HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IN JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS:

CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

By

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Capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the joint masters degree in Jewish Nonprofit Management and Jewish Education

April 2013

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

LOS ANGELES SCHOOL

SCHOOL OF JEWISH NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT

RHEA HIRSCH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Dedication

I dedicate this capstone to Lani Silver z"l, my friend and mentor. As the founder of the Bay Area Holocaust Oral History project and many other projects, Lani showed us the healing power of memory. Her life's work bettered our world. Her memory is a blessing.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Professor Sarah Benor who advised me throughout the research and writing process. I am grateful to Richard Siegel for the support and guidance he provided me over the course of my graduate studies.

I would also like to thank the educators who were interviewed for this project for being so generous with their time and open with their stories. Their insights were invaluable.

I would not have been able to complete this project without the moral support of my classmate, friend, and writing buddy, Sarah Craemer. Finally, thank you to Michael Horwitz for his love, support, and understanding.

Abstract

While virtually all Jewish educators agree on the importance of teaching the Holocaust, opinions vary about when and how it is best to teach Jewish students about this horrific event in Jewish and human history. This project explores these choices and offers recommendations for teaching about the Holocaust in a way that is responsive to the particular needs of students and teachers at Jewish day schools.

The researcher interviewed educators from nine Jewish day schools about Holocaust education at their schools. This small-scale study sought to answer the following questions: Who designs and chooses Holocaust curricula in Jewish day schools? What factors affect their decisions? In which classes and grade levels do they teach the Holocaust? What content areas, methods, and resources are missing from the pool of Holocaust curricula available?

Four recommendations for Jewish day school educators emerged out of this research study. Schools should develop a curricular plan based on goals that align with the mission of the school. Educators should consider introducing the Holocaust in earlier grades in order to give elementary school students the opportunities to learn important lessons about values and heritage. Teaching the Holocaust is challenging for a number of reasons, and Jewish day schools should provide teachers with opportunities to attend professional development trainings to learn Holocaust content knowledge and instructional methods. The Holocaust should be taught through a model that integrates general studies and Jewish studies in order to allow students to explore how the Holocaust relates to their Jewish identity. In addition to these recommendations, this study led to the development of a curriculum guide for Jewish high school students on Jewish memory and Holocaust remembrance.

Holocaust Education in Jewish Day Schools: Choices and Challenges

While virtually all Jewish educators agree on the importance of teaching the Holocaust, opinions vary about when and how it is best to teach Jewish students about this horrific event in Jewish and human history. Educators have different motivations and rationales that affect their curricular and instructional choices. They must respond to the political and cultural attitudes toward the Holocaust in the community, often dealing with concerns and even protests from parents and board members. They have the choice to implement a preformed curriculum, create their own curriculum, or integrate materials from multiple sources.

Especially with the advent of online curricular resources, educators have increasing access to Holocaust educational materials from around the country and around the world. In order to prevent educators from "reinventing the wheel," and to ensure innovative contributions to the field, educators should be well informed about the curricula available as well as the professional development opportunities for training teachers how to teach the Holocaust.

In 1973, following his survey of Holocaust education in Jewish schools, Elazar Goelman identified the need for further qualitative research on Holocaust education in Jewish schools. He saw the need for researchers to further study instructional methods, the experience of educators and students, and reactions of parents (Goelman, 1973). Since Goelman's survey, few comprehensive research studies have been conducted on Holocaust education in Jewish schools. In 2008, Simone Schweber and Debbie Findling explained that though, "the Holocaust remains a 'curricular powerhouse' in liberal Jewish educational settings, many questions remain" (Schweber & Findling, 2008, p. 311). How and when is it taught? What materials and methods are used? And, what are the effects on students, parents, and communities.

Based on this call for further research, and in preparation for developing a new Holocaust curriculum that is responsive to the particular needs of students and teachers at Jewish day schools, educators from nine Jewish day schools were interviewed about Holocaust education at their schools. The following questions were explored: Who designs and chooses Holocaust curricula in Jewish day schools? What factors affect their decisions? In which classes and grade levels do Jewish day schools teach the Holocaust? What content areas, methods, and resources are missing from the pool of Holocaust curricula currently available?

Though quite small in scale, the completion of this study helped guide the development of a useful, meaningful Holocaust curriculum for high school students in Jewish Day Schools. The study, will hopefully also offer day school educators new awareness and sensitivity to common issues and challenges, thereby helping them to more effective decisions about teaching the Holocaust.

History of Holocaust Instruction in the United States – 1970s Onward

The Holocaust was a critical and tragic moment in Jewish history and the history of the world. In the early 1970s, as a "new era of education and curiosity about the recent past" (Cohen, 1998) emerged, Jewish educators called for more in-depth and higher quality Holocaust education in schools. Alan D. Bennet (1974) called for the development of more Holocaust curricula. "Curriculum that is not only about history and dates, but addresses the moral and psychological" (p. 23). Based on his research of Holocaust education in over three hundred Jewish day schools and supplementary schools around the world, Elazar Goelman (1973) made several recommendations for enhancing Holocaust education in Jewish schools (p. 97). Among his recommendations were:

- Instructional units for certain age groups

- Better text books
- Additional materials such as films, photos, maps
- Battery of objective tests to gauge progress
- Suggested guidelines for teachers
- Workshops and seminars for training teachers

Several curricula and teacher training programs were developed in the years following these rally cries, including Facing History and Ourselves (1968) and the New York City Board of Education's *The Holocaust: A Study of Genocide.* Though the curriculum from New York's Board of Education was not developed for Jewish schools in particular, over 60 percent of the district's student body was Jewish.

