

Thoughts on Tuition Reduction, Fundraising, and Education

CHAIM LAUER

Over the past few years there has been much talk and some action addressing how to make Jewish education affordable. Most of the discussion has been about fundraising strategies for day schools. For example, George Hanus has proposed the 5% Plan which would allow people to create large permanent endowments by allotting a percentage of their wills to go for Jewish education. More recently, Alan Silverstein and Eugene Korn offered a community tuition support formula for day and synagogue schools at an American Jewish Committee forum. This formula, including contact time and other factors, would help provide an objective mechanism for community funding of day and synagogue schools.

Both fundraising and tuition support discussions are valuable, yet neither focuses adequately on the real issue of making quality education accessible to all and through different venues. This goal statement differs from the implicit assumptions of the others in two ways, by its:

- Addition of the operative concepts of quality and accessibility to affordability to assure that participants are getting something worth paying for; and by
- Focusing on the full continuum of education delivery — and not only day schools or formal education.

Accomplishing this expanded goal will require thinking “out of the box,” including re-visiting long-held positions. The purpose of this article is to push the discussion forward, generating debate and local action.

GOALS OF INCREASED FUNDING

Despite good intentions, solely concentrating on reducing tuition will boomerang by lowering the quality of Jewish education in the long run, not strengthening it. No one can say with any assurance that reducing tuition costs to parents will automatically improve the Jewish education for which they are paying, nor can anyone say that it is primarily tuition costs that keep marginal parents from enrolling their children. Furthermore, none of the discussions take into account the social and educational factors that can foster a quality educational environment and ongoing improvement. Any educationally sound funding program should, at minimum:

- Assure accessibility to a quality Jewish education for all Jews;
- Provide enriched Judaic and general studies programs, including those that meet the variety of needs and intelligences of all children;
- Address the growing teacher shortage by upgrading teacher salaries and benefits, improving recruitment strategies, and/or underwriting initial and ongoing teacher training;
- Support coordination of the necessary educational continuum of adult, family, early childhood, formal, informal, youth groups, camping, and Israel programming;
- Upgrade facilities; and,
- Foster the use of instructional technology.

However, having raised all of the preceding caveats, Silverstein and Korn's proposal to *develop constructive community funding formulas for schools as part of a comprehensive support package* should be seriously considered. While their suggestion of using Jewish contact time as the primary factor is useful, it is limited because contact time cannot be the only factor in a funding formula. [I can imagine the first round of debates on what constitutes Jewish contact time!! All schools? Which subjects? Any curricular restrictions? The debate will be as divisive and as difficult to resolve as an internal church-state issue.]

If the goal of these initiatives is *making quality Jewish education accessible*, additional questions should be asked, a variety of strategies should be suggested, and other factors should be considered. Some questions that will advance the deliberations include:

1. *Are there other community goals for supporting Jewish educational programs and institutions?* For example, much yeshiva and day school education takes a text-based and "liberal arts" approach. If, however, there is a long-term interest in some communities in assuring *parnasah* and helping families avoid welfare and/ or becoming drains on family services, shouldn't minimum levels of *general* education performance be required, and even vocational programming supported?

2. *Why do day schools appear to succeed?* Is it solely a factor of time in class, or is it also a matter of self-identification and consonance with the home? The latter suggests curricular and programmatic investment in a variety of family education projects, not only for day schools, but also especially for synagogue schools.

3. *Why is it that, all things being equal, some people do not send their children to day schools?* Is it primarily a function of finances? If so, why do so many send their kids to more expensive private schools? Has marketing to marginal parents ever worked for day school enrollment? Would discounts for new students be useful? These points should be considered, addressed, piloted, proved or disproved before we go to large-scale programming.

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING PARTICIPATION AND FINANCE

A variety of approaches to increase day school participation and/or financial resources for day schools can be considered. These include:

- Initially charge parents actual full tuition. Or,
- *Announce what it is.* Let people know what the real cost is. People value things that cost more.
- *Optional procedure:* After schools determine the full tuition (full cost / # of students), any parent may receive an automatic and unquestioned tuition reduction of \$X determined by the school by merely indicating their desire in writing, without undergoing the financial scrutiny that many find uncomfortable or demeaning. If they need or want more, they would pursue a more traditional scholarship application procedure.

