

How Schools Enact Their Jewish Missions
20 Case Studies of Jewish Day Schools

A Project of the AVI CHAI Foundation

Jewish Learning by Design

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A visitor arriving at the Carmel Academy in Greenwich, Connecticut on a day in late January would expect to find frenzied activity in every classroom, with teachers rushing to cover as much ground as possible. It is, after all, a mere three weeks since classes resumed after the long Christmas break and but a few weeks removed from another week-long school break during Presidents' Week. What can be more precious to a day school (where every hour of the day is an irreplaceable commodity) than an uninterrupted week of sustained study? And yet, on not one but two days in January, every single full-time Jewish studies staff member was absent from the classroom and had been replaced by substitutes.

And what occupied the Jewish studies teachers? They were engaged in a two-day workshop, one of four such marathons that will take them out of the classroom over the school year. As she explained the goals of the workshop, Dr. Tali Aldouby-Schuck, Director of Professional Development and Jewish Studies Curriculum at Carmel, noted the oddity of the entire enterprise, designed as it is to pull educators away from the minutiae of their day-to-day teaching and to look at big picture questions. "The essential question: What am I here for?" she said, quoting Abraham Joshua Heschel, "and second: How can we evoke a sense of wonder in our students?" Over the span of a year, the dozen Jewish studies teachers will oscillate between engaging with the large questions of purpose — What are our goals for our students? — and the practical — How do we engage them in learning and spark their curiosity?

Their guide in this inquiry is Rabbi Sheryl Katzman, an educational consultant for the Standards and Benchmarks project housed at the Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary and funded by The AVI CHAI Foundation. Katzman begins by explaining, "The purpose of these days is to unpack our own thinking." The operative word here is "our." The workshop is designed to work on the individual level, helping each teacher understand his or her own guiding assumptions and pedagogical objectives, but ultimately it requires active conversation between teachers to help each other think through improved ways of delivering material to students.

For this process to work, teachers must engage with peers. Katzman warns, "You will never get the depth of

understanding about each piece of what you are teaching if you only sit alone in your room. You have to talk things through with colleagues." The guiding assumption of the project is that every teacher should understand what colleagues are doing in other grades. Hence, teachers of 2nd graders are seated alongside 7th grade teachers, so that each will develop a sense of the entire trajectory their students travel during their time in lower and middle school at Carmel. By seeing the curriculum as an eight or nine-year arc (or "spiral," a term frequently heard in the school), rather than as a single year's set of goals, all teachers can work more effectively to produce the ideal Carmel graduate.

In broad brushstrokes, the four two-day seminars are organized as follows. The first session is devoted to working with teachers on their overall goals for students. What are the skills and content knowledge we want our students to acquire? The second asks teachers to develop assessment tools to judge how well their goals have been met. The third pushes teachers to consider how they arrive at their goals and engage in effective instruction. (This was the workshop observed.) And the final session would deal with a review of curricula and the changes teachers wish to make in light of the year's work. Teacher input and ownership is an essential piece of the overall process. The standards and benchmarks come alive as the teachers are challenged to create and refine units of study tailored to their students.

If this sounds abstract, Katzman works hard with the teachers to ground their big-picture thinking in the realities of classroom life. By the end of the two days, teachers will have developed their own new teaching unit focused on the Scroll of Esther, which they will present to each other during the workshop. Moreover, Katzman offers them strategies for keeping students engaged and insists they must be alert to how involved students are. She devotes time to reviewing research, comparing how much the average learner retains of material read, heard orally, discussed with others or actually taught to someone else. (The latter, it is thought, leads to a 95 percent retention rate, whereas merely 10 percent of what we read is retained.) What follows from this is a discussion of steps teachers must take to expose students to a variety of classroom experiences in order to increase the odds that new learning will be internalized.

This movement from the conceptual to a toolbox of techniques teachers can apply in the classroom is matched by a shifting set of interactions among the participants. Early on, they sit in small working groups to discuss a model instructional unit plan and are given a set of questions to answer: “What components of effective instruction can you find in this plan? What instructional techniques are used to engage students in the learning process? Where do you see evidence of selected benchmarks, big ideas and essential questions in the unit plan? Does this plan lead to mastery on the performance assessment? What makes this a unit plan and not a lesson plan?” Later in the day, teachers are assigned different partners to discuss how they themselves employ different techniques to introduce students to new material. And in still other settings, the focus returns to the individual student, so that teachers must consider how the same material can be presented in a differentiated manner to students who have their own styles of learning. Finally, teachers are challenged to personalize the learning experience for students and help them develop an affective connection to the material, to feel a sense of wonder about what they have learned.

