

**SHIBBOLEY SCHECHTER:
A GATHERING OF IDEAS
FOR LAY AND PROFESSIONAL
DAY SCHOOL LEADERS**

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SOLOMON SCHECHTER DAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**

Taking Andrew Hargreaves' Charge to Heart

By Dr. Steven C. Lorch, Head of School, Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan

At the recent Solomon Schechter Day Schools Principals' Conference in Toronto, the heads and senior educational leadership of the movement were exposed to the views of Professor Andrew Hargreaves of the University of Toronto, one of the world's leading authorities on school leadership and educational change. Over the course of two days, Professor Hargreaves challenged our assumptions, raised our sights, and guided us to new and often inspiring insights about the nature and challenges of our work in our schools.

Based on Professor Hargreaves' presentations, I hope to identify in this article four key, but often neglected issues that cry out for careful attention in our schools: two that are primarily the province of heads of school, and two that are first and foremost the responsibility of board leaders. (Of course, by writing to heads in a periodical intended for board leaders as well as heads, and to board leaders in a forum in which heads participate, too, I am also attempting to promote mutual understanding, communication, and, ultimately, collaboration on these issues, while at the same time trying not to blur the lines of primary responsibility for each.)

Issues for Heads of School

1. Mind, Heart and Soul

One of Professor Hargreaves' key messages to us is that the traditional assumptions about school, and the structures and relationships within them, were developed at a time and in a societal context that were quite different from how we live today. Technology has changed, as have family structures, the world of work, and community norms, so that the childhood experiences of our students are vastly different from those of students even a generation ago.

Schools, too, must adapt to meet these changes and serve students who are the products of this changed reality, in two ways: first, they must promote learning for deep understanding, organize themselves around the principles and structures of systems theory, and use technology to maximize the sharing of data to enhance the process and quality of decision-making (which he termed "teaching for the knowledge society"). In addition, however, they need to promote social and emotional learning for self-understanding and empathy with others, organize themselves around structures that engender secure and sustained relationships, and use humanitarian and spiritual values to inform their decision-making and ongoing practice (which he termed "teaching beyond the knowledge society").

When Professor Hargreaves spoke about the culture of schools that take values seriously, he spoke from his own experience base of secular schools that promote humanitarian values influenced only indirectly by the rich framework of a religious tradition: confidence in one's abilities, openness to change, integrity and trust, commitment to an organization, being a good team member, and so on. Professor Hargreaves' list seems impoverished, almost banal, compared to a short list of core Jewish spiritual values: *k'dushah* (sanctity), *hovah* (obligation), *areivut* (mutual guarantorship), *mitzvah* (commandedness), and *tzedek* (justice, righteousness), for starters. How much richer the spiritual valence of our schools can be if only we relate to our core values, not as mere slogans, but as the deepest sources of ultimate meaning and value in our lives and the lives of our schools!

Do our students pay lip service to *t'filah* in our schools, or do we ensure that the experience and words of the prayers they recite every day are an endless source of theological, moral and existential inquiry and affirmation? Is community service a formal requirement to clock a number of hours a year, or a deep expression of *tzelem Elohim* (being created in the Divine image)? Do we as educational leaders openly and explicitly model for our communities such religious imperatives as being a *rodef shalom* (a pursuer of peace) in our interactions with others and in our political views, and expect our teachers to do the same for their students? If we gave concrete expression to this, a mere fraction of the spiritual wealth of our tradition, our students' social and emotional intelligence would be off the charts.

2. Sustaining Leadership

When Professor Hargreaves discussed with us the impact that we as heads and school leaders can have, he encouraged us to think beyond the innovations we could introduce or the lives of students or colleagues we might touch. He challenged us to think about our ability to transform an institution so profoundly that our influence lives on long after we have moved on, in the form of improvements that we weave so tightly into its very fabric that it would take malicious effort to dislodge them.

Making our schools better places than we found them when we first arrived on the scene – richer and more supportive learning environments for our students, more rewarding, challenging, and supportive working environments for our teachers, and more welcoming, secure, and inspiring communities for parents to participate in – is enough of a challenge for most of us, without confounding the matter with gnawing questions about the longevity and sustainability of the changes we put in place. Nevertheless, whether we asked for it or not, this is one of the key challenges Professor Hargreaves threw our way.