Louise Matteoni (1981) observed that interest in Holocaust education was gaining momentum at the same time that interest in human rights around the world was increasing. Jewish community organizations were making more resources available to teachers. In addition, trainings to enhance teachers' sensitivity when teaching the Holocaust were appearing. Wilson Frampton (1981) criticized the way the Holocaust was being taught, describing the methods as "indiscriminate, incidental, and inconsistent" (p. 34). He called for more consistency in Holocaust education in both public and Jewish schools.

Despite the interest of Frampton and other voices in the field of Holocaust education, Simone Schweber and Debbie Findling (2008) explained that by the early 1990s, the consensus opinion among Jewish educators was that teaching the Holocaust should not play a prominent role in Jewish education. Then, in 1993 the film *Schindler's List* and the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and in 1995 the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the

end of World War II brought an "uptick [of Holocaust] in American discourse" (p. 312). This "uptick" becomes very apparent when one looks at the growth in Holocaust museums and educational programs in the mid 1990s.

When the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in 1993, it included an education department providing a multitude of resources and trainings for teachers of the Holocaust. In addition to the museum in Washington DC, many other Holocaust museums opened their doors; two examples are the Museum of Tolerance at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, and the Holocaust Museum and Learning Center in St. Louis. Both these and most other Holocaust museums offer educational materials and teacher trainings. The organization, the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Project (now called The USC Shoah Foundation and Visual History Archives), partnered with the Anti-Defamation League and Yad Vashem to publish *Echoes and Reflections,* an in-depth modular curriculum based on visual testimonies. As the Holocaust grew more prevalent in American discourse and in public schools, the Jewish education sphere refocused on Holocaust education.

Three main questions must be considered when preparing to teach the Holocaust. Why teach about the Holocaust (rationale)? What should be taught (goals and content?) And, how should it be taught (instructional methodology)? Educators and scholars have different approaches to answering these three questions.

Philosophy and Pedagogy

While both Jewish and secular educators agree it is essential to teach about the Holocaust, philosophical and pedagogical approaches vary across educational settings. Bennet (1974) identified two common reasons to teach Jewish students about the Holocaust: pay

homage to the Jewish people and ensure such an event will occur "never again" to the Jewish people or anyone else. Based on the Jewish experience in the Holocaust, Jews have an obligation to work towards world peace and social justice. Students must be educated about the Holocaust in order to understand this obligation. Bennet called for a Holocaust curriculum that would focus not only on history and dates, but that would address the moral and psychological sides. He called for a thoughtful and reflective curriculum that would begin with teachers asking, "What is the meaning of the Holocaust for me...what is the meaning of the Holocaust for our children?" (p. 24). Bennet also raised the issues of developmental appropriateness, emphasizing the importance of finding ways to teach the Holocaust to all age groups, not only high school students.

In her article, "Why Teach the Holocaust," Louise Matteoni (1981) identified different ways the Holocaust is taught. She points out several unhelpful approaches:

> Dwelling on the grisly and the gory, and have morbid fascination in the way that film, TV and print violence does and thus miss the point altogether. It can dwell on statistics, staggering and difficult to comprehend because they represent human beings. It can dwell on pity – self and other; hatred – self and other; flagellation – self and other; and also miss the point. It can dwell on statistics… difficult to understand… Or it can dwell on pity, victimhood or hatred. (p. 5)

She explains that important lessons about the universal experience can be lost when the Holocaust is not taught in a larger context. She advocates replacing these negative methods with educational programs that will allow students to "see tragedy as the triumph of human spirit, the unquenchable determination of Jews, and by extension, of all of us, to survive… [Students should] see the Holocaust as a culmination of centuries of blind and brutal prejudice… and see

the dangers of bigotry" (Matteoni, 1981, p. 6). Students should also become aware of other groups who were persecuted and understand the concept of genocide in other contexts. Finally, Matteoni warns of the dangers of inadequate teachers. Unlike some authors who proposed sensitivity training for teachers of the Holocaust, Matteoni insists sensitivity cannot be taught.

Several authors have discussed the question of using the Holocaust to teach values and moral lessons. In addition to Matteoni and Bennet, Karen Riley, an educator in the field, insists the suitability of using the Holocaust to teach values lies in its uniqueness. The Holocaust can be used to teach universally accepted values including, "responsibility, decision making, citizenship and courage" (Riley, 1990, p. 34).

Similar to curriculum development of any subject matter, the early stages of developing a Holocaust curriculum must involve identifying goals and objectives. Common goals include for students to understand themes such as "prejudice, racism, or intergroup relations" (Cohen, 1998).The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum identifies several additional goals including lessons about democracy; the dangers of remaining silent and indifferent to the suffering and oppression of others; and the use and abuse of power. (Guideliness for Teaching about the Holocaust)

While these goals pertain to all students regardless of whether they are Jewish or not, other goals, such as those identified by Jon Bloomberg (1985), are unique to Jewish students. In his article, "Defining the Uniqueness of Holocaust Teaching in the Jewish School," Bloomberg identifies two goals specific to Jewish students: 1) "strengthen Jewish identity," and 2) "clarify what it means to be a Jew in the post-Holocaust world." According to Bloomberg, in order to

address Jewish identity, educators must deal with the issue of resistance or lack of resistance in a balanced and intricate manner.

> A student who is not disabused of the widespread notion that Holocaust victims went to their deaths 'ka-tzon la-tevcha' ('like sheep to the slaughter') will inevitably feel a certain sense of shame and discomfort as he considers these Jews and their behavior; hence a formidable barrier will be erected in the way of his achieving a sense of identification with them and a feeling of pride in their reactions to their terrible fate. (Bloomberg, 1985, p. 25)

However, teaching that resistance was everywhere and that partisans and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was the usual, is a distortion of historical truth; students are not convinced by it (Bloomberg, 1985).

