

114

A STUDY OF THE
JOSEPH WOLINSKY COLLEGIATE
(JUDAIC STUDIES DEPARTMENT)

IN

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

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CONDUCTED BY:

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ON BEHALF OF THE

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH EDUCATION
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In December 1980, Baruch Rand, Superintendent of the Winnipeg Board of Jewish Education, requested the American Association of Jewish Education, on behalf of the Board of Jewish Education, to conduct a study of the Judaic Studies Department of the Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate.

Dr. Joseph Heimowitz, Consultant, Department of Community Services of the American Association of Jewish Education, was appointed to undertake the project. He visited the community on January 26, 27, 28th 1981. During this visitation he met with the school Principal, and Director of Judaic Studies, members of the faculty, and students. He also observed classrooms, interviewed parents and Board members of JWC and Board of Jewish Education. A meeting was also held with parents of the three feeder schools to the Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate (Talmud Torah, Ramah School, and the I.L. Peretz School).

The surveyor is grateful for the complete cooperation he received from the principal, faculty, office staff of the school and the lay leaders of the community.

A. Background

The Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate was founded in 1957 as a junior-senior all day high school (grades 7-12). The school is described as ¹ "a day school rooted in Jewish tradition, preparing its pupils to become responsible and creative members of the Jewish community, while equipping them to make substantial contributions to Canadian life.

In its Jewish education the school seeks not only to impart factual knowledge, religious and linguistic skills, but also to inculcate a desire for continued study, love of God, reverence for Torah, and attachment to Israel and the Jewish people everywhere."

The school is governed by a Board of Directors who in turn are represented on the Winnipeg Board of Jewish education. Recommendations made by the Collegiate Board must be approved by the BJE.

B. Location and Facilities

The school located in the northern section of the city, shares facilities with the Talmud Torah elementary school. A gymnasium used by both schools separates the JWC from the Talmud Torah. Facilities include, fourteen classrooms, a library, school offices and a teacher's room. Space is limited, causing some classes to meet in the lower level rooms of the Talmud Torah elementary schools for which a rental fee is paid.

The gymnasium designed for an elementary school is not suitable for a senior high school either in size or as regards equipment. The teachers' room serves as a faculty lunch room and meeting room for both the Judaic and general studies staff. It is quite small and not adequate as a place where teachers can relax or prepare materials for their classes.

¹

Statement of school philosophy, Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate, June 1976.

The Board of the Collegiate and BJE are aware of this situation and are reviewing various proposals for the solution of the housing problem of the school. It is hoped that a suitable location and facilities can be found in the near future.

C. Enrollment

The enrollment figures for the 1980-81 are:

<u>Grade</u>	
7	36
8	60
9	45
10	37
11	30
12	<u>26</u>
Total	234

A summary of the school population for the past four years is as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>School Population</u>
1976-1977	267
1977-1978	262
1978-1979	281
1979-1980	282

The current school population of 234 students is the lowest during the past five years. Of the 36 students currently in grade seven 28 came from the Talmud Torah and 8 from the Ramah School.

The drop in enrollment is a matter of great concern to the school officials. Besides the small enrollment in the seventh grade for the present school year, there was an attrition in the various other grades. A possible reason for the decrease in enrollment, is the poor image of the school in the community. The turnover in the professional educational leadership during the past few years, and the lack of a clearly defined school philosophy does not project a stable and positive image among parents in the community.

Recommendations

An aggressive enrollment campaign should be embarked upon immediately. Visitations by the principal to the various feeder schools (especially Ramah) should be made. Parents of potential students should be invited to visit the school and learn first hand of the school's programs and future plans.

An outline of the schools educational program should be sent to all prospective families in the community. An interview with the schools new principal in the local Jewish press would enhance the image the school is trying to project to the community at large.

D. Hours and Scheduling of Instruction

The school day is based on an eight period day from 9:00 a.m. to 3:40 p.m. Judaic and general studies classes meet on an integrated basis.

The percentage of time allocated to Judaic studies is 40% in the junior high school (grades 7-9) and 30% in the senior high school (grades 10-12).