Charging or announcing full tuition will:

- Provide facts and figures to clarify that the actual costs of day school education exceed tuition. Consequently, this will demonstrate that most students are, in effect, scholarship recipients. This may promote more support and effort from parents and grandparents, even after their children graduate.
- Help assure that if tuition is reduced (thereby reducing the burden on individual families), support from other sources is not concurrently reduced, which would be counter-productive.
- Underscore that paying for a child's education is actually a parental responsibility. Support from the larger community should only be seen as a last resort.

COMMUNITY FUNDING FORMULAS

A community funding formula is predicated primarily on the assumption that there is community interest in the *accessibility of quality Jewish education*. This suggests actions in a number of areas:

1. Develop scholarship or tuition reduction proce-

dures which ensure that no Jewish child is turned away for financial reasons alone.

2. Adopt supportive policy decisions such as:

- a. Revisiting and/or pursuing other resources, including government materials or transportation support, tax reductions, and/or vouchers;
- b. Establishing uniform community-wide scholarship procedures and parameters;
- c. Considering sibling discounts, either per school or by family across community;
- d. Defining Jewish contact time; and,
- e. Resolving whether and how the community requires some minimum curricular or performance standards.

3. Support quality teaching through recruitment stipends, subvented training, portable pensions, universal benefits, mentorships, etc.

4. Consider other possible eligibility factors to enable schools to participate in creating a formula for community funding initiatives, especially those including the automatic uncontested tuition reduction described above. For example:

- a. Analyze schools' scholarship histories for last three years as evidence of experience with scholarship administration and to minimize potential abuses;
- b. Require schools to raise a specific percentage of funds in order to maintain internal motivation and participation in the initiative;
- c. Offer incentives for school improvement, for example: X% for credentialed teachers; realistic continuing education and/or benefit funds that are recalibrated on a regular basis;
- d. Include students' achievement ratings as part of schools' eligibility to receive funding; and
- e. Make appropriate funding and educational accommodations for schools based on level of schools and types of students. This recognizes that high school education costs more than elementary grades; that schools with high special education or immigrant populations face added costs and challenges; and that early childhood programs should be given special

support as their impact ripples through the entire system from recruitment to better preparation.

This approach is clearly oriented toward day schools. Certain aspects, however, are also applicable to synagogue schools and youth groups for which other strategies should be considered. These might include re-establishing or experimenting with community or regional afternoon school systems. Regardless of the details, the thrust of the debate should not be about tuition reduction, but rather on how to make a quality Jewish education accessible to all Jews.

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Financial Resource Development: A Role for Central Agencies

CHAIM Y. BOTWINICK

INTRODUCTION

Funding Jewish education is at the top of the Jewish communal agenda. This represents an evolving awareness of the critical importance of Jewish education and its relationship to Jewish identity, continuity and affiliation on the part of Jewish communal leadership. It also presents challenging opportunities for institutions to think creatively and strategically about effective ways to articulate compelling cases for funding Jewish education programs and initiatives that are relevant, planful and, above all, responsive to unmet communal needs.

Traditionally, central agencies for Jewish education limited their activities to programs and services that were either programmatic or consultative in nature. Today however, central agencies are beginning to evolve into effective conduits for federation and foundation funding. Recently, the organized Jewish community is turning to central agencies to assist institutions in the areas of grantsmanship, donor cultivation, and financial resource development (FRD). As a result of their expanding and evolving roles in the area of FRD, central agencies currently influence the disbursement of close to \$340 million. This figure includes millions of dollars raised or leveraged through central agency advocacy, fund-raising and FRD efforts.¹

However, as fund-raising activities for Jewish education on the local, regional and national levels become more sophisticated, complex and competitive, central agencies are challenged to take on even greater FRD responsibilities. This will surely test their viability, effectiveness, leadership and vision.

The challenge for central agencies therefore is to equip themselves with the necessary human resources, expertise and leadership to support and promote future growth and success in this critical area.

SOCIAL PLANNING: THE CONTEXT FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

FRD "involves a systematized approach to the securing of more funds and services for Jewish educational programs."² Sometimes referred to as grantsmanship or development, FRD combines advocacy, lay leadership development, fund-raising, research into foundations and corporations, program development, and proposal writing.³ Effective FRD involves a holistic systems approach that begins with a social planning process, and a strategic planning focus that provides a priority-setting context for potential funders and funding sources.

Thus, effective FRD for Jewish education should be an outgrowth of a comprehensive social planning process. As such, a planful FRD campaign should *assess the needs, and determine objectives, costs and benefits of the service/program to be provided*. Such planning processes have recently been instrumental in capturing the interest and imaginations of major contributors.