In regards to helping students understand what it means to be a Jew in the post-Holocaust world, Bloomberg explains, teachers must address the issue of faith. Teachers should struggle alongside their students about the big questions such as "Where was God?" They do not have to feel like they have all the answers. From studying the Holocaust, Jewish students must draw the conclusion that,

> The importance of maintaining a sense of Jewish unity is rooted in an awareness of the common destiny shared by all Jews, the priority which should be placed on assuring continuing the Jewish survival and vitality, and the centrality of the continuing existence of the Jewish state. (p. 27)

Simone Schweber identified an additional consideration unique to Jewish students. She warns of the phenomenon, "Holocaust Fatigue." In the article by the same name, Schweber points out that

Simone Schweber identified an additional consideration unique to Jewish students. She warns of the phenomenon, "Holocaust Fatigue." In the article by the same name, Schweber points out that by the time Jewish students reach middle school and high school, many of them have learned about the Holocaust repeatedly, often receiving the same messages with each lesson. She emphasizes that if educators are going to teach older Jewish students about the Holocaust, they must be challenged to think more deeply and through new points of view (Schweber, 2006).

Methodology

This research study involved interviews with educators at Jewish day schools in California. A total of fourteen schools were invited to participate in the study, and nine schools ended up participating. The original sample frame of fourteen schools was designed to include schools diverse in movement affiliation and span of grade level. Out of the fourteen schools that were invited to participate, four were K-6 grade schools, four were K-8 grade schools, one was a K-12 grade school, two were 8-12 grade schools, and three were 9-12 grade high schools. In regards to affiliation, two of the fourteen schools were attached to Reform congregations, two were attached to Conservative congregations, one was a Solomon Schechter day school affiliated with the Conservative movement, three were non-affiliated community schools, and six were Orthodox schools. More Orthodox schools were invited than non-Orthodox schools due to an expectation of lower response rate from Orthodox schools. This expectation was accurate. Out of the fourteen schools, two Orthodox schools declined to respond, and one Orthodox school refused to participate. One Orthodox school and one community non-affiliated school ended up not participating due to scheduling conflicts.

Of the nine schools that participated, two were Reform day schools, two were Conservative day schools, one was an Orthodox day school, and four were community day schools. In regards to grade span, two schools were K-6, three schools were K-8, two schools were 6-12, one school was 9-12, and one school was K-12.

Initially, the researcher contacted the schools by emailing or calling the Head of School, explaining the research study, and inviting them to be interviewed. Some Heads of School were interviewed, and other Heads of School referred the researcher to the educator they considered

most knowledgeable or most involved in Holocaust education. In some cases the referral was to a Judaic studies educator, and in other cases it was to a general studies educator. At some schools an administrator was interviewed, at others a teacher was interviewed, and in some cases a combination of an administrator and teachers were interviewed. Interviews were conducted on site at eight schools, and one school responded to questions over e-mail. The on-site interviews were audio-recorded; participants gave written consent.

Characteristics of Participating Schools

The characteristics of the nine schools and educators that participated in the study are displayed in Table A. The names of schools and educators have been changed in order to maintain the anonymity of the study participants. Interviews were conducted with only Judaic studies faculty in four schools and with only general studies faculty in four schools. In one of the nine schools both general studies and Judaic studies faculty were interviewed.

Table 1
Characteristics of participating schools and educators interviewed

School	Affiliation	Grade span	Educator interviewed
Temple Beth El	Reform	K-6	Judaic studies director
Congregation Israel	Reform	K-6	Head of School; 1 Judaic studies teacher
Rauschman Academy	Conservative	K-8	Judaic studies director
Hillel Academy	Conservative	K-8	Judaic studies director; 1 Judaic studies teacher
Rambam Community School	Community	K-8	Associate head of school; 1 General studies teacher
Yavneh High School	Orthodox	9-12	General studies administrator
Kehillah Community School	Community	K-12	Judaic studies director; 2 General studies teachers
Rothschild School	Community	6-12	General studies teacher
Tehillah Community High School	Community	9-12	General studies teacher

Interview Questions

The interview questionnaire is found in Appendix A. The interviews were based on twenty-three structured questions that fall into five areas:

Holocaust Instruction: These questions surveyed grade-level(s), department(s), and course(s) in which the Holocaust is taught. The questions also covered what instructional methods, media and resources are used in their Holocaust instruction.

Teacher Experience. Educators were asked about their motivations for teaching the Holocaust, their professional development and training in teaching the Holocaust, and their process for curricular planning. Teachers were asked to describe their interactions with students and parents and their personal emotional and psychological reactions to teaching the Holocaust.

Curricular Decision Making. Educators were asked who was responsible for curricular decisions in Holocaust education and what the process was for making those decisions. The questions asked about the philosophical approach and attitudes on Holocaust education at the school. These questions also covered the development of Holocaust curriculum over the school's existence.

What is Missing? Teachers and administrators were asked to identify gaps in available Holocaust curricular resources and to offer recommendations for future curricula and resources.

Findings

Teaching the Holocaust: When and How?

Surprisingly, at the majority of schools Holocaust education falls under the general studies department in social studies and language arts classes, rather than under the Judaic studies department. The exception is the Conservative schools in which Judaic studies instructors teach the Holocaust. One community K-8 school teaches the Holocaust to its middle school students in both Judaic studies and general studies courses. One of the Reform elementary schools also teaches the Holocaust in Judaic studies, but at that school Holocaust instruction is minimal. A teacher at this Reform school explained that some teachers choose to read Holocaust themed books to their students, such as *The Sunflower* by Elie Weisel, but the school does not have a formal Holocaust curriculum. At this school, the students' main interaction with the Holocaust is on Holocaust Remembrance Day when students attend and participate in the city-wide memorial service.

Most schools observe Holocaust Remembrance Day with ceremonies on campus or with attendance at a city-wide program; school choruses often perform at these community events. Holocaust survivors usually speak at school assemblies, and several administrators expressed their concern about what Holocaust Remembrance Day will look like when survivors are too old or weak to visit, and when the time inevitably arrives when there are no survivors left at all.