What might it mean, as he suggested, to think about the legacy we will leave to our school, not in our last year or two there, when we've already decided to move on, but from Day 1? What do we need to do to make the things that matter most to us in our school depend least on us and most on our colleagues who, we hope, will carry our shared initiatives forward once we are no longer there? Do we have sufficient capacity for *tzimtzum* (self-limitation) to strategically shine the spotlight on others,

even, or perhaps especially, for improvements that we personally identify with very deeply?

In response to this set of questions, another dilemma suggests itself and begs to be explored: if we were to take Professor Hargreaves' recommendation to heart and try to plan for change that can survive our own departure, how can we reconcile this aim with that of being a hands-on, visible and inspirational presence in our school? That is, how can we go about trying to maximize the personal influence we exert on our community as a role model (we are, after all, Jewish educators first and foremost!), knowing that, in the process, we may be compromising the longevity of our innovations once our tenure ends? Or, on the other hand, how can we throw ourselves wholeheartedly into the task of disentangling our personal style and personality from our most salient and – we hope – sustained initiatives, in full knowledge that this strategy runs the risk that the initiative itself may be less successful on account of our lack of personal, public and passionate identification with it?

And then, as we make career transitions and succeed one of our colleagues in a sister school, or watch as one of our colleagues takes over as head of a school we previously led, how shall we relate to the legacy of our predecessor, or to the new ideas of our successor? How much continuity with, and how much of a break from, one leader to the next strikes the proper balance? On the one hand, if we see our role as successor, or that of our own successor, to be mainly to preserve and strengthen that which went before, we underestimate the potential of every new head, ourselves included, to move the institution forward. On the other hand, if we conceptualize the role of the new head as that of change agent, how will the important legacy of the previous head be sustained? It is far easier to find the balanced turn of phrase – support and extend the good work of the previous head – than to strike the balance in practice, or even to think and feel about it in a balanced way.

Issues for Board Leaders

1. A Partnership of Shared Purposes

Probably the most memorable moment of the conference for most participants came in Professor Hargreaves' first session with us. It derived its power from both the nature of the activity and its message.

Professor Hargreaves led us in an exercise in which we clarified our views on the purposes of schooling – to what extent we believe that schools are supposed to serve the needs of society (for productive workers, for active citizens, for social justice and equality), or the needs of individuals (to be nurtured, to mature, to acquire knowledge, to grow morally and spiritually); and to what extent we believe that schools best achieve their purposes by being traditional in organization, curriculum, approaches to teaching and learning, and authority structures, or by being progressive. To signify our beliefs, and to take a public stand on them, he divided the room into four quadrants, as follows:

Humanist (traditional/individual)	Developmentalist (progressive/individual)
Social Efficiency (traditional/societal)	Social Meliorist (progressive/societal)

Each of us was then asked to get up and move to the location in the room that best represented our personal vision of the purposes of schooling.

Once we had made up our minds, we were asked how we felt the views of parents in our schools about aims and purposes would compare to our own. Without exception, every last one of us indicated that we felt parents would rate themselves significantly more conservative, or traditional, than we do.

Professor Hargreaves was quick to disagree with us. He claimed that, although he could not possibly know our individual situations, we were all most probably absolutely wrong. The reason educators tend to answer as we did, he went on to explain, is that parents are often anxious about whether their children are learning everything they need to know and that other children are learning in other schools, and so those are the issues they tend to raise with educators, and that's what educators hear them talking about most of the time. However, more fundamentally, parents usually agree with us about the purposes of education. After all, that's why they sent their children to our school in the first place, and that's why they keep them there year after year.

This appreciation of the underlying agreement between teachers and parents over the aims of education should be a source of reassurance to heads of school, but more often than not, it isn't. In too many schools, heads – and teachers – view themselves as being an embattled minority, standing against a group of parents and – yes, board members – whose vision of schooling differs from their own views significantly.

Imagine how hard it must be to do one's job when one constantly imagines that one's clients (read: parents) and boss (read: board) are critical of one's underlying assumptions about how to define the job that is to be done. Imagine how debilitating it must be to feel second-guessed at every turn. Of course, as Professor Hargreaves correctly observed, most heads and teachers are sorely mistaken in their perception. There is much more consensus than disagreement about the fundamental purposes and aims of schooling than heads imagine. But the perception persists, and helps to form the reality of the working environment of the head in all of our schools (remember: it wasn't only some, or even most, of the heads at the conference who got it wrong; it was all of us!).