Recommendations

In day high schools throughout North America the minimum amount of time devoted to Judaic studies is 40% of the school day. If the JWC seeks to achieve its educational goals as stated in its philosophy, more time must be allocated to the Judaica and Hebraica portions of the curriculum. The school day can be extended by beginning classes at 8:40 a.m., and ending at 4 p.m., would help achieve this goal.

E. Administration and Supervision

The principal of the school, Jerry Cohen is responsible for the overall administration and supervision of the school. He comes from a public school background having spent many years as a principal in the Winnipeg school system. He is assisted by Rabbi Charles Grysman who is Director of the Judaic Studies program. Rabbi Grysman an ordained Rabbi previously was a member of Judaic Studies Department of JWC. He has a Master's Degree in Social work from Yeshiva University in New York.

The school is administered in an orderly, organized manner. Among the material reviewed were school records, faculty and parent handbooks, school forms and schedules. The existence of such records, as well as the personal observation of the surveyor indicate a well organized and administered school. The principal should be commended for conducting a smooth running organization in light of the fact that he has only been in charge of the school since June 1980.

Apart from administration a basic element in orderly and well organized learning institutions is the availability of regular supervision.

The purposes of supervision include among others: Motivating teachers, defining goals, evaluating classroom performance, and assisting teachers in improving classroom instruction. This is especially true when one deals with staff members who are comparatively young and do not have many years of teaching experience.

In JWC too, there seems to be a need for a structured program of classroom supervision and evaluation of the instructional performance of the staff. Clearer goals of achievement for the various grades should be defined. Specific suggestions will be listed in the sections dealing with curriculum and teacher performance.

F. Faculty

The Judaic Studies faculty consists of eleven people. Four teachers are on a full-time basis and seven are part-time. The educational credentials of the staff vary. There are among them those who have a permanent license in Jewish education, and also beginning teachers applying for teaching permits.

The years of teaching in Jewish schools are also varied. The two veteran teachers in the school have been teaching for over twenty years while two full-time teachers are in their first year of teaching.

Two of the full-time faculty are Israeli Shilichim who will be returning to Israel in two years.

Four of the full-time teachers are in their first year of teaching at the school.

Personnel Practices

There is an official code which governs personnel practices. Salary is determined on the basis of training and experience. This writer was informed that negotiations are currently going on between the Teachers Union and the local BJE. It is hoped that a uniform salary scale will be developed for all teachers in the school in both the Judaic and General Studies departments.

Teacher Performance

The faculty members are dedicated to their work and interested in their students. A warm relationship was evident in the meetings between teachers and students during the change in classes and conferences held in the faculty room.

By the same token, the performance in the classroom showed an unevenness, from satisfactory to poor quality. In some classes visited

there seemed to be a lack of proper planning, and at times it was not clear to the surveyor exactly what the goal of the lesson was. This was most noticeable in the Hebrew language classes of the weaker students and in some of the Talmud classes. Even students in the higher academic groupings in grades nine through twelve were not motivated or properly challenged. At times poor methodology was used, for example, when students in grade 10 and above were asked to translate the text word by word from Hebrew to English, an approach that is used in elementary schools.

One can understand the teacher performance in light of the fact that two of the full-time teachers are in their first year of teaching, while the other two full-time teachers are Israeli Shilichim who need guidance in dealing with North American students.

Recommendations to Improve Quality of Teaching

1. A carefully planned in-service teacher training program is needed, including teacher workshops conducted by master teachers or by supervisors who are knowledgeable in objectives, methods, and contents in the different curriculum areas. There is need for a systematic observation of teaching practices; for subsequent supervisor-teacher analyses of performance; and suggestions for change and improvement. These would greatly enhance the level of classroom instruction.

2. A diagnosis of individual teacher's strengths and weaknesses should be used as the basis for improvement of teaching performance. (e.g., teacher-pupil interaction, motivation in lesson planning, use of Hebrew in the classroom, etc.)

3. Special attention should be given to lesson planning, particularly to proper use of textbook, workbook, or ditto sheet as a teaching aid.

4. Pre- and post-observation meetings with teachers to develop teacher's critical self-evaluation, with emphasis on methodology is another ingredient of the supervisory process that would be helpful in the present circumstances.

5. Demonstration teaching by a qualified supervisor and special teacher to develop techniques and know-how in different types of lessons, particularly individualized learning and research would also be useful.

