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Response to Lee Shulman's keynote address
"Where Novelty and Routine Collide:
From the Formation of Understanding
to the Formation of Identity in the Process of Education"
Network Conference for Jewish Day School Leaders
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Thank you.

Every year,
in the world of general education scholarship,
there is an annual conference called
the American Education Research Association Conference.
The conference is massive,
with 10,000 attendees and
a session program, printed on newsprint,
about an inch and a half thick.

I remember
when I was an aspiring scholar in that world,
there were certain people
whose work and names were known intimately,
but only on the page.
Young researchers would come to the AERA conference and say,
"oh...that's not how I pictured Howard Gardner" or
"that's exactly what I imagined Ted Sizer would look like."
I remember the first time my colleagues—my friends—and I
saw Lee Shulman making his way
through the crowded hall of one of the conference hotels.
We whispered excitedly:
"There he is! That's him! That's Lee Shulman!"
And we stopped and gaped, in awe,
as if we were teenagers at the mall,
watching Bruce Springsteen come out of The Gap.

Lee Shulman is truly a giant,
an elder statesman in the field of education.

A rock star.

When I crossed over from general education to Jewish education,
I didn't know I'd find him here,
devoting his extraordinary talents, experience, and passion
to our field of Jewish education.
Tonight we are in the presence of greatness,
and I know I speak for myself,
my colleague Harlene Winnick Appelman,
and all of us here,
when I Thank You, Lee, sincerely,
for your leadership, your big ideas,
your commitment, your kindness, and
your generosity in contributing to the efforts
of Jewish day school education.

As we heard tonight, Lee Shulman teaches us
that 2 features or modalities of Jewish education—
the *dvar Torah* and *Machloket*—
can be understood as, what he calls,
“signature pedagogies” of Jewish education.
These signature pedagogies can result in
certain cognitive outcomes—“habits of mind,”
practical or experiential outcomes—“habits of practice,” and
emotional or ethical outcomes—“habits of the heart.”
And these habits can lead to identity formation.
And, in fact, the Jewish students in Jewish day schools
grapple with the formation of multiple identities.
Shulman further teaches us
that multiple identity formation should be an educational goal,
and so we must develop the appropriate pedagogies.

This formulation is both original and extremely useful
as we consider our aspirations for our students in North America
and our dreams for the Jewish People in the 21st Century.
For sure, this formulation,
if we are to see it through to its full potential,
requires great teachers and great leadership.
But I think it also requires something more.
It requires that we take a stand about what we really want for our students.
That we can clearly and unapologetically
articulate our hopes and dreams for them,
even if they can't all be reached,
and that we lead our schools and our teachers and our students—
and empower them to lead us—
toward the realization of those dreams.

In his book, *Growing Minds: On Becoming a Teacher*,
Herbert Kohl tells a powerful story:
He is tutoring a student.
A black high school basketball player
who is struggling to learn to read.
The boy tries. He stumbles. He is frustrated.
He is ashamed. He is angry.
He slams his book shut, and with a sweep of his long arm,
he swats at Kohl's latest manuscript.
Pages fly everywhere, like a small tornado in the office.
Kohl is furious, and he starts to shout.
The boy is shaken by Kohl's response, and moves to collect the papers.
Kohl forbids him to touch the pages,
Telling him that he no longer trusts the boy.
Kohl tells him that next to his family,
Nothing means more to him than words on a page.
Kohl writes of this incident,
"Next to the people that I love,
my manuscripts are the most important things in my life...
Books and writing are not
small school things for me but central to life and understanding.
I told the boy that it was no joke not to be able to read.
That it was a form of poverty.
And that he didn't have a right to not read."

Kohl meant that reading is an essential skill, yes.
But he meant more than that:
he said reading is central to life and understanding.
That learning to read was the boy's obligation.
He was bound to do so.
It was a moral imperative.
He would simply have to learn to read if he expected
anything of meaning or consequence to follow.
Illiteracy is poverty,
and the boy did not have the right to pass that on.

I think this is an extraordinarily powerful story
about an educator's aspirations for his student
And about teachers' and learners' obligations to the world.

What is the analog in Jewish education?

I submit, as we probably all do,
that our students need a Jewish education
that enables them to think about themselves,
their people, and their G-d
in a way that is uniquely and beautifully Jewish.