What should be clear from this multilayered approach is that the workshop does not offer a simple menu of dos and don'ts, nor does it rely upon big-picture thinking without taking into account the changing atmospherics of the classroom, the different needs of students seated side-by-side, and also the varied styles of teachers. To add to the complexity of the process, the Standards and Benchmarks project currently focuses exclusively on *Tanakh* study, but the workshop included Hebrew

language teachers and instructors of *Mishnah* and *Gemara*. All are encouraged to apply the questions and methods to their own areas of specialty.

The two leaders of this process, Sheryl Katzman and Tali Aldouby-Schuck, are self-conscious about the complexity of their undertaking. They use humor to lighten the day's discussions and are more than happy that teachers tease them and each other good-naturedly. They are mindful of the undeniable reality that what they are asking of teachers is hard work. They are seeking to instill self-consciousness about the multiple planes upon which classroom teaching operates, and also asking seasoned teachers not only to jettison their tried-and-true lesson plans of the past, but to alter their approaches to teaching. Katzman concludes the first day by thanking the teachers for their openness to try something new and difficult, and for spending time looking at the larger questions removed from the day-to-day work in the classroom.

The reader undoubtedly will have noted that much of the process employed in this year-long seminar is drawn from prevailing thinking in American educational circles. The Standards and Benchmarks project is heavily indebted to the Understanding by Design approach to curriculum planning. The teaching is explicitly student-centered and attuned to differentiated learning styles. And the entire orientation toward intensive professional development work with the teaching staff draws upon models in general education. What was on display at the workshop was how *Tanakh* study meets cutting-edge 21st century American pedagogy. Without a doubt, this workshop for teacher learning was entirely by design.

None of what transpired on those days in January would have been possible without the clear educational vision that animates the Carmel Academy. And that vision begins at the top with the school's head, Nora Anderson. A seasoned teacher with years of experience as the assistant principal of several public schools, Anderson comes across as fiercely determined to lead her school to ever greater heights. More than once, she remarks upon working through the pain of letting teachers go, at times in mid-year, rather than tolerate individuals who

cannot or will not embrace the vision and practice of Carmel. Of the original staff she inherited when taking over the school a decade ago, only three teachers remain; quite a few of her own hires have also departed. These unpleasant experiences, though, are in the service of ambitiously high goals. If teachers are expected to revisit the larger aims of the school and rethink how they teach their classes, Nora Anderson expects no less of herself and her administrative staff.

When she arrived at the school, it was a recently-founded institution (Carmel opened its doors in September 1998 and Anderson arrived in 2003). Yet it already had a passionate commitment to developing the critical thinking capacities of students and a board leadership that had personally been educated in day schools, but intentionally sought to shape Carmel to be the kind of day school they had **not** attended: one that placed the learner at the center, defined its objectives clearly, and was open to self-improvement. Characteristically, Anderson is currently leading a self-study of the school that will survey alumni and ask teachers to critique candidly the educational management of the school.

Central to Anderson's mission is sharp clarity about what the school aims to accomplish overall and within each classroom. She makes a point of observing each and every class over the course of the year in order to gain first-hand access to what matters most to her: student learning. This preoccupation is available for all to see. A visit to the Carmel website reveals a detailed listing for each grade level and what students will learn in every course. Carmel announces its driving questions as follows:

1. *At the end of the day, what do our students need to come away knowing and being able to do as they complete any unit of study?*
2. *How will we know that the goals we set have been achieved?*
3. *How should we structure the learning to create the richest opportunities for student mastery?*

These challenging questions are asked about general studies classes; the same questions are posed about Jewish studies classes. Clarity of mission and goals, assessment, and individualized student learning opportunities are central to the school's self-understanding and apply equally to its Jewish studies offerings. Thus, while the Standards and Benchmarks process has furthered the clarification of the school's guiding questions, Carmel's preoccupation with big-picture questions has preceded the project and, in fact, is built into the school's DNA. So too is the preoccupation with curriculum and pedagogy. Nothing dramatizes this more than the administrative structure of Carmel. It no longer has lower school and upper school principals. Instead, the key middle management officers for

its educational program are two curriculum specialists who spend their time working with teachers. First, Nora Anderson hired Cindy Mann, a curriculum specialist with a Ph.D., to work with general studies teachers, including the world history teacher who includes material in her classes on Jewish history. And then she hired the same kind of expert for the Judaic studies side. Under Anderson's guidance, these specialists drive the school's quest for excellence in all its departments.