EFFECTIVE FRD PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Most central agencies for Jewish education are either autonomous federation member agencies or actual federation entities. For this reason it is absolutely essential that central agencies forge FRD partnerships with their local federations. If the "bottom line" is raising addi-

tional dollars for Jewish education, it would be short sighted not to partner with the most effective fund-raising instrument in the Jewish world. The challenge lies in determining the most effective ways to effect this partnership.

One possible strategy is for central agencies and federations to jointly initiate coordinated communal efforts to raise funds specifically targeted to Jewish educational programs, projects and institutions.

The first step in this effort would be to establish a joint central agency/federation body, housed either at the federation or at the central agency, which would:

- Engage in a comprehensive FRD strategic plan;
- Oversee the planning, coordination and implementation of FRD initiatives on behalf of Jewish education in the community;
- Provide oversight guidance and policy in the areas of grantsmanship, agency-based proposal development, solicitation, foundation/donors cultivation and public/private foundations;
- Monitor and assess the progress of the central agency's FRD efforts on behalf of Jewish education in the community; and
- Promote and advocate for increased funding for Jewish education in the community.

Obviously, the success of this effort will depend on appropriate professional leadership and staffing, lay leadership engagement and commitment, a shared vision resulting from the strategic planning process, mutual trust and understanding; and a passion and commitment to make it work!

The nature and scope of the structure required for such strategic collaborative partnerships will vary from community to community. However, all must be based on true central agency-federation partnership.

Another possible strategy for central agencies and federations is to jointly convene a forum of local senior philanthropic leadership. This group would:

- Create a "common language" or "vocabulary" and a critical mass of funders for Jewish education;

- Introduce "major issues" or "big ideas/concepts" in Jewish education in consultation with national foundations and institutions;

- Discuss and debate what it would mean from a human, capital and financial perspective to have an organized Jewish community that takes Jewish education seriously;

- Assess or inventory the magnitude of private funding in support of Jewish education in the community;

- Compare and contrast federation endowment support versus funder independence, and determine ways in which to create a confluence between their support and independence; and

- Provide recognition in order to "give credit where credit is due."

Creating such a forum would enable the central agency and the federation jointly to develop a local funders group that is conversant with the major issues of Jewish education. This group could then: (a) embark on educational initiatives either individually or collaboratively, (b) be knowledgeable and competent evaluators of educational proposals they review for potential funding, and (c) create a critical mass of individuals who have both the resources and clout to influence the Jewish education agenda consistent with articulated communal priorities.

GETTING STARTED

As a first step toward establishing a central agency-based FRD program, the agency must differentiate between programs and initiatives that require *short-term* funding and those that require either permanent and/or *long-term* support. Doing so will determine whether an endowment or other funding mechanisms are required.

Paraphrasing "permanent dollars" resulting from an endowment is the ideal, in contrast to one-time-only "soft dollars" that continually require new sources of funding.

Once a "menu" of funding opportunities is compiled by means of a communal priority-setting process, the

agency will be ready to embark on a solicitation campaign. Depending on the structure of the agency and culture of the community, the solicitation team may be comprised of lay members of the agency board of directors, federation lay leadership, the agency director or a combination of the three. When submitting formal proposals the grant-writers must conduct research about the foundation's composition, goals and giving history. Knowledge and familiarity with potential funders, their interests and funding history are essential for successful solicitations. The potential for success is also greatly increased when at least one member of the team is personally acquainted with the potential donor.

Finally, the central agency director and/or an agency liaison should establish an ongoing professional relationship with the local federation endowment/foundation director. This will help the agency identify prospective donors and potential sources of funding. These relationships should be built upon trust and commitment to a shared vision—the essential ingredients for building an effective FRD effort in any environment.

POSTSCRIPT

This paper presents a contextual framework for the critical need for central agencies to build their capacities in the areas of fund-raising and FRD. Financial support for Jewish education must be further developed by means of a partnership between funders and leaders of central agencies for Jewish education.

Funders should come to see central agencies for Jewish education as key local agencies for planning and implementing such programs for the community. Central agencies must develop the experience, expertise and authority to manage communal processes (in partnership with their local federations) that will identify and prioritize the educational programs that the community requires. Funders should leverage their resources and independence to support bold, innovative projects. Together they will take the necessary risks to forge a mutually held vision that will sustain a healthy Jewish community well into the 21st century. The challenge is to think creatively and boldly about ways that central agencies can plan and implement effective financial resource development programs that are meaningful, relevant, vision-driven and, above all, responsive to communal needs.

