Hebrew Day School exclusively for children with learning disabilities and ADHD. This community school, which

accommodates students from grades one to eight, operates on the educational philosophy of Israeli psychologist Reuven Feuerstein. Many children are integrated back into the day school system upon leaving She'arim. Toronto's community Hebrew academy C.H.A.T., has been in the forefront by setting up a modified program for She'arim graduates and others needing some both assistance and a smaller class setting at the outset of their high school experience. For multi-handicapped children, the Zareinu school and therapeutic center services infants and elementary school-age children. The Diamond Adolescent Center is a mental health treatment center and a special education school. The center works both individually with teens as well as with their families on behavior and emotional issues. The Reena Foundation is both a community residential and day facility providing programs and services for adults with developmental delay.

There are still many things to be accomplished and many areas in which to take initiative. My own personal goals include setting up a center for the remediation staffs of the various schools, complete with materials and resources. Regular group meetings with the resource staff members, to explore common issues, and develop strategies for individual or classroom use, would be part of such an endeavor. Expanding services for special needs children in the school system, parent and family programs for training specific approaches to assist children with difficulties, volunteer and "shadow" training programs, extending teacher training programs, all these are issues of immediate importance. The arrangement of these and other possible programs in priority order will be decided on in consultation with the special education committee. There is indeed much to be done.

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Washington, DC

The Special Needs Department of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington continued to offer a wide range of services to support students, par-

ents and professionals in the field of special education.

Early Childhood Services

The BJE Early Childhood Special Needs Consultant, Mara Bier, provided an array of services including staff in-service workshops, parent and teacher effectiveness training courses, and identification and referral of children who may have developmental lags or other academic, behavioral or physical issues that would benefit from early intervention. Because of an increase in the number of children with special needs attending our preschools in the past year much of Mara's work was devoted to working closely with the educational team established for each child which often included the parents, teachers, shadow teacher, O.T., and speech and language therapist. She also worked to assist special needs preschoolers as they transitioned into various kindergarten programs.

Additionally, Mara worked with the Adas Israel Gan Hayeled Preschool to secure a grant from Zero to Three. This money was used to increase special needs services to individual students, provide on-site O.T. consultation to staff on a monthly basis, provide increase the number of special needs workshops and to establish a special needs parent and child library. Mara continued to work closely with the early childhood directors during the course of the year and conducted a two-day director's retreat focusing on special needs topics.

Day School Services

The Day School Learning Specialists Network was established this year to provide an opportunity for professionals at area schools to collaborate, problem-solve and share information on an ongoing basis. The Day School Parent Support Group which is cosponsored with the Jewish Social Service Agency met monthly and gave parents of students with special learning needs the opportunity to hear speakers and to network with each other. A pilot program developed in conjunction with Montgomery County Public Schools began in September at one day school to provide on-site speech and language therapy for coded students. In addition, professional developmental opportunities for secular and Judaic teachers included a series of four seminars: "Working with the Child with Attention Deficit Disorder," "From Description to Prescription: Informal Assessment to

Accommodations in the Classroom," "The Conundrum of the Gifted/Learning Disabled Student" and, "Integrating Technology and Curriculum for Students with Special Learning Needs." Additionally, a two day seminar with three follow-up sessions was offered at the end of June entitled "Reaching and Teaching Children with Learning Disabilities in Day and Supplementary Schools." SULAM, a new community wide day school program for students with multiple disabilities was began its pilot program and currently has six students at one day school in the Washington area.

Supplementary Schools

Sara Rubinow Simon is continuing her work as a Field Services Consultant with teachers and educational directors at area supplementary schools. She makes on-site classroom observations and offers both verbal and written feedback to school professionals. The Sh'lom Kitah mentoring program continues to train teachers to integrate students with special learning needs in their congregational schools. Eleven teachers and ten mentors are participating in this year's program. The program included individual clinical supervision and group seminars. Participating schools, teachers and mentors received financial incentives for their participation in this program. Teachers from last year's Sh'lom Kitah program have continued their training by attending the series of professional workshops mentioned previously. Additional area schools have hired learning specialists to work with students that have special learning needs in their congregation.

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JESNA

JESNA's website (www.jesna.org) continues to grow. Resources for special needs education, including downloadable copies of the *Newsletter*, can be found under the Consortium area, under "Networks." We encourage you to help us build on this resource by submitting links to other special needs-related websites for possible inclusion. As always, we invite new Consortium members to join the Consortium's email discussion list. Contact Caren for more information.

We were pleased to have arranged with Sh'ma to distribute their December issue on Jews with special needs to Consortium members, the Association of Directors of Central Agencies for Jewish Education (ADCA), and federation executives. Sara Rubinow Simon and Shana Erenberg contributed articles to this issue.

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Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education *Call for Action*

In recognition of the obligation to provide a religious education for all Jewish persons with special needs, the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education, in conjunction with, JESNA, the Jewish Education Service of North America urges all Jewish communities throughout North America to develop and support systems to:

- identify Jewish persons with special needs including individuals with developmental, learning, behavioral, neurological, physical, medical, and sensory disabilities;
- deliver Jewish educational services to special persons that will enhance and enrich their Jewish lives and those of their families. Such services include special educational programming in early childhood; day and supplementary schools; continuing adult education programs; and programs in residential, social/recreational and camping settings;
- explore various funding sources for the provision of the aforementioned services through federal, state and local government entitlements and foundations as well as local community and private sources.

The Consortium, in conjunction with JESNA, endorses this proactive approach to provide services to Jewish individuals with special needs. "It is enough that an individual is disabled. Let us not disable him or her as a Jew as well."

Keep Your Community Informed

Additional copies of the *Newsletter* are available for task forces, lay people, and other community groups. For additional copies, please contact Judith Goldstein at JESNA:
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CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

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