When Anderson assumed the leadership of Carmel in 2003, there were few curriculum documents and no process to create them. As much as she wanted to see well-developed curriculum statements, she could not proceed without ensuring a child-centric orientation. Anderson's philosophy of education focuses on the creation and implementation of a program which is both curriculum and child-centered at the same time. In addition, she brings a powerful and well-developed set of commitments — high expectations for all, ongoing professional development, an insistence on continuous improvement, a strong supervisory culture, and rigorous planning.

To implement her vision for the school, Anderson has assembled the kind of staff she believes the school required; in addition, she is ready to take risks and sometimes to fail. The Standards and Benchmarks project represents a powerful example of perseverance and vision; such a project does not happen of its own accord. The proof is that seven years earlier, Anderson signed on to the same project and, as she ruefully admits, the school failed to take full advantage of what the Standards and Benchmarks project offered because Carmel was not yet ready; she, herself, was still relatively new to the school and did not know the personnel well enough; she lacked the infrastructure to hold teachers accountable to respond constructively to the process; and the school did not yet have a strong enough curriculum. "If there is no product, then there is only conversation," she admits ruefully. But Anderson is a strong believer in patience, noting that educational change takes at least three to five years, and so she has brought the program back for a second try. This time, the school seems prepared, thanks to Anderson's strong visionary leadership, high standards, and openness to change and experimentation.

One can only imagine how some board members and parents have responded to the disappearance of the entire Jewish

studies faculty from classrooms for eight days over the course of the school year and the financial investment in the Standards and Benchmarks project. Anderson is adamant in countering opposition by asking parents whether they would seek the services of a dentist who never upgraded her knowledge of the field since graduating dental school or a tax specialist who never attends workshops in his field. Why, she asks, would we want our teachers to rely entirely on the fund of pedagogical know-how acquired during their years of training? Judging by the implantation of the Standards and Benchmarks Program, Anderson's argument carried the day.

Anderson's lieutenant on the Jewish studies side is the aforementioned Tali Aldouby-Schuck. She is a woman of unusual background. Having grown up in Israel, she is fluent in modern, Israeli Hebrew; having immigrated to the United States in her teen years, she also speaks flawless American English. This makes it easy for her to converse easily with both Israeli-born teachers and American staff members. She also discovered Jewish learning during her college years and worked hard to ratchet up her own Jewish literacy. This gives her the advantage of understanding the complexities of teaching about Jewish civilization to a student body completely integrated into American culture. And for her graduate studies, she completed doctoral work at New York University in Jewish education and Jewish studies, where she developed a strong interest in curriculum. She brought to Carmel a strong belief in listening carefully to what teachers are thinking and doing with regard to curriculum, thereby gaining their trust and willingness to embark on new projects. Aldouby-Schuck also worked for several years as a consultant for the Standards and Benchmarks project, learning first-hand about its approach. In fact, some thought was given to her heading up the Carmel process, since she knows the program as an insider; but she herself rejected the idea, favoring the input of an outsider like Sheryl Katzman who would bring a fresh set of eyes to Carmel.

When asked why the school invested in the Standards and Benchmarks process, Aldouby-Schuck candidly admits that a variety of factors pushed Carmel to rejoin the project. Pressure had built within the top educational leadership to develop a clearer overall vision of what the school wanted its graduates to leave with. This could only be accomplished through

sustained conversation with the teaching staff. A nudge toward more self-study also came from without during Carmel's recently completed accreditation process, which culminated with a strong recommendation by the accreditors to launch such an effort. And also from the outside, Carmel was experiencing heightened competitive pressure from neighboring day schools and concluded that it had to keep pace. At least three Orthodox day schools and one Schechter school operate within a half hour driving distance of Carmel. After growing its student population smartly over its first decade, Carmel had hit a ceiling when it reached 275 students and had been unable to increase enrollments further since the Great Recession hit in 2008.¹ All of these factors pushed the school to engage in self-study and to refine further its general and Jewish studies programs.