6. It would be well to identify pupils with special needs, talents and abilities in order to develop enrichment and individualization through contract, self-study, and research opportunities.

7. A mandatory requirement for the less experienced teachers should be the taking of summer in-service courses in a recognized Jewish teacher training program and/or at a local university.

8. The establishment of a professional library for teachers is an indispensable tool. Such a library should contain teacher manuals and reference works, as well as relevant curriculum materials and texts. The school should make every effort to organize and develop such a resource.

The Board of Jewish Education and its professional director can be of assistance in organizing and servicing the recommended in-service teacher training program and the development of a professional library.

9. The upgrading of the salary scale for the Hebrew faculty (currently under negotiation) should be a major priority of the school if it is to continue to grow and enhance maximum Jewish education in the community. In order to attract experienced and highly competent faculty, as well as retain the present staff, the school must be competitive in its salary scale and fringe benefits.

G. Learning Climate

The atmosphere in the school is warm, pleasant and open. There is a fine rapport between teachers and pupils which leads to a relaxed and happy school environment conducive to study. In many of the classes the writer was impressed by the alertness and intelligence of the student body. The decorum is good and a friendly and respectful teacher-pupil relationship is evident.

H. Curriculum

The curriculum (prepared in August 1980) is in the form of a course outline for the various subjects taught in the school. Objectives and textbooks to be used are listed for each grade level.

The following courses are taught:

Humash, Navi, Sifrut, Mishnah, Talmud, Jewish History, and Jewish philosophy. The tenth-grade students study the Holocaust, and twelfth-grade students participate in a similar type course where outside speakers make presentations to the students on topics of current Jewish interest, and a course in Modern Israel.

Humash - Students in grade seven study excerpts from the Book of Deuteronomy, grade eight Exodus, grade nine Numbers, grade ten Deuteronomy, grade eleven Leviticus and grade twelve, selections from the Five Books of Moses according to topics. Commentaries (e.g., Rashi) are studied in all grades.

Navi - The early prophets are covered in the lower grades. This includes the Books of Samuel and Kings. The Megillot (Esther, Ruth) and selections from Jeremiah and Isaiah are studied in the upper grades. Selections from Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Job are also taken up.

Sifrut - (Hebrew Literature and Grammar) - Formal grammar is studied in grades seven-nine. In the upper grades stress is placed on Modern Israeli and Hebrew literature of the past century. Among the writers studied we find, Bialik, Peretz, Shalom Alecheim, Agnon and Kishon.

The curriculum calls for the discussion of themes in modern Hebrew literature in grades ten thru twelve.

Talmud - In this section of the curriculum, we find students studying Mishnah and Talmud as two separate courses. Since this part of the curriculum is new to most of the students, almost all grades are on a beginners level.

Selections studied include, Berochot, Makkot, Sanhedrin and Baba Metzia.

Jewish Law and Philosophy - The development of Jewish law and its application to today's society is presented. The various holidays and Shabbat are studied.

In the upper grades topics such as the Jewish Way in Death and Mourning, Jewish Marital Relations, Abortion, and Jewish ethics in business are reviewed.

Jewish History - This subject, taught in English is studied in grades seven thru nine. The texts used are "The Story of the Jewish People," by Klaperman, and "My People" by Abba Eban.

The course of study begins with the second Temple and ends in the modern period.

Recommendations

1. In reviewing the curriculum one area that is obviously lacking is the area of T'filah (prayer). Students do not study the Siddur, its format and content, or participate in any kind of religious service, other than once a month on Rosh Chodesh.

Students need to have a place to experience the spiritual dimension of Judaism. They require a place to develop skills as Shlichei Tsibur, Ba'alei Kriah and other essential synagogue skills. A student who might be in mourning may not have a place where to recite the Kaddish or even be familiar with its content.

It is strongly recommended that formal services e.g. Schacharit be instituted in the school beginning with grade seven. A program of Beurey T'filah (Explanation of the prayers) should be included in the curriculum.

2. Jewish history currently taught in grades 7-9 should be moved to grades 9-12 for 2 periods per weekly cycle. Students in these grades are older and have a more mature understanding of the Ancient and Modern world.