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1 "Central Agencies Count." *Association of Directors of Central Agencies*, Fall, 2000.

2 Blum, Deborah Cardoza. "Resource Development for Jewish Education." *Jewish Education*, Vol 53, No. 4, Winter 1985, p.45.

3 *Ibid*.

What's a Funder to Do?

STEPHANIE GREEN

The big questions of Jewish education in America seem clear — What makes for an educated Jew, and therefore what are the Jewish educational needs of our local and national communities? Who will provide the services? How will the work be funded, and who will contribute? How do we set priorities given finite resources?

Within this set of broad questions, a relational question emerges, regarding the distinct roles, as well as the complementary roles, that central agencies, service providers, funders, and federations play in affecting the field of Jewish education. It is apparent that these groups make up an interdependent system, of which transparency and collaborative thought are critical. To that end, the goal of this article is to offer some gleanings on the independent funders' perspective, derived from work the Jewish Funders Network has done to organize funders of Jewish educational initiatives, facilitate discussions and collaborations among them, and strengthen their skills as grantmakers.

To be clear, the ideas presented here are a synthesis of what we have heard and seen in our work. They do not claim to reflect the thinking of all, although we do believe they are illustrative of some of the major issues of concern shared by many funders interested in Jewish education. In sharing these perspectives, our aims are two-fold. One, to inform other funders about this growing group of like-minded funders, in order to continue growing the collaborative process. Two, to illustrate to central agencies, service providers, and federations how independent philanthropists think and what they are thinking about regarding the field of Jewish education.

WHO ARE JEWISH "FUNDERS"?

At the Jewish Funders Network (JFN), a Jewish funder is defined by the philosophy of the giver, rather than the projects or programs supported by the funder. In other words, a Jewish funder is one who gives based on his/her Jewish values and ethics, whether to Jewish or secular causes. Who fits this description? Trustees from private and family foundations; professional staff of private, public, and supporting foundations; individuals or families with donor advised funds at community foundations, federation endowments, or public foundations; as well as single philanthropic individuals. Under such an umbrella, both independent funders/foundations and Jewish federations are equally considered "funders." However, for the purpose of illustrating the particular perspectives of *independent* philanthropists, when the term "funder" is used it refers exclusively to those grantmaking organizations outside of the annual campaign system of the federation.

Over the past few years, JFN has organized a Working Group of over 250 funders committed to Jewish educational issues. More recently, JFN sponsored a funders-only *Summit on Funding Jewish Education*, convening more than 85 funders, large and small, to address their roles in advancing the field. A diverse spectrum of interests was represented, fostering a cross-fertilization of ideas and approaches affecting the entire educational landscape, rather than a single piece of it. For 24 hours, participants grappled with "the big issues" affecting formal and informal education, offered new visions for educating Jews of all varieties, and challenged each other to give their money and minds to work toward these visions.

WHAT'S ON THEIR MINDS?

Asked to put on their creative thinking caps and unleash their imaginations, the breadth of issues and ideas that funders raised was incredible. Although impossible to detail everything, several significant areas of concern stand out as focal points where Jewish funders are seeking to address their energies. These concerns can be categorized into three priority areas: 1) Systemic Issues, 2) Unmet Needs and Population Groups, and 3) Tools for Strategic Education Grantmaking. For JFN, getting these issues on the table is a beginning, not an end, which will require continued commitment on the part of Jewish philanthropists and Jewish institutions to advance tangible goals, plans, and funding.

I. SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Advocacy for Increased Education Funding

There are two linked questions that funders broach in nearly every discussion related to the role of Jewish education in America. The first, at a time when participation in the "Jewish community" is viewed as voluntary and many people feel neither drawn to the community nor obligated by it, how is it possible to create a sense of communal priorities and obligations around Jewish education? The second, can/should funders act as advocates in encouraging other funders to support Jewish education?