In addition, Aldouby-Schuck had her internal reasons for embracing the Standards and Benchmarks process. Beyond her own experience working for that project was a conviction she had developed that the teaching staff had much to gain. This is how she put it: "There are a small number of highly intuitive teachers who are so memorable and exciting that they carry students along. But this process is for all teachers and it raises their level. It gives teachers who are not so intuitive the chance to reflect on their teaching goals and methods in a far more self-conscious fashion. It raises their game." One does not have to engage in a long conversation with Aldouby-Schuck to realize that raising the game of the Jewish studies staff is one of her driving passions.

In fact, every Thursday, the entire Jewish studies staff is required to submit the next week's lesson plan to her for review. By her own admission, she does not comment on each one every single week, but she reviews them and does spend time talking with those teachers who in her view require attention and guidance. She meets biweekly with the entire Jewish studies staff to focus on teaching and curricular issues. She also

¹ Included in the Carmel enrollment figures are students in its PALS program, Providing Alternative Learning Strategies, which works with students who have learning disabilities. The program offers small classes capped at ten students and intensive work with trained special education teachers. Students in this program are integrated into the mainstream classes whenever they demonstrate a facility to keep up and are also given a special track of general and Jewish studies when they are not. Carmel is unusual as a Jewish day school for offering these opportunities.

works hard with teachers to insure their twice-a-school-year written assessments of students (called “anecdotal”) are not vague and congratulatory, but instead relate to specific benchmarks that have been established for assessing student progress. Needless to say, all of this is labor intensive.

Much of her work involves intensive interactions with individual teachers. As an example, she cites her work with a teacher who remarked on how difficult it is to learn and not to slide back to old ways of teaching. She stresses that this particular teacher has “magic in the classroom” and easily could have continued to rely on personal charisma to win students over. But from Aldouby-Schuck’s perspective, this is not enough. Students, she insists, have to develop skills to read Hebrew texts and to meet goals. Star teachers have to learn that they are “not the center of the classroom.” In her work with this teacher, she has focused on student learning, not “the show the teacher will put on.”

Aldouby-Schuck is quite aware of the constant balancing act she must perform. “In Jewish day schools you get sucked

into putting out fires and things you just have to do, and you easily lose your compass,” she laments. But as the key person responsible for upholding the larger Jewish educational vision, she simultaneously works on the big-picture questions, notes her supervisor, Nora Anderson. The latter commends Aldouby-Schuck for developing a common language among Jewish studies teachers to enable them to communicate with one another about their joint enterprise; for leading the staff to agree upon a common set of goals; for demonstrating to the teachers that they will benefit by coming on board in support of the common effort; and for weaving the various components together. Aldouby-Schuck herself describes her work as a kind of tight-rope act. “Everyone is very clear about where we want to get to. The goals are defined by Nora who sets the agenda. But we also need teachers to bring this all to life... The bottom line and vision is clear. But the process is always in motion. What makes it work is the relationship with teachers.”

But does it work? Is the classroom experience of students at Carmel enhanced by the strong investment in curriculum and professional development? In the absence of standardized testing in Judaic studies, our answers, of necessity, must be based upon observation of classes and conversations with teachers. To start with the former, a visitor to Carmel cannot but be struck by the strongly interactive quality of classes. Rather than limit themselves to frontal forms of instruction, Carmel’s teachers are constantly asking questions and spurring conversation with students and between them. It is evident that what students have to say is valued. This is not to suggest that the school does not also attend to skills and knowledge acquisition. Through 5th grade, Jewish studies classes are conducted in Hebrew (*ivrit b’ivrit*); in the middle school, Hebrew texts are read in the original, but class discussions are conducted in English. Like many other day schools, Carmel has decided that its students lack the conceptual and emotional vocabulary to render their thoughts in Hebrew, and therefore has opted for English language conversation. Still, Carmel students perform

well on the Hebrew portion of the so-called BJE exam, an entrance test administered to students planning to enroll in a Jewish day high school in the New York area.

Carmel is also distinguished among Community day schools for its commitment to teaching Rabbinics. Beginning in 5th grade, students are exposed to *Mishnah* study. And 7th and 8th grades learn *Gemara* three times a week, using the highly acclaimed *Gemara Berura* approach. Despite the protests of some parents that the *Gemara* classes come at the expense of other Jewish studies, such as *Tanakh*, the school in recent years has implemented the *Gemara* curriculum and has stood its ground. In this arena, the BJE results tell a different story: unsurprisingly in light of the school’s emphasis, Carmel graduates do not perform as well on the so-called *Bekiut* part of the examination, when they are tested for breadth of knowledge in *Tanakh* and *Gemara*, especially as compared to products of Orthodox day schools. This is not a minor matter, because close to half of Carmel graduates go on to study in Orthodox day high schools.