The two K-6 schools, both Reform schools, devote the least amount of time to Holocaust instruction out of all the schools. The administrator at one of these schools responded in an email that an interview was not necessary because the school does not teach the Holocaust. The decision by these schools to not formally teach the Holocaust at elementary grade levels reflects

the common concern about the developmental appropriateness of teaching the Holocaust. Table B presents in which courses, grade levels, and departments the Holocaust is taught at each school.

Facing History and Ourselves (Facing History) is the only curriculum that several schools have in common. Established in the 1970s, *Facing History* is an organization dedicated to using lessons from the Holocaust to teach democratic and humanistic values. Their foundational curriculum, called "Holocaust and Human Behavior," uses lessons from the Holocaust to teach the importance of identifying stereotyping, fighting prejudice, and standing up to injustice. The organization also has a curriculum about Polish Jewry before and during the Holocaust that is geared primarily for Jewish schools. *Facing History* provides in-depth professional development to train teachers how to use their curricular approach. Once teachers have gone through a training, they are given access to an extensive online resource center that provides teachers with activities and materials to use in the classroom. Tehillah Community High School, Rauschman Academy, Rambam Community School, and Kehilla Community School incorporate the *Facing History* approach into their Holocaust instruction.

Table B presents in which courses, grade levels, and departments the Holocaust is taught at each school.

Table 2

Characteristics of Holocaust Instruction at Jewish Day Schools

School	Affiliation	Grade Span	Courses with Holocaust instruction (grade)	Grade levels with Holocaust instruction
Temple Beth El	Reform	K-6	Minimal to none	Minimal to none
Congregation Israel	Reform	K-6	Judaic studies	Varies
Rauschman Academy	Conservative	K-8	Judaic Studies	K-8
Hillel Academy	Conservative	K-8	Year-long mandatory Holocaust course	8
Rambam Community School	Community	K-8	Language Arts, Judaic Studies, Social Studies	6,7,8
Yavneh High School	Orthodox	6-12	History, Psychology	9-12
Kehillah Community School	Community	K-12	Language Arts, Social studies, Jewish history	4th grade, multiple high school grades
Rothschild School	Community	6-12	American History (8), World History (11)	8, 11
Tehillah Community High School	Community	9-12	U.S. History (10), Semester-long mandatory Holocaust course	10, 12

Developmental Appropriateness

Concerns regarding the developmental appropriateness of teaching the Holocaust were raised by every administrator. Developmental appropriateness refers to questions such as, "At what age should students be exposed to the Holocaust?" "What aspects of the Holocaust, and using which methods, should the Holocaust be introduced to certain age groups?" While this concern is universal, each school introduces the Holocaust at different grade levels in different ways. At many schools, mainly the parents are the ones who worry about the appropriateness of

Holocaust education. Some schools let parental concerns affect Holocaust educational decisions more than others.

One school offers an interesting example of how Holocaust education has changed over the lifespan of the school in response to parental concerns. Kehillah Community School, a K-12 community school, was founded by a Holocaust survivor, and, as a result, the school was closely connected to the survivor community. Many students' grandparents, who were Holocaust survivors, often visited the school. Gil, the lower school Judaic studies director, said that in the early days the school was characterized by "Holocaust awareness throughout." Holocaust education was emphasized in the curriculum, and survivors came to speak regularly to students as young as third grade.

In recent years, however, the Holocaust has become less prevalent in the lower school grades because "many parents felt it was too early to expose their innocent, fragile children to the horrors of the Holocaust," explained Gil. Holocaust education has become limited to lessons surrounding Holocaust Remembrance Day. Teachers present some stories and poems that talk about "a terrible time," but "all details are excluded," Gil stated. Gil believes fifth graders are mature enough to be exposed more deeply to the Holocaust, so he sends them to the middle school Holocaust Remembrance Day assembly.

In 2011, Kehillah's upper school administration sent four teachers to professional development training by *Facing History and Ourselves*. One fourth grade general studies teacher, Kristen, who took initiative to be included in the training, was the only lower school teacher to attend. When asked about the appropriateness of teaching the Holocaust in fourth grade, she responded that she believes *Facing History and Ourselves* materials can be adapted

for fourth graders. Kristen devotes significant time to creating customized curricula for teaching the Holocaust and *Facing History* concepts in a meaningful way to her fourth graders. She builds upon lessons from *Diary of Anne Frank,* a portion of which is included in the standard literature curriculum adopted by the school. When asked about ways to enhance the Holocaust curriculum in the lower school, she expressed a strong interest in collaborating with the fourth grade Judaic studies teacher. Kristen wishes *Facing History and Ourselves* provided more materials for elementary age students so that teachers like her did not have to develop their own lessons from scratch. In the meantime, she hopes that more teachers from her school will attend *Facing History* trainings so she has colleagues with whom to collaborate

Two schools emphasized that it is especially appropriate and important to teach the Holocaust to their graduating classes. Rauschman Academy, a K-8 Conservative day school, and Tehillah Community High School have required courses dedicated entirely to the Holocaust for their graduating classes.

Characteristics of Exemplary Schools

The findings of this study focus on the roles educational administrators and teachers play in the direction and instruction of Holocaust education. Four out of ten schools were found to have the strongest Holocaust education programs based on three main characteristics: 1) visionary curricular leadership 2) well-defined curricular structure 3) thorough teacher training.

Visionary curricular leadership. Holocaust education in these four exemplary schools is led by visionary teachers and administrators with impressive dedication to Holocaust education. The educator's earliest personal encounters with Holocaust education, as well as their professional training on teaching the Holocaust, strongly influence the nature of Holocaust

education at their school. These educators were personally motivated and self-selected to invest her or his time and professional resources into the curricular development and/or instruction of the Holocaust at their school. These exemplary leaders base curricular decisions on clearly articulated vision, rationale and goals of their Holocaust program.