3. A sequential approach in teaching of Bible (Torah and Navi) should be developed beginning with grade three of the feeder schools. Included in this joint project (under the direction of the Superintendent's office) should be the teaching of Rashi and other Commentaries in grade four and five. The textbooks used in Humash (Bible) should be the original with Rashi, and not the abbreviated form currently being used. The course in Bible should meet 3 times per weekly cycle.

4. A more realistic curriculum in Hebrew literature should be developed especially for students in the weaker classes of the school. Stress should be made on the use of spoken Hebrew by the students in the class. Three sessions per cycle should be adequate in covering the curriculum.

5. The Talmud program should be revised. Mishnah can be introduced in grade 6 or 7. Beginning with grade eight, only Talmud should be taught as is done in Jewish high schools throughout North America.

Time devoted to Mishnah can now be assigned to T'filah (Prayer) and Jewish history. The course should meet a minimum of three sessions per cycle in all grades.

6. Jewish law as presently structured seems to be realistic and serving the needs of the student body. It may be beneficial to have more discussions on modern day problems included in the upper grades. Two sessions per cycle are adequate for this subject.

7. A uniform approach regarding the language of instruction in Judaic studies should be adopted. The present faculty with proper guidance should be able to conduct classes following the I'vrit B'ivrit method.

8. A committee consisting of the Judaic Studies coordinator, teachers, knowledgeable lay people and the Superintendent should review the present curriculum in order to upgrade the level of the program and review some of the above suggestions.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Supervision

1. A more structured program of classroom supervision and evaluation of the instructional performance of the faculty is needed.

2. Clearer and more specific goals of achievement for the various grades should be defined in order to upgrade the level of classroom instruction.

B. Improving the Quality of Teaching

1. A carefully planned in-service teacher training program including teacher workshops conducted by master teachers or by supervisors thoroughly knowledgeable in objectives, methods, and contents in the different curriculum areas should be planned.

2. Careful observations of teaching practices with supervisor-teacher analysis of performance with suggestions for change and improvement will improve the quality of classroom instruction.

3. Analysis of individual teacher's strengths and weaknesses as the basis for improvement of teaching performance, with special attention to lesson planning, particularly to proper use of textbook, workbook, or ditto sheet as teaching aids, should be planned.

4. Pre- and post-observation meetings on a regular basis with teachers to develop teachers' critical self-evaluation, with emphasis on methodology is a useful supervisory tool in upgrading classroom instruction.

5. Demonstration teaching by supervisor and special teacher to develop abilities and know-how in different types of lessons, particularly individualized learning and research should be investigated.

6. Less experienced teachers be mandated to take a summer in-service course in a recognized Jewish teacher training program and/or at a local university.

7. It is urged that a professional library for teachers be established. The library should contain teacher manuals and reference works as well as relevant curriculum materials and texts.

C. Curriculum

1. The school should adopt a policy regarding the language of instruction. The teaching in Ivrit will not only improve the Hebrew Language Program but will enhance the teaching of Humash, Rashi, Prophets and Mishnah.

2. Review the entire curriculum including the hours per week allocated to each subject. A committee of faculty members, the Superintendent and members of the Board of Education, and Judaic Studies Coordinator should be assigned to develop this curriculum.

3. Include T'filah (Prayer) both in the form of a formal service and explanation of the various prayers.

4. Review and revise the Talmud curriculum.

5. Review the Jewish History curriculum. Modern Jewish History, e.g., Zionism, State of Israel, Holocaust, American Jewish Community should be stressed. Proper textbooks should be used, as well as visual aid materials.

D. Library

A Hebrew library should be developed, enabling students to read and appreciate Hebrew books. Part of this library should consist of teacher reference texts as aids in improving lesson planning, e.g., the various texts by Dr. Nechama Lebovitz on Bible and Prophets.

E. School Policies

1. The instructional day should be increased to allow more time for Judaic Studies.

2. The school's philosophy should be more clearly defined. A "desire for excellence" is not sufficient to attract new students to the school.

3. More opportunities should be provided for students to experience Jewish living through Shabbatonim and other similar projects.

4. Educational supervision for the Judaic Studies faculty should be strengthened. This can be done through the superintendents office by using existing and/or new educational personnel.