They need an education
that enables them to live the simple rhythms of their day and their year in a way that is, again,
inimitably and magnificently Jewish.

They need a Jewish education
that is substantive and relevant
to their modern lives in the Digital Age.

They need an education
that relies on the wisdom and grandeur
of the texts that have guided our people through centuries, and
they need to be able to see these ancient texts
as guides for their own lives.

They need an education that illuminates the
glorious and difficult Jewish past
as a way to light the way in our present and for our future.

They need an education
that secures the continuity of our people
so that we may continue
to create our story and tell it to the world,
and so that we can enrich the world
through our participation.

They need an education
aimed at promoting the notion of *klal Yisrael*,
where Jews around the world are connected to and care for each other
across geographical, generational, class, race, and ideological differences.

But what does this really look like in schools?
Are we willing to place our stake in the ground
regarding Jewish literacy;
religious engagement;
and Jewish Peoplehood and the connection to the modern state of Israel?

Can we declare these aspirations loudly,
Or must they remain secrets we keep in our hearts?

I'd like to suggest the following specific and unapologetic
aspirations for our schools and the graduates they produce.
Much of this will sound quite familiar,
because, in fact, it is what we aspire to everyday.
But I articulate a whole set of aspirations here
so that we can begin to place these aspirations
in the framework Lee Shulman has provided.
As you hear this full articulation of aspirations,
consider how the signature pedagogies of Jewish education
or the primary pedagogies in your schools
lead to a set of "habits of mind, hand, and heart,"
which in turn lead to identity formation.
If we accept all or some of these aspirations
and place them within Lee Shulman's framework,
consider the implications for teachers,
teaching practice, curriculum development, and school leadership.

The aspirations to consider are the following:

- That Jewish day school graduates are knowledgeable about ancient and modern Jewish history and conversant in modern Hebrew.
- That graduates appreciate the significance of the State of Israel and her centrality for Jews everywhere.
- That graduates feel themselves part of a distinctive People who share a common heritage, history, culture, religion, language and homeland, and these connections will create for them a unique bond to and inspire a sense of responsibility for Jews around the world.
- That Jewish day school graduates continue a tradition of independent study of biblical and rabbinic texts, ideally in Hebrew.
- That they appreciate the sacredness of those texts and the texts' role in our People's timeless grappling with theological, spiritual, existential and practical questions.

- That graduates are guided by Jewish values and *mitzvot* that are integrated into all aspects of their 21st Century lives, and that they become adults committed to lifelong Jewish intellectual and spiritual growth.
- That they take responsibility for transmitting their Jewish heritage to future generations, engaging in and/or leading the Jewish community
- That they bring a Jewish voice and Jewish values into the discourse of humankind.

And finally,
 all of these aspirations are pursued in a Jewish educational context
 that includes, quite explicitly,
 joyful participation, physical enactment,
 positive socialization, and leadership development.

I stress that this intensive and immersive educational experience
 is an aspiration for Jewish students of all types and ideologies
 so that a literate and committed core can exist
 within all Jewish denominations.

Lucky for me,
 I am the respondent and not the keynote,
 so my job is not to provide you
 with original theories or brilliant conclusions,
 but, instead,
 to connect a theoretical framework to our practical concerns, and
 pose some questions
 for you to take with you
 into the final day of the conference
 and for you to consider as you reflect
 on your experience here.

Here are the questions:

- What are your specific and unapologetic aspirations for the graduates of your school?
- Are these aspirations, as Kohl said of reading, “not small school things, but central to life and understanding?”
- What “habits of mind,” “habits of practice,” and “habits of the heart” does the pursuit of your aspirations imply?

- As you pursue the aspirations,
what identity or multiple identities
do you hope your students will develop?
- What pedagogies of multiple identity formation are required?
- And what does this all mean for teaching and for leadership?

To me, these are the next great questions for us to tackle.

It is my true belief from my work in this field—
and it was affirmed in the last two days at this conference—
that we are up to the challenge.

And this is **not** “a small school thing.

It is central to life and understanding.”

And it is central to creating
a literate, committed, connected core to lead the Jewish People.

I am thankful that we have Lee Shulman
and other great thinkers and visionaries—
including all of you—
to journey with us into our glorious Jewish future.

THANK YOU