What role might board leaders play in redrawing the inaccurate topography of their school that heads carry around in their minds all the time? If they wanted to, could they have an impact on their school community – first themselves, then their fellow board members, and finally the wider parent body – to be clearer in their communication with the professional staff of the school about the extent of their disagreements and agreements over what is going on within classrooms, behind the schoolhouse door? Might they succeed in convincing, or reminding the head, and encouraging the head to remind the teachers regularly, that whatever questions, or concerns, or anxieties parents may have, they are all there because they fundamentally believe in the school and what it stands for? Could they help the head keep things in perspective by bearing in mind that any disputes that arise are less about what the school says it should be doing than about how well the school

is accomplishing what everyone agrees it should be doing?

If board leaders can help heads change their perception of the range of basic beliefs they share with the broad constituency of the school, heads and teachers will feel more comfortable to invite parents into a partnership with them in their child's education. Heads and teachers need to be helped to appreciate that, by inviting parents in, there is really no risk that the school program is opening itself up to the possibility of radical rethinking and transformation; there is only the likelihood that individuals, parents and teachers, who agree about the big picture will bring mutually enriching perspectives to a conversation about methods of achieving that purpose.

2. Sustaining Leadership

Professor Hargreaves pointed out to us that "sustaining leadership" can be understood in two distinct ways. It can either refer to extending or lengthening the trajectory and influence of leadership and change, in the sense of "sustainability," as that term was first used in the context of economic development and environmental protection; or it can refer to nurturing and caring for the leader, in the sense of providing "sustenance." The first sense was the subject of his remarks that I summarized in the section above, on sustaining leadership addressed to school heads. This section, addressed to board leaders, will focus on the second sense of the term.

Heads need sustenance to succeed.

So there we were at Professor Hargreaves' third and final session, 40 heads and school leaders hearing that a critical task of schools is to look after our own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. And there we sat in discussion groups, working with typologies like "the empty principal" and "the paranoid principal," on the one hand, and "the learning principal" and "the reculturing principal," on the other, brainstorming how to avoid or overcome the negative, debilitating tendencies of the one and how to achieve or maximize the energizing, generative tendencies of the other. Each of us drew from a rich store of personal experiences with each of these typologies or tendencies that we had encountered in our careers, and sought to infer general principles of self-regulation and healthy balance at work and in our lives from our own stories and those of our colleagues.

The session evoked great interest and generated considerable energy from every quarter, but I couldn't help feeling, as I looked around the room, that the key partner was absent from these deliberations: you, the board leaders of our schools. There is undoubtedly a place for heads to consider how well they are looking after their own well-being in their demanding roles. After all, this is one of the implications of Hillel's familiar dictum: "*Im ein ani li, mi li?* (If I am not for myself, who will be for me?)" (*Avot* 1:14). But, at a more fundamental level, this is not their primary task, whereas it most assuredly is one of the board's main responsibilities: to support and look after the head's well-being.

Why, after all, does the most highly respected management

consulting firm in the independent school field, Independent School Management, advocate on behalf of creating a Head Support Committee as one of the very few standing committees of the board? What are the implications for board leaders of one of the most consistent research findings of Professor Hargreaves and others: that, time and again, one of the greatest obstacles to sustained school improvement is turnover in school leadership? What should board leaders learn from a landmark study of 50 primary schools in London by Peter Mortimore and colleagues, that the quality of education students received in schools with new heads (who had served three years or less in their role) was demonstrably inferior to that of schools with longer-serving heads (*School Matters*, 1988)?

What might board leaders do if they wished to undertake this head support role with the seriousness and resolve that they marshal for other critical strategic issues in their schools? For starters, they might ask the head to lay out in detail how s/he is, and isn't, looking after his or her personal well-being. They know the corners they are cutting, the health-promoting measures they are neglecting, the risky behavior they are engaged in, because the demands of their task seem overwhelming, even inhuman. Listen to them; assess whether the chances the head is taking are acceptable for the key player upon whom the entire educational program hinges; and decide how best to intervene and provide the necessary support for the head to attend to his or her well-being. In considering how to help the head, some or all of the following questions may be appropriate: What responsibilities that the head assumes are his or her personal responsibility can s/he be convinced to delegate? Who can serve as a supportive sounding board to help the head think and work through the inevitable frustrations of the role? What time off from being on the job 24/7 should the board encourage, or insist, that the head take – for family, for study, for exercise, for emotional health, for R & R?