Consideration should be given to developing a strategic approach for funders, practitioners, and Jewish communal organizations to jointly advocate for the values of Jewish education. In addition, more dollars will certainly bolster the Jewish educational system. However, at the Jewish Funders Network we feel strongly that affecting the scope, quality, and availability of Jewish education in America can be most closely and immediately accomplished through more *strategic* philanthropy. There are many funders working to affect educational change right now, supporting and seeding programs around the country, but the biggest obstacle to systemic change is that most funders do not know what else is being done, how to avoid wasting time and resources by reinventing the wheel, and how to find partners to tackle shared and complex challenges together. From this perspective, our principal goal is to improve the *quality*

of grantmaking being done, rather than just the *quantity* — to change the way funders, thinkers, and agencies interact, to focus on joint program planning from the outset, and to give philanthropists the tools they need to engage in this manner.

Organizational Effectiveness and High Performance Boards

Although funders often seek to replicate outstanding educational program models, organizational infrastructure should not be overlooked. Program innovation is only as strong as the supporting organization, and funders are beginning to identify ways to incorporate capacity building, consulting support, leadership and board development, evaluation, etc. into their grant allocations. *Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life*, is an example of a Jewish educational organization that frequently utilizes consulting services to improve its performance. In Hillel's case, consulting is provided in-house through its funder-supported *Campus Strategic Services Department*. Spurred in part by the current enthusiasm for "venture philanthropy" and the interest in incorporating business ethics into grantmaking, funders are now realizing that strategic philanthropy means grantmaking that will both help educational organizations, create good programs *and* do their work better. *The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE)*, a consortium of 12 funding partners, is making inroads in this area through the technical assistance it offers to day schools around the country. Some of the ideas proposed during the Summit to develop this approach include:

- Catalogue best practices and profiles of organizational leadership;
- Cultivate high performance professionals and professional development;
- Define standards of board excellence and the role of a good board member;
- Create an institute to train incoming boards of any Jewish educational group; and,
- Invest in evaluation, technical assistance, and strategic planning.

II. UNMET NEEDS AND POPULATION GROUPS

Incorporating the Arts

Involvement with the arts is often overlooked, as a potential venue for creative Jewish learning. Jewish artists are undervalued and underutilized in a community seeking creative educators. New definitions of "Jewish education" should include the creation of and interaction with Jewish arts and culture. In addition, many Jewish artists who may or may not be engaged in "Jewish" work, or the Jewish community, could be brought in to develop educational and artistic ventures exploring Jewish life and learning, and to create opportunities for the exploration of Jewish culture through the arts.

Informal and "Unconventional" Education

In June of 2000, UJA-Federation of New York released a study of Jewish identity formation, *Connections and Journeys*, researched and written by sociologist Dr. Bethamie Horowitz. The results of her study indicate that a host of factors affect people's decisions to engage Jewishly at various points in their lives. Because people respond to Jewish experiences differently and at different points in time, there is no single way to fashion an educated Jew. One of the critical lessons learned from these findings is that formal Jewish education (such as day schools), while effective, may not reach the majority of Jews. For this reason, we must develop a wide-array of choices and opportunities for people to connect Jewishly, particularly in the realm of adult education, as well as non-formal alternatives for youth, such as camping, the arts, youth and teen programs, etc.

People with Special Needs and Disabilities

The inclusion of individuals with special needs within the full spectrum of learning and participation in the Jewish community is a real need across the field. This issue is overdue for consideration on the national agenda. Many Jews with developmental and physical disabilities have fallen through the cracks or have been forced to look outside the Jewish community for programs and services. Funder advocates can spur organizations and institutions to think creatively about bridging gaps in Jewish education, recreation, congregational life and more, so that every individual may be included in all areas of Jewish life. Based upon discussions held during the Summit, the Manuel D. & Rhoda Mayerson

Foundation of Cincinnati is spearheading an effort to develop a national partnership of funders committed to serve as advocates for the full inclusion of people with special needs (ranging from disabilities to giftedness) and seek strategies to affect systemic change in this area.

Personnel

The dearth of qualified educators is one of the greatest challenges hindering the advancement of Jewish educational initiatives. This stems, in part, from lack of strong incentives to enter or stay within the field, such as poor salaries and benefit packages and few opportunities for ongoing professional development. Underpaid teachers reflect a Jewish community that undervalues the profession of teaching — a cultural mindset that must be shifted in order to attract talented individuals to the profession. The personnel shortage cuts across the field of education, from day school teachers and principals, to informal educators for youth and adults, to summer camp staff and youth group leaders. Paralleling the massive teacher shortages occurring in the secular public and private education sector, the Jewish education sector faces an even greater challenge in recruiting and training teachers with strong Judaic content knowledge. Specific local initiatives have been developed in some communities to begin addressing these concerns, and funders are beginning to organize nationally, as well. For example, the University of Judaism is developing a plan to create a "Jewish Teach for America" program that would seek to duplicate some of the successes of the secular, public school program Teach for America. To address this systemic concern, funders offered a variety of creative options at the Summit, among them:

- Fund salaries & endow Jewish teaching positions below the university level;
- Establish "Superfunds" for pension and life insurance benefits;
- Centralize services between schools, communities, and federations to share talents and costs of local personnel;
- Create ongoing professional development opportunities;
- Coordinate efforts locally, regionally, and nationally; and
- Introduce a National Jewish Educator Week.