Two models of Holocaust curricular leadership emerged from this research. In the first model, found at Rauschman Academy and Rambam Community School, Holocaust curricular decisions are made primarily by an administrator with an exceptionally strong vision for the role of Holocaust education in the school; the vision is carried out in a coordinated manner with teachers across grade-level and discipline. In the second approach, found at Tehillah Community High School and Hillel Academy, Holocaust curriculum development is led by an expert teacher who, in consultation with the administration, designs and teaches a single, mandatory course to the graduating class.

Well-defined curricular structure. The exemplary schools have the most structured curricula, implemented consistently from year to year. A well structured curricular program documents the specific content that will be taught in which grades and in which courses. Redundancy is avoided by dividing up which content will be taught in which grades, or by varying the resources, instructional methods, and levels of complexity when teaching the same content in multiple courses and grade levels. Schools that could produce a written document identifying the scope and sequence of Holocaust education at the school, and/or a detailed syllabus for the main Holocaust course, were qualified as schools with strong curricular structure.

Thorough teacher training. These exemplary schools have the best trained educators in Holocaust education compared to all the schools in the study. In two of the schools, high proportions of teachers have participated in Holocaust professional development trainings, and in the other two other schools an individual teacher has advanced expertise in Holocaust instruction. The administrators highly encourage teachers to receive training in teaching the Holocaust either by providing professional development trainings at the school or by paying for the cost of a teacher to attend an outside training. One school pays its teachers a stipend for attending professional development trainings on teaching the Holocaust.

Exemplary School Narratives

Rauschman Academy. Rauschman Academy, a K-8 Jewish day school based at a Conservative synagogue, takes Holocaust education seriously, providing lessons across grade level through multiple entry points including music, film, literature, drama, survivor talks, and museums. This is thanks to the visionary leadership of the Judaic studies director Hannah, and the significant amount of time she devotes to developing a customized Holocaust curriculum for her school. Her approach to Holocaust education aligns with her belief that Jewish education must provide students with a strong sense of heritage and Jewish peoplehood.

Hannah's experiences growing up in Israel strongly affect her attitude towards Holocaust education. She explains that since a young age, too young in her opinion, she was constantly exposed to disturbing images and stories about the Holocaust. Her experiences growing up influence her attitude towards Holocaust education in two major ways. First, she believes it is essential for Jewish children to learn about the Holocaust as it is part of their heritage. Second, her priority is to deliver Holocaust lessons to children in a developmentally appropriate manner.

While the majority of educators interviewed for this study indicated they believe it is inappropriate to teach the Holocaust to students below a certain grade, Hannah believes there are appropriate ways to teach the Holocaust to students as young as kindergarten and first grade. For example, in kindergarten and first grade, students learn the themes of loss and sadness without being exposed to painful stories or historical context which these young students are too young to understand anyway. Holocaust education at the school is 'spiraled', an educational term meaning that the subject is taught in every grade level in a different way, so that by the end of their education, graduates have attained a cumulative understanding of the Holocaust.

Hannah is a strong visionary leader who articulates a very clear vision for the role of Holocaust education in her school. For her, the goal is for students to gain a sense of connection and belonging to the Jewish people and the experiences of those people who perished in, and survived the Holocaust. The Holocaust is taught not only through an historical lens, but even more so through stories, as importance is placed on memory and commemoration. Groups of students attend the city-wide Holocaust commemoration ceremony on Holocaust Remembrance Day every year. Students sing as a chorus and participate in other ways in the ceremony.

She personally develops the curriculum, sometimes in collaboration with teachers. Teachers are encouraged to seek out their own Holocaust teaching professional development that fits their interests. No particular organization or program is favored over another. Teachers have participated in trainings including *Facing History and Ourselves, Echoes and Reflections* from the Shoah Foundation, trainings from Yad Vashem, the U.S. Holocaust Museum, the Museum of Tolerance, and others. She feels there is no single curriculum available that presents the Holocaust wholly, and she has invested significant time over the years researching and evaluating materials and themes in order to customize a curriculum for her school. Hannah said

that general studies teachers may teach some isolated lessons on the Holocaust, but for the most part the Holocaust is taught by Judaic studies teachers.

Hillel Academy. At Hillel Academy, another K-8 Jewish day school based at a Conservative synagogue, an interview was conducted with the Judaic studies director and the Judaic studies Holocaust teacher, Yaffa. Yaffa is an Israeli woman in her late 60s who is a long-time expert in Holocaust education. When she graduated from high school in Israel she was recruited by the Ministry of Education and received specialized training in teaching the Holocaust. Given her expertise and 20+ year tenure at the school, Yaffa has particularly strong influence over the curricular direction of Holocaust education at the school. She is responsible for developing the current eighth grade mandated year-long course on the Holocaust. At Hillel most of Holocaust instruction takes place in this course with the exception of programs centered on Holocaust Remembrance Day. The eighth grade course started out as a semester-long course and was recently expanded to a year-long course.

The course is student centered, and most of the coursework is research based. Students work in small groups on a long-term final research project. The course is taught through a chronological and thematic historical lens beginning with the years following World War I. Zionism and the founding of the State of Israel appear in multiple parts of the curriculum. The second unit is titled, "The Dream of Return – Formation of the Zionist Movement," and the course concludes with a unit on Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel called, "A Dream Comes True." One of the main enduring understandings of the course is that the founding of the State of Israel was a direct outcome of the Holocaust. Contemporarily, this is a contested historical perspective.

