

More Jewish children receive their formal Jewish education in congregational schools than in any other venue. To succeed, these schools need leaders who are well-equipped to develop vibrant cultures of Jewish learning, articulate clear goals accompanied by concrete activities, build effective lay-professional teams, and translate Judaism into educational experiences that engage children and their parents ever more actively in Jewish life.

A \$1.8 million dollar grant has established the groundbreaking Leadership Institute for Congregational School Principals (LICSP), a joint project of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) and The Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS). Initiated by UJA-Federation of New York's Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal (CoJIR), this grant marks an important trans-denominational effort to

and Conservative Movements of Judaism, respectively – share the Commission's belief that strengthening the educational leadership of congregational schools is vital to transmitting Jewish identity and knowledge, building Jewish community, and continuing development of Jewish education as a professional field. We are grateful for UJA-Federation of New York's recognition of the need for continuing education for Jewish educators and its investment of human and financial resources toward this visionary project.”

“The Leadership Institute summer seminar was an inspiring and fulfilling two weeks – the best professional development I have been involved with in all my years of Jewish educational leadership. The barriers of Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Orthodox were significantly lowered, and we were all able to come together for the sake of study and development in a truly meaningful way.”

Yonni Wattenmaker, NYSOE '96, LICSP Mentor; Director of Education at Temple Shaaray Tefila of Northern Westchester, Bedford Corners, NY.

Connecticut, and Pennsylvania area. Forty

and support they need to excel in their profession, we believe the institute will improve the landscape of congregational education in New York and beyond.”

The mission of the Institute is to build leadership capacity in Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist congregational and communal schools serving nearly 35,000 students in New York, Long Island and Westchester, as well as in schools in the greater New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania area. Forty

Transforming Jewish Educational Leaders: The Trans-Denominational Leadership Institute for Congregational School Principals

**Jean Bloch
Rosensaft**

address the need for professional growth in Jewish educational leadership. The mission of the Institute is to ensure that congregational school principals master critical competencies in the core areas of Judaism, leadership, and pedagogy, and develop the attitudes and skills for further professional development.

In launching this initiative, Rabbi David Ellenson, HUC-JIR President, and Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of JTS, express a resounding affirmation of the concept of *klal yisraek*: “HUC-JIR and JTS will approach this Institute with mutual respect, a shared inquiry into the commonalities and differences between the movements, and a commitment to early resolution of potentially problematic issues. Furthermore, HUC-JIR and JTS – institutions training the professional leadership for the Reform

“We are delighted to support the groundbreaking partnership between Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Jewish Theological Seminary,” adds Alisa Rubin Kurshan, Vice President, Strategic Planning and Organizational Resources, UJA-Federation of New York. “The Leadership Institute for Congregational School Principals is an exemplary collaborative initiative that will have a major impact on the quality of education Jewish children receive through congregational schools. By providing principals with the education, resources, skills,

congregational school directors have been selected for the two-year program.

The curriculum stands on three pillars of success: Leadership, Judaism, and Pedagogy. The Leadership curriculum (vision and reflective practice, school management, cul-

ture of the school and congregation, process of change, lay-professional relationships) is designed to strengthen the professional identity and effectiveness of educational leaders by introducing the current research on educational leadership and practicing leadership skills. The Judaica curriculum (text study, theology, ideology, role mod-

“I feel so fortunate to be participating in this Institute. After the initial two-week seminar, I am energized and infused with new perspectives and strategies to apply to my congregational school.”

Mason Voit, Director of Education and Jewish Family Life, Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale, Bronx, NY.

eling, personal religious growth, building a community of learners) is structured to empower congregational school principals to communicate and infuse Jewish values, skills, and practices in their schools effectively and consistently. The Pedagogy curriculum (curriculum and instruction, supervision and mentoring, professional development, action research) is devised to enhance the identity and effectiveness of congregational school principals as mentors by introducing current research on learning and practicing critical supervisory and pedagogical skills.

“All of our seminars and symposia are carefully crafted to provide models of excellence in Jewish education with the intent for possible replication in the forty schools,” explains Evie Rotstein, LICSP Project Director. “One of the special outcomes of this program has been the gathering of ‘expert educational

HUC-JIR’s New York School of Education. “The building was filled with voices of people teaching and learning, connecting and networking, and sharing feelings of good will. The congregational principals, mentors, and faculty looked forward to each day as a new opportunity to learn from one another. Time and again, we saw principals and mentors, from across move-

ment lines, studying together and planning ways that would keep them connected as cherished colleagues in the future. It was a unique learning experience that far exceeded our expectations.”

The LICSP represents transdenominational cooperation at its best. “We all marveled at the prayer experiences developed by the Institute mentors, which modeled positive educational and emotional prayer experi-

ences for students in synagogue schools from Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist points of view,” says Dr. Steve M. Brown, Dean, William Davidson

Graduate School of Education and Director, Melton Research Center for Jewish Education at JTS. “Each of us learned from the others, developing a wider vision of what we can accomplish in the synagogue school. The synergism of mentors, faculty, HUC-JIR-JTS staff and leadership has made for one of the most successful part-

“This program further inspires the love and passion we all share regarding Jewish education. It has given us a golden opportunity to excel through visioning, culture, embracing change, reflective practice, text study, and mentoring in order to make positive, long-lasting changes in the way we affectively educate Jewish children and their families.”

Richard Zemser, Mentor; Director of Education, Central Synagogue of Nassau County, Rockville Centre, NY

nerships I have ever had the privilege of entering.”

“In January, the principals will attend a 6-day seminar in Israel, placing Israel education at the heart of the curriculum and modeling the central place it should hold in Jewish education and congregational schools,” explains Aviva Schwartz, LICSP Program Associate. In April, they will convene with the rabbis and lay leaders of their respective congregations to explore the issue of building *Brit Kodesh* – professional/lay relationships. In addition,

they will participate in eight 1- and 2-day skill-building workshops and four site visits to successful congregational schools throughout the two-year program. Each participant will fulfill the requirements of an approved Individual Education Plan and undertake a funded change project within their school. The program will conclude with a *siyyum* (conference) at JTS, at which principals who have met all of the Leadership Institute requirements will receive a personalized certificate of completion.

The core faculty is drawn from the scholars and educators at JTS and HUC-JIR. UJA-Federation staff provide training in professional-lay relationships and grant writing for education projects. An Advisory Board

(comprised of scholars in Jewish education and Judaic studies from HUC-JIR and JTS, congregational educational leaders as mentors, congregational rabbis and cantors, synagogue lay leaders, and UJA-Federation of New York representatives) is advising on trends and new developments in research, training, and scholarship. ■

“Community is a basic currency of Judaism and a vital predicate to education. This Institute has done so much already to bring my shul, my school, and me into the larger environment of Jewish community at a critical point for my synagogue and for me in my role as educator here.”

Connie Heymann, Principal, The Hebrew Tabernacle, New York, NY



leaders’ in the field to serve as mentors. Their energy and enthusiasm in the design and implementation of the Institute has provided our participants with quality role models who work collaboratively to support growth and change.”

LICSP participants completed the first of two intensive 10-day summer seminars this past July, focusing on *Crafting a Vision, Reflective Practice, Role Clarification, Strategic Planning, Best Practices, Communal Change, Team Building, and School Transformation*. Through lectures and panel discussions, case study analyses, text study, worship services, arts experiences, and meetings with mentors, the principals, mentors, and faculty bonded as a learning community. “It was exhilarating to be here during the Summer Institute,” says Jo Kay, Director of