None of this should be surprising in light of the school's history and emphasis. Parents, let us recall, intentionally choose Carmel because they seek a school that inculcates critical thinking and does not focus its energies just on covering material and memorization. The entire orientation of Carmel is on posing big questions, on pausing to let students make what they learn part of themselves, and on fostering critical and conceptual thinking. Carmel has deliberately opted to make trade-offs between learning outcomes and is prepared to live with the consequences.

The trade-offs are vividly on display in *Mishnah* and *Gemara* classes we observed. In a 5th grade *Mishnah* class, students study from a binder of texts developed by the teacher herself. The focus is not on moving systematically through a series of consecutive chapters, but on learning a carefully selected set of *Mishnayot* related to Jewish holidays. The emphasis in class was on understanding the essential questions with which the *Tanaim* (rabbis of the *Mishnah*) were contending as the Oral Law developed. Conceptual issues, rather than covering ground, predominated. Similarly, a 7th grade *Gemara* class was focused on outlining the structure of a *sugya*, the basic unit of the Talmud. The teacher explained how such a unit logically flows and analyzed the types of questions that are likely to be present in a *sugya*. He repeatedly came back to the same question: In any *sugya*, where are the questions to be found and where are the answers? The language of instruction is English, though the Aramaic text is employed.

Reflecting on this class, Jeff Kelstein, the school psychologist who also teaches *Gemara* to 7th and 8th graders, concedes he is now approaching classes in a manner quite the opposite of how he had been taught. Whereas his own education stressed covering ever more ground and moving from page to page, he teaches with an eye to helping student understand how a *sugya* flows. His goal is to aid students to develop a confidence that they can understand the *Gemara* and relate to it as their own text. Working closely and regularly with Tali Aldouby-Schuck, he adopted the Understanding by Design approach. This helped him grasp where students were likely to encounter difficulties in comprehension. And utilizing what he learned in the Standards and Benchmarks program, he now takes far more time to answer student questions and to take detours

that will profit students in later classes. He has learned the value of repeating key words and clarifying how some terms in the *Gemara* have multiple meanings, thereby helping students understand how a term is used in different contexts.

Teachers of lower school students also trace specific ways professional development programs offered at Carmel have reshaped — and, in their view, raised the quality of — their work in the classroom. Anat Ankava, a 4th grade *Chumash* teacher, describes her efforts as focused on teaching text as something applicable to the lives of students. “We always ask about the skills we want them to master. And then we ask how we can help them develop those skills. But we also learn to ask questions to which there is no single answer. We developed a guide for students to help them arrive at the question that **they** wish to ask about the *pasuk*.” And what is the outcome of this sharper focus on reading skills and critical thinking? “I can see...that students can read without me. They now become independent readers. My students five years ago could not do this.”

Livia Bronstein, a 2nd and 3rd grade Judaics teacher, reports that, “We teach students how to be students. We teach them how to teach themselves, how to become independent learners. In recent years, we have far clearer lesson plans. The goals, skills, what you want out of the class, are clearly laid out. We have developed a new structure here.” Livia also reports that she uses multiple-intelligence approaches, including art pieces, reading, writing, drama, etc. “Students can shine in any area in which they feel comfortable.” She states that the difference between now and earlier in her ten-year career at Carmel is both a greater clarity about goals and a student-oriented classroom environment. “Students raise questions that amaze me. Students become the Bible commentators.” Why are students more excited about their classes today? “In the past, teachers posed the questions and students answered. Now it is flipped. Students are asking the interesting questions.... This new kind of teaching encourages students to be involved in the learning.”