Yaffa and the administrator recounted a situation in which a parent came to them with a major concern about the link they were drawing between the founding of the State of Israel and the Holocaust. They said that, "the father didn't want to see the establishment of the State of Israel presented as an outcome of the Holocaust. Some say that we have Israel because of the Holocaust and some say not. This course teaches that Israel is a direct outcome of the Holocaust." No changes to the course were made in response to the father's concern.

In contrast, educators at three other schools described curricular changes that had been made over the years in response to parental concerns. Another parent at Hillel had concerns about the developmental appropriateness of the course, asserting that his eighth grade son was too young to learn about the Holocaust. Yaffa spoke with the father and explained that no inappropriately graphic images or materials would be presented to the students. She told him that she did not want to scare the students, but that what they were learning would indeed be shocking. Yaffa encourages family participation throughout the Holocaust course, sending home discussion questions for the family. She explained that she wants this "to be an education for the parents as well."

Yaffa's strong vision for graduates provides the rationale for the course. She wants her students to become, "Jewish ambassadors, human rights ambassadors, to be knowledgeable to fight Holocaust denial, and be agents for human equality." She believes it is important to "educate the younger generation. Forgive maybe. Forget never." The administrator added, "They will be going out into the world and they need to know who they are." The educators believe knowing about the Holocaust is integral to a complete Jewish education because it is such a significant event in Jewish history.

While Yaffa mentioned her vision for students to become human rights ambassadors, however the class syllabus does not specify any material towards this goal nor does it include other genocides. When asked why, she responded, "It is important for them to know their own history first. Then they can get into other comparisons." This course teaches the message of "never again." Today this phrase has two different connotations. To some people it means never again shall there be a Holocaust for the Jews. To others, it means never again should there be any genocide for any people in the world. In this school, the connotation is the former, focusing on the particular concern for Jews.

Yaffa said students are very motivated and invested in the course, gaining a sense of mastery by covering a single topic in so much depth. Young students in the school look forward to taking the Holocaust course in the eighth grade. Yaffa passes on to her students a sense of the great significance of the Holocaust and its role as a critical event in Jewish history.

Due to Yaffa's expertise in Holocaust education, the school is able to deliver a curriculum rich in historical content. Her longevity at the school has allowed the course to be taught consistently for over fifteen years. The course has become a cornerstone of the eighth grade curriculum.

Rambam School. What makes Rambam stand out among all the schools is its collaborative team approach to Holocaust education. The associate head of school works alongside a team of six teachers who were trained in *Facing History*. Together, they continuously develop a spiraled Holocaust curriculum for the middle school. The school is taking a new educational approach by incorporating *Facing History and Ourselves* vocabulary and values into the culture of the school. Even when students are not explicitly learning about the

Holocaust, they are learning about the values of taking personal responsibility, standing up for others, and fighting racism and hatred.

At Rambam, a community K-8 school, the associate head of school was interviewed. Richard has served on the faculty for over twenty years and has been the associate head of school for twelve years. Richard went on March of the Living as a staff member in 2011, after which, his interest in Holocaust education grew stronger. His approach to Holocaust education has been to work in collaboration with a group of teachers in curriculum development. At least fifteen years ago there was no formal Holocaust curriculum at the school. Then, seven years ago a group of seven general studies and Jewish studies teachers went to a *Facing History and Ourselves* training. This group of teachers returned to the school and began incorporating *Facing History* concepts into their classrooms. Four years ago the sixth, seventh and eighth grade teachers and the associate head of school planned out a structured scope and sequence for the middle school. In sixth grade, the Holocaust is taught through literature and language arts where students read Anne Frank and other literature. In seventh grade students study the Holocaust in Judaic studies where they study the years of 1919-1939, focusing on stereotyping and isolation. In eighth grade they study in social studies.

The sixth grade English teacher, Jenny, chose to attend the *Facing History* training seven years ago. She had always included Anne Frank in her curriculum, but not more than that. She thought the *Facing History* curriculum was "interesting and dynamic." She has found age-appropriate ways to incorporate it into her social studies and language arts curriculum. Using *Facing History* materials, she teaches about membership and the universe of obligation. Students read a shortened version of Anne Frank. They look at the question: how are so many people

victimized. She does not share any graphic materials such as images of concentration camps. She talks with her students about different forms of racism.

Seventh graders have a fourteen-week once-a-week English seminar using *Facing History* materials. The seventh grade teacher explained that he doesn't have family who was in the Holocaust nor other connections. His passion for the subject comes from his experiences on the *March of the Living*. He believes that the Holocaust is the most important thing that he can teach his students.

Students have varying responses to learning about anti-Semitism and racism. For example, the teacher said, "some students become very afraid when they learn about the KKK, and sometimes you [teachers] have to comfort your students." Overall, parents are very supportive. For example, one parent who does research on Jewish graves in Eastern Europe came into her child's seventh grade class to do a presentation.

Tehillah Community High School. Similar to Hillel Academy, Holocaust education at Tehillah Community High School is driven by an individual teacher with particular expertise and passion for teaching the Holocaust. Linda has taught at Tehillah for fifteen years. She is responsible for teaching the school's mandatory semester-long Holocaust course for the graduating class. She designed the course many years ago, and continues to modify and shape the curriculum every year. Linda's first encounter with Holocaust education was when she worked as a summer camp advisor for students who happened to be learning about the Holocaust. This experience sparked her interest in learning more about the Holocaust and how to teach about it.

She began as a Hebrew teacher, but after her first three years she expressed an interest in teaching the Holocaust. "The head of school was very supportive and encouraged me to 'go and learn how to teach the Holocaust.' Developing the curriculum was difficult," she said, "because nothing existed." First she attended a training course on how to use the *Echoes and Reflection* program, a multi-media, testimony-based curriculum published jointly by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, the Anti-Defamation League, and Yad Vashem. She also pursued other trainings as she developed the high school's first elective on the Holocaust. Then, seven years ago, Linda attended *a* five day intensive training course put on by *Facing History and Ourselves (Facing History)*. She was immediately inspired by *Facing History*'s focus on human behavior, identity, and responsibility; she proceeded to incorporate *Facing History*'s approach into her Holocaust elective. *Facing History*'s staff continues to provide great mentorship for her as she continuously develops her curriculum.