III. TOOLS FOR STRATEGIC EDUCATION GRANTMAKING

Developing Collaborative Structures

The Jewish education challenges that lie ahead are large, complex and potentially daunting to smaller and mid-size foundations. In addition, the unique needs of smaller and more isolated Jewish communities demand special attention and consideration. Constructive change will require leveraging of funds, which necessitates new collaborations among smaller funders and geographic diversity. Local and regional funding partnerships, communication through new technologies, and national sharing of best practices will be important. Among the ideas suggested by funders:

- Commission a demographic study of Jewish educational needs in smaller and more geographically isolated communities (e.g. Southern states);
- Develop regional caucuses of funders, focused on particular educational concerns, to share challenges and successes and collaborate on solutions; and
- Include diverse geographic representation on national steering committees for educational initiatives.

Mapping the Field

No one wants to reinvent the wheel. There are many challenges yet to be met, but there are also numerous examples of successful programs in diverse educational arenas taking place around the country. Identifying and mapping current educational initiatives across the country is a necessary first step in order to build local and national models of "best practices." Funders were particularly captivated by JESNA's project to create a database of projects and initiatives around the country tied to Jewish education, which is searchable by keyword, geography, etc.

"Walking the Talk"

In order to promote the value of Jewish education, funders must make Jewish education a focal point in their own lives, speaking from a position of knowledge and strength. Jewish living, text study, and setting an ethical Jewish example are personal goals for funders to strive for. One idea proposed during the Summit, to develop a curriculum for Jewish funders on what the Jewish tradi-

tion teaches about philanthropy, is currently in development by the Jewish Funders Network and the Donors Forum of South Florida.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

There was a palpable energy felt during the 24 hours of the Summit on Funding Jewish Education, with the obvious next question being how to help the funding community build upon these ideas and move forward. Success requires continued creative thinking, energy, and commitment. More importantly, affecting real change demands a new model of partnership between funders, federations, service providers, and central agencies. Based on lessons learned from the Summit, we envision the facilitation of educational consortiums, which would address major needs in Jewish education. Some suggestions that might contribute to more effective collaborations include:

1. *Pick a single-issue.* Develop collaborations that are topical and focused on singular issues, rather than the field as a whole. While it is important to understand the interconnecting opportunities and demographics that make up the complete educational system, partnerships must be realistic in scope to accomplish significant change.
2. *Be inclusive.* Include all the relevant players in the game, *from the outset.* Whereas our current models of engagement are reactionary or exclusionary -- with practitioners and educators developing programs that are then "sold" to funders for support, or with an individual funder identifying a need and seeking to solve it on his/her own or with limited financial and/or organizational partners -- real change requires all parties to participate in assessing needs and developing strategies for change, working together to identify the role each can play in addressing the challenge.
3. *Empower funders.* Enable funders to take leadership around the issues. Giving funders a sense of ownership to act upon and advocate for the issues they feel passionately about will not only encourage a greater desire among funders to become as educated as possible about the issue in question, but will undoubtedly contribute to greater success in

impressing the legitimacy of the need to the overall community.

Collaborations amplify the voices of the educational community to put serious issues on the national Jewish agenda, and they enable funders to act more strategically by leveraging their dollars to impact large-scale change. The effort need not be daunting. We could begin locally, regionally, or even nationally. The General Assembly and the Jewish Funders Network National Conference offer two annual, national venues to bring together funders, providers, central agencies, and federations. In addition, national Jewish organizations like JFN and JESNA could help facilitate regional consortiums with the help of local federations, central agencies, and foundations. The energy and enthusiasm we see among funders (and federations, and central agencies, and providers) to contribute to the creation of a vibrant and viable Jewish educational system is inspiring. Our challenge is to grasp that momentum and move boldly forward.

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