Heads need sustenance to succeed. They are the chief caregivers of our institutions, and someone (other than they themselves) needs to care for them, too. Board leaders neglect the support and caring that the head needs at their school's peril.

School Safety

Much has been written and shared since September 11th. What follows are a few practical steps wise schools are taking to improve their safety preparedness and to lower parental anxiety. They were prepared by Dr. Pat Bassett for ISACS (Fall 1999) following the school shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado and provide a quick checklist:

- Engaging a professional to do a security/safety analysis of the campus and of procedures (including child pick-up procedures). (Ronald D. Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center, indicates that a good crisis-preparedness plan is more effective than putting metal detectors in every doorway and transforming the school into a fortress.)*
- Changing entrance and egress to the school for outsiders to a single, monitored place (with other doors on a swipe card system so that teachers are not inconven-

nienced in entering or exiting with their classes to the playing fields, playgrounds, etc.)

- Development of a “lockdown” procedure (and practice runs, just as with fire drills and hurricane drills) for an intruder on campus.
 - Installation of telephones in each classroom for emergency purposes.
 - For middle schools and high schools, offering a “crisis counseling” service for students to make anonymous calls to report suspicious or troubling behaviors by their peers.
 - Review of harassment education and disciplinary procedures to make the school's stand on such matters prominently displayed and manifest.
 - Creation of an “intervention” team (school advisor, psychologist/counselor, division head) to develop intervention programs for children exhibiting anti-social behaviors.
 - Engaging kids in more “community talk” with the goal of teaching tolerance and inclusion.
 - Including conflict resolution training as part of the school's “second curriculum” or “character curriculum.”
- * *ISACS School Survey*, September '99. (Of over 20,000 students in the database, only 12% said that security and personal safety were a significant issue, 20% responded “somewhat significant,” and 69% indicated “not significant.”)

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ENDOWMENT BENCHMARKS

There is an air of excitement as additional schools add Endowment Funding. Perhaps the following Principles for Building Endowments from ISM will be of interest.

Principles for Building Endowments

- Board policy not to spend endowment income until it reaches critical mass levels (or to spend a lower than ordinary percentage)
- Board policy to require 20% of new building price tag to include endowing its operation.
- Establish an endowment-funding expense line in the operating budget (e.g., 1% of total budget): i.e., a third “reserve fund” beyond cash reserve and plant fund.
- Establish a policy that 10-25% of all annual fund-raising campaigns and events be allocated for the endowment.
- Specify a percentage of all capital campaign dollars to go to endowment (ISACS recommends 33-50%).
- Ask the board to lead with deferred-giving programs in allocating a percentage of their estates (e.g., 5%) to be left to the school’s endowment. * See note below.

Managing Endowments: (NAIS/NACUBO Stats of Schools >\$10M Endowments)

- Avg. endowment/student for schools with endowments (ISACS & NAIS) = \$25,000 for day schools, \$60,000 for day/boarding & boarding schools.
- Avg. Annual Spending Rate: 6.7% (spending rule based on pre-specified % of moving average of market values over time: e.g., last three years of market value as of July 1).
- Portfolio Distribution: Domestic Stocks (54%); Fixed Income (26%); Cash (6%); Foreign Securities (7%); Other (6%).
- Annualized Nominal Return (15-year Avg.) = 11.5%
- Fees: Management = .5%; Custodial = .08%

B’hatzlahah to all!

* Note: Allocating charity donations in an estate as a percent of the total estate is to be avoided. A beneficiary charity could contest the valuation of the estate in order to increase the share bequeathed and could thus tie up the estate in a legal and financial tangle for years.

Likewise, a family member could contest the total estate value in an effort to reduce the amount that a charity might receive.

A pecuniary(fixed) amount is always preferable to a percent (%) allocation in estate planning.

Opinion on this bullet point offered by Anaruth Bernard, Newsletter Advisor.

Homework Humor

Homework Schedule

Here is an explanation of the school homework policy:

Students should not spend more than 90 minutes per night. This time should be budgeted in the following manner:

15 minutes looking for assignment.

11 minutes calling a friend for the assignment.

23 minutes explaining why the teacher is mean and just does not like children.

8 minutes in the bathroom.

10 minutes getting a snack.

7 minutes checking the TV Guide.

6 minutes telling parents that the teacher never explained the assignment.