Linda's course does not focus on history. She explained that by the time students get to twelfth grade they know the history of the Holocaust from their tenth grade World History course. Linda takes a different approach. In her course students learn about anti-Semitism and how myths and propaganda about Jews were created and spread. She focuses on identity and human behavior, as presented in *Facing History*'s curriculum. She pushes her students, asking them, "Now that you've learned this [about the Holocaust], what are you going to do with that? How does it affect you?" She uses the Holocaust as an example of the worst of human behavior. "Now that you know this you have a responsibility to do something," she tells her students. Reiterating the point, she reflects, "Students *have* to do something." The course is intentionally taught to twelfth graders. "When they graduate they will go to college and encounter messages of anti-Semitism, racism, and anti-Zionism; they will be exposed to the reality of genocides around

the world. In this course they are learning, 'now I have an obligation to do something,'" she explains. The course is geared for the emotional maturity level of high school seniors. She takes into account what is and is not appropriate even for students in their late teens, carefully choosing which images to show to her students. She emphasized that she "does not show black and white footage of skeletons. It would be unfair to bombard them with that stuff." She said that learning about the Holocaust is shocking for her students, "but they don't cry." She believes that students "must internalize what they are learning, otherwise it is meaningless. It becomes a different level of conversation when they are connecting on the heart level." Even though Linda has spent years developing and expanding the curriculum for her Holocaust course, she returns to the curriculum regularly, rethinking and reworking it year after year. She continually seeks out new training from *Facing History* and other sources. She said she reads incessantly about the Holocaust and Holocaust education. While describing the importance of her own professional development she affirmed, "I will not allow myself to become complacent."

Linda had several recommendations for potential new curricular materials. She said there is a need for interdisciplinary units. She would be interested in something that might integrate science and technology. She could use more materials on teaching about anti-Semitism to Jewish students. The greatest need by far is for materials for middle school students, specifically seventh and eighth graders. She suggested that a curriculum on Holocaust and memory would be interesting to students by encouraging them to see the Holocaust through a lens other than history and human behavior.

From Hillel Academy and Tehillah Community high school, we learn that an individual teacher, not only an administrator, can have a huge impact on the direction of Holocaust education in a school. As Hillel Academy did, Tehillah Community High School has given the

teacher full freedom to develop a Holocaust course using her own expertise and vision. While the content of the courses at Hillel and Tehillah differ – the former focuses on history and heritage, while the latter focuses on human behavior and social justice – the strengths in both courses lie in the fact that the instructors are highly knowledgeable and passionate.

Conclusion

This study explored the state of Holocaust education in Jewish day schools by interviewing educators at nine Jewish day schools. By interviewing educators, the story of Holocaust education is presented through their eyes. If other stakeholders such as board members or parents, for example, had been the subjects of the interviews, it is possible the research would show these stakeholders play more of a role than this discussion implies.

Recommendations

Four recommendations for Holocaust curricula developers and educators in day schools emerged out of this research study. Schools should develop a thoughtful curricular plan based on well thought out goals that align with the mission of the school. Administrators and teachers should consider introducing the Holocaust in earlier grades in order to give elementary school students the opportunities to learn important lessons about values and heritage. Many resources on developmentally appropriate Holocaust education are available. Teaching the Holocaust is challenging for a number of reasons, and Jewish day schools should provide teachers with opportunities attend professional development trainings to gain both content knowledge and instructional skills. Teacher trainings designed for general education and specifically Jewish settings are both valuable. Several excellent organizations provide professional development opportunities. Most schools teach the Holocaust in general studies courses rather than Judaic studies courses. This is a missed opportunity for students to integrate their understanding of the Holocaust as both a general history and Jewish history event. The Holocaust should be taught in an integrated model that allows students to explore understanding the Holocaust relates to their Jewish identity. In addition to these recommendations, this study led to the development of a

curriculum guide for Jewish high school students on Jewish memory and Holocaust remembrance.

Goal based curricular planning. Every school should develop and document a customized Holocaust scope and sequence across grade levels and courses. This scope and sequence should be a result of thoughtful consideration of the school's rationale for teaching the Holocaust, goals, and objectives. Of the nine schools studied, only three were able to present a written document outlining the scope and sequence of their Holocaust curriculum. At Hillel Academy and Tehillah Community High School the teachers were able to provide detailed course outlines, and at Rambam Community School the administrator provided the structure of the school's Holocaust curriculum that covered what Holocaust content area is taught in which courses in each grade level of the school. The educators at all four 'exemplary schools' most clearly articulated the alignment of their visions and goals for Holocaust education with their curriculum. A school does not just have to choose one established curriculum. Ongoing research on Holocaust curricular materials will allow educators to customize Holocaust curriculum based on their schools' goals and values. Customizing the curriculum requires a significant time commitment. A dedicated educational leader with a personal investment and connection to Holocaust education is integral to a successful Holocaust education program.

Developmental appropriateness. Educators should learn about developmentally appropriate ways to teach about the Holocaust to students in a broad range of grade levels. Several schools avoid exposing their younger students to the Holocaust out of the belief that it is developmentally inappropriate to do so. Conversely, other schools, including Rauschman Academy and Hillel Academy introduce the Holocaust beginning in lower grades, in one case as

early as Kindergarten. Not teaching elementary age students about the Holocaust is a missed opportunity.