Even as the Carmel Academy articulates to each member of the teaching staff what it expects of them, it is also mindful of the value-added dimension teachers contribute by drawing upon their own individual perspectives and experiences. Yonatan Shear, a middle school Rabbinitics instructor, describes

his own process of incorporating what he has learned from the professional development programs offered at Carmel with his training at Pardes, an educators' program in Jerusalem. Further evidence of the absence of lockstep conformity is provided by the school's Director of Jewish Living, Erica Sokoloff. To complement the strong emphasis on cognitive learning, she develops experiential education programs that draw together all the school's students. One year, before the holiday of Sukkot, school days were each devoted to different themes: wind, rain, the sky, and the *sukkah*. Science teachers help develop the content of these programs, which focus on the natural elements and ecology; the Judaic studies faculty help students decorate kites they will fly in the wind with individualized passages in the Bible. One year before the holiday of Shavuot, the children "built" Mt. Sinai: machines emitting smoke and thunderous noises were harnessed to envelop students in the awesome experience of revelation. This led some students to declare that they now "get it": they now understand that they "too stood at Sinai." Experiential education serves as a complement to the school's multi-pronged effort to help students connect with their learning in cognitive and affective ways, to make the material their own.

Carmel does not press its teachers to become clones of each other or of Tali Aldouby-Schuck, but it does encourage them to accommodate parts of what they have learned at Carmel to their own idiosyncratic teaching styles. "As a school we set parameters," Tali Aldouby-Schuck explains, "but within those parameters you can shape the teaching, if it is not at the expense of what the students need to know."

As a school that has existed for barely 15 years, Carmel lacks a long-term track-record. It cannot point to multiple generations of alumni who have made their mark on Jewish life. Instead, there are other markers of impact. Given her commitment to fostering a culture of self-reflection, Nora Anderson recently undertook a survey of alumni who graduated from the middle school during its first six years. The respondents, she reports, identified the three most important skills they had learned in the middle school as asking probing questions,

engaging in critical thinking, and developing leadership tools. Parents who completed a similar questionnaire mentioned the school's stress on teaching students to manage time effectively, the ability to ask questions, and thinking skills as central to the culture of Carmel Academy. Alumni also noted their disappointment that the key emphasis in their high schools was on teaching the straightforward meaning of the text (*psbat*), whereas they had been prepared at Carmel to pose new and open-ended questions. Here, then, was some confirmation of the school's success in communicating its values and aspirations to its students.

The ways teachers narrate their own trajectories of growth through collaborative and continuing learning provides still another measure of Carmel's impact — this time on its staff. Symptomatic of the way Nora Anderson and Tali Aldouby-Schuck operate, they used our observational visit to the school as a learning opportunity for teachers. Because we inquired specifically about what Carmel is doing to strengthen Jewish literacy, they led the faculty in discussions prior to our arrival designed to elicit clarity about what the teachers understood to be Jewish literacy.

The culture of the school so patiently cultivated by Nora Anderson and her educational specialists encourages self-reflection, continuing professional growth for teachers, and a commitment to asking big questions about purpose in order to ward off complacency and rote learning. Toward that end, Carmel signed on to the Standards and Benchmarks project, among its other initiatives in professional education. Other schools can find their own ways to develop greater self-consciousness about their learning goals, curriculum, and teaching practices in Jewish studies. What is so valuable about the Carmel experience is the model it offers for day schools to embrace excellence in the classroom as a non-negotiable expectation, and then to work patiently over the course of years to foster a culture committed to Jewish learning and literacy. The beneficiaries are both the students and the teachers, all of whom are expected to "raise their game."

Questions for Further Consideration:

1. How thoughtfully and self-consciously does your school ask about the student learning and affective outcomes it hopes to achieve in the realm of Jewish studies? Does each teacher have a personal set of goals for the year and for each unit studied, beyond covering ground? And do the teachers of different grades communicate with one another about their goals, so that an overall school agenda is explicitly articulated?
2. Nora Anderson describes how Carmel failed the first time it participated in the Standards and Benchmarks project because the school had not prepared the staff. What steps would your school have to take to ready itself for a wide-ranging reconsideration of how to strengthen Jewish literacy? What would be the building blocks that would have to be put in place, and how would the staff, the board, and the parent body be prepared?
3. How might the ongoing work with Judaics teachers, the weekly lesson plan review by a knowledgeable administrator, the biweekly staff meetings of the Jewish studies faculty, and the driving questions about purpose and implementation be applied in your school, albeit tailored to its unique culture? Is the Carmel approach only workable in a day school with a significant proportion of parents who demand that their children receive a well-designed Judaics education? Can it happen when a school does not have the chance to select its faculty with utmost care, as Carmel can since it draws upon New York-area teachers?
4. How much do you value the investment in teachers' professional development? Might it help your school with recruitment or in gaining an edge over the competition? Would parents like to see teachers have more professional development opportunities?