10 minutes sitting at the kitchen table waiting for Mom or Dad to do the assignment.

Long Term Assignments

These are given the night before they are due. This explains the name “Long term.” It is a long term commitment to time that begins at 9:30 PM and ends at 11:50 PM — or later. It is important that the whole family is involved in the project. It is imperative that at least one family member races to Wal*Mart/K-Mart for poster board, and that at least one family member ends up in tears (it does not have to be the student).

One parent needs to stay up and complete the project. The other parent needs to call the school and leave a message that the student is out sick. It is not necessary to have the student’s name on the assignment.

Let's Talk About Standards

by Dr. Zvi Schoenburg, Head, Solomon Schechter Day School of St. Louis, MO; President, Solomon Schechter Day School Association Principals' Council

Curricular Standards in general education have appeared in many iterations over the past decade. They have been compiled separately by subject area and compiled and recompiled by state commissions in 49 of our 50 states. The intent of standards is to articulate clearly what students should know and be able to do in order to allow all students the opportunity to reach levels of high academic achievement. In large part, standards have been created out of the desire to raise the ante of accomplishment for all students. This core idea is encoded in the name, "No Child Left Behind," which has been attached to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) recently passed by Congress.

Would setting standards for Jewish Studies be useful for Solomon Schechter Day Schools? If we can learn from the world of general education, then certainly the answer would be yes. Let's count the ways:

1. Setting standards would sharpen instructional practice in the various disciplines that make up the Jewish Studies aspect of day school education. The occasion of writing standards would be an opportunity to disseminate worthwhile and research-driven instructional ideas regarding how to best teach the subjects of the Jewish Studies curriculum.
2. Setting standards would create an environment of accountability in relation to learning. Increasing the potential for schools to objectively attest to student achievement could allow day school advocates to better make the case for increasing communal funding of day school education.
3. Setting standards would logically serve to help standardize the curriculum both across schools and even within schools and help schools to be more efficient and productive. Currently, teachers of Jewish studies frequently "make Shabbos" (i.e., independent and idiosyncratic choices) for themselves, with the result being low instructional coherence for students advancing from grade to grade, creating learning gaps and repetitions.
4. Each Solomon Schechter Day School independently determines its curricular objectives. National articulated standards would serve the schools well by providing the expertise needed for informed curricular decision-making. Also, setting standards for Jewish Studies might prove to be a useful tool for encouraging greater creativity for the individual instructor without detracting from the cohesion of the school's instructional efforts as a whole. Standards allow for innovative practices to be replicated and shared amongst teachers and between schools.
5. Finally, back to the beginning, an imperative: We must not leave a single Jewish child behind. To whatever extent our schools do not completely provide all our students with the learning necessary to be literate and participating adult Jews — let us define these goals better to better allow our schools to

attain them. Let's raise the ante of accomplishment for all.

An initiative to set standards for Jewish Studies in non-Orthodox day schools is presently being considered by the AviChai Foundation through the Melton Research Center of the Davidson School of Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary. With hope, following preliminary deliberations, we will see some movement in this direction.

SAVE THE DATES
The next Solomon Schechter Day School
Association Biennial Conference for Lay and
Professional Leadership

December 15-17, 2002

to be held at
the Jewish Theological Seminary of America

SAVE THE DATES

Join Schechter in Cyberspace

There are now 4 Solomon Schechter listservs:
Roshnet@uscj.org — for Principals
SSDS-Prez@uscj.org — for Presidents
SSDS-Business@uscj.org — for Business Managers
and the newest:
SSDS-Development@uscj.org — for Development
Directors

A listserv allows people with a particular interest — in our case, Schechter — to share information regarding that interest. Once you sign on, all participants in the listserv receive all postings via e-mail. Registrants are encouraged to be active participants by posting questions, concerns, and ideas to the group regarding issues of interest to the Schechter organization.

To sign up for the appropriate listserv send an e-mail to education@uscj.org. On the subject line type in "new sign up for" (choose appropriate listserv: Roshnet, SSDS-Prez, SSDS-Business, SSDS-Development). You will receive a message welcoming you to that listserv. You may then send a message, question or comment and it will be distributed to everyone on that list. Enjoy!

Open A Schechter Website!

United Synagogue invites all Schechter schools to open WEBSITES. Contact Martin Kunoff, kunoff@uscj.org, for immediate attention. Many Schechter schools have already taken advantage of this opportunity. There is no fee.