> Students in grades six and above demonstrate the ability to empathize with individual eyewitness accounts and to attempt to understand the complexities of this history, including the scope and scale of the events. While elementary students are able to empathize with individual accounts, they often have difficulty placing them in a larger historical context. Elementary school can be an ideal location to begin discussion of the value of diversity and the danger of bias and prejudice. (For Teachers: Teaching about the Holocaust)

As students mature, they are able to relate to broader groups and concepts. Lessons for middle school students tend to focus on the community and nation; lessons for high school students deal with the nation and the historical narrative. Yad Vashem's pedagogic center provides a wealth of curricular materials that adapt each unit to the social and cognitive developmental stages of the students (Yad Vashem Education and E-learning).

Professional development. Schools should provide opportunities and encouragement for educators to attend ongoing Holocaust training and professional development for teaching the Holocaust. Many city Holocaust museums provide trainings for teachers. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has an extensive department dedicated to providing teachers with educational resources and professional development. They provide lessons online and hold seminars at the museum in Washington D.C. The USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education provides trainings for teachers from around the United States and abroad on how to incorporate visual testimony into their Holocaust teaching. Their "Master Teacher

Program: Teaching with Testimony" provides professional development to one cohort of select teachers each year.

Yad Vashem is the largest Holocaust education center in the world. They provide in-depth courses in Israel for Holocaust educators from around the world. They also provide over ten different online workshops for teachers to gain Holocaust studies knowledge as well as pedagogy. Yad Vashem is one of the few organizations that provides professional development specifically for Jewish educators.

Facing History and Ourselves is entirely devoted to training teachers how to implement their curriculum on Holocaust and Human Behavior. Once teachers participate in one of their trainings, teachers are given life-long access to the wealth of *Facing History's* online curricular resources. In 1990, *Facing History* established their Jewish Education Program uses materials developed specifically for students in Jewish settings.

> Through the integration of history and ethics, this program promotes an understanding of how Jewish values can inspire students to combat prejudice with compassion and indifference with participation. Building on the internationally recognized strategies and resources of *Facing History and Ourselves,* the program uses materials and pedagogy developed specifically for Jewish educational settings that honor the principles of social justice and repairing the world. (Jewish Education Program)

Curriculum Guide

Informed by this research study, I developed a curriculum guide for a Jewish high school course about Jewish memory and Holocaust remembrance. This curriculum creates an opportunity for integrating general studies and Jewish studies. In order to do so, this curriculum may be taught in a Jewish studies course at the same time that the Holocaust is taught in a general studies language arts or social studies class. The curriculum is also appropriate for students who have previously studied the Holocaust in general studies courses. The curriculum places the Holocaust within the larger context of Jewish history and memory. Students will study Jewish historical narratives, rituals, and calls for action that emerge from Passover, Purim, Tisha B'Av, and the Holocaust. Throughout the course, students will reflect on how the Jewish Holocaust narrative affects their Jewish identity. Specifically, students will explore questions of how learning about the Holocaust affects their sense of belonging to the Jewish people, their relationship to non-Jews, and the sense of obligation and responsibility they feel to Jews and non-Jews around the world.

During interviews, several high school teachers expressed that their students often feel "stuck" or "disempowered" after learning about the Holocaust. They believe their students need an opportunity to *do something* with what they have learned. This curriculum culminates with students designing a commemorative ceremony and/or social action project inspired by their Holocaust studies. My hope is that through deep study of Jewish tradition and exploration of the Holocaust, students will have the opportunity to affirm their Jewish identity and sense of personal responsibility as they become independent members of the Jewish community and global society.

Appendix

Interview Protocol

Holocaust Education in Jewish Day Schools

Introduction: Thank you for participating in this research study on Holocaust Education in Jewish Day schools. It is my hope that this study will lead to a better picture of the range of Holocaust education in Jewish Day Schools. I expect this research will shed some light on the distinct and common issues and challenges facing educators regarding Holocaust education. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. I am particularly interested in hearing specific anecdotes that may illustrate your responses to the questions.

1. What school do you work at?
2. What is your title/position? Administrator/teacher/both? What courses/grade levels do you teach (if any)?
3. How many years have you been working at this school?
4. Is the Holocaust taught at your school?
5. If so, in what grades?
6. What curriculum do you use?
7. Is the curriculum a published curriculum or was it developed internally at your school?
8. Who elected to use the curriculum? If you did, what led you to this decision?
9. What modes are used when teaching the Holocaust? (Check all that apply.)

Check here	Model	Comments
	Literature: Fiction	
	Literature: Memoirs/Autobiographies	
	History/social studies	
	Film	
	Students conducting interviews/oral histories with survivors	
	Survivors speak in class/to school	
	Art/Drama	
	Videos of interviews with survivors	
	Museum visits (which museums?)	
	Student trip to Eastern Europe	
	Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony at School	
	Other (please describe)	

10. Is there any integration between Jewish studies and General Studies? If so, please describe.
11. Does the topic of God or theology ever enter the discussion? If so, how?
12. What background knowledge do students possess about the Holocaust before beginning class?
13. How would you describe students' reactions to learning about the Holocaust? Do you have any anecdotes about students' reactions or experience in classes?
14. What background do you have on the Holocaust and have you received any professional development in teaching the Holocaust?
15. When you started teaching, did you feel prepared to teach the Holocaust?

16. Is teaching the Holocaust an emotional experience for you? If so, how? Do you have any support when teaching the Holocaust?
17. How do parents respond when their children are learning about the Holocaust? Is there variation in parental responses?
18. Do you agree or disagree with the curricula that are used and the grades in which they are taught?
19. What *challenges* do you face as an educator regarding teaching the Holocaust or administering Holocaust education?
20. If it were up to you, would you make any changes to how the Holocaust is taught at your school?
21. Are there any resources you wish you had that you don't have right now?
22. What recommendations do you have for future Holocaust curricula and resources?
23. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?

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