

BIMA and Genesis at Brandeis University
Community Educator Job Description
Summer 2012

Community Educators (CEs) are graduate students or professionals who have experience working with high school students in Jewish experiential settings. The team of BIMA and Genesis CEs lives with the participants and is responsible for designing and implementing a curriculum of experiential Jewish and arts-based learning. At the same time, CEs invest significantly in thinking about their own professional development and the craft of experiential Jewish education.

This document outlines the main responsibilities of a community educator at BIMA and Genesis: (1) residential and community life, (2) Jewish life and educational programming, (3) recreational options, and (4) professional development.

Residential and Community Life

Community Educators, together with the interns, form the residential staff of BIMA and Genesis (see “working with interns” below). The residential team plays a key role in fostering a nurturing environment where participants can connect with each other, learn and challenge themselves. They form relationships with the participants and model the behavior of encountering and understanding people from diverse backgrounds, as well as facilitate ways for the participants to encounter each other.

Members of the residential staff:

- Live in the residence halls with the participants;
- Monitor the physical and emotional wellbeing of the participants;
- Support the participants in following the community guidelines and making responsible decisions as they negotiate living in the community at Brandeis;
- Create a safe, supportive environment within which participants can expand their comfort zones and explore new ways of expressing themselves;
- Collaborate with the participants to shape a vibrant, diverse Jewish (artistic) community;
- Consider creative ways of approaching “unstructured” time in the program.

More information on what it means to live in the dorms with the participants will be provided in a separate document on “Residential Life at BIMA and Genesis”.

Jewish Life and Educational Programming

The CEs work independently and as a group to frame programming in the area of the Jewish life of the communities (including, but not limited to, exploring issues around Jewish practice, Shabbat, ways of relating to Israel, Jewish identity). The CEs are also responsible for helping the participants bring together the different parts of their experiences through community building and exploration of diverse Jewish community.

Educational Programming

Each CE will have the opportunity to lead a set of educational programs with a small group of participants. BIMA and Genesis approach this piece of the program differently:

Each BIMA CE will design and facilitate an “Artist Beit Midrash” experience, using the arts (music, theater, visual arts, writing, dance, or interdisciplinary arts) to explore Jewish texts, questions of identity, and more.

Each Genesis CE will design and facilitate an “Expedition” that explores the important facets of community: people, ideas, and experiences. The expeditions are hands-on explorations that culminate with authentic experiences that are shaped by the participants.

Detailed descriptions of these educational frameworks will be shared in the interview process. CEs will do much of the individual planning prior to the summer with support from senior staff members. Collaborative planning will happen during staff orientation and throughout the summer.

Shabbat and Weekday Options

The team of CEs will work with the Shabbat Coordinator to plan Shabbat and determine ways of engaging the participants in Shabbat planning and celebration each week. Participants will be engaged in planning the beginning and end of Shabbat, as well as some elements of meals and Shabbat afternoon.

The CEs and other faculty will take responsibility for “*She’arim*,” both *tefilah* and non-*tefilah* options on Monday and Thursday weekday mornings, as well as Friday night and Shabbat morning.

Chofesh: Recreational Options

Participants and educators deal with free time in various ways; some know what to do with their free time, and others seek out organized activities through which to connect to other participants and educators and give them a focus for the free time in the schedule. Throughout the summer the CEs will be responsible for offering optional recreational activities during the afternoon chofesh (rest) time block. These will be coordinated in advance and throughout by a member of the community education team.

As part of our emphasis on collaboration, the participants will have the opportunity to plan some evening activities for the larger community. CEs will work closely with small groups of participants to design and facilitate programming during several open time slots. These may or may not be open to BIMA and Genesis together, at the discretion of the planning committee.

Ongoing Learning Opportunities

We believe that every member of the educational team is both an educator and a learner. Our staff engages in reflective practice and models a philosophy of life-long learning that supports our work with the participants. The CEs work collaboratively and invest significantly in thinking

about their own professional learning and the craft of experiential Jewish education. The CE team functions as a research group studying their practice as Jewish educators – individually and as a group. Over the course of the summer, each CE will cultivate an area of inquiry for a reflective investigation. The CEs will work closely with members of the senior staff on their investigations.

Working with the Interns

The BIMA and Genesis interns are current university juniors or seniors who are interested in learning and practicing experiential Jewish and arts education. Interns have a variety of responsibilities within the programs, including sharing responsibility with the CEs for all aspects of residential life. Interns also take part in their own significant professional development as a group and individually. The CEs serve as educational role models and informal mentors for the interns throughout the summer.

Typical Daily Schedule

Mornings

Meet to review the weekly schedule, discuss upcoming programs, go over plans for Shabbat, prepare for program facilitation, participate in staff learning

Afternoons

Facilitate educational programming, offer recreational activities, meet with participants planning aspects of Shabbat or other community activities, meet with small groups of participants to check in and process their experience, be accessible during free time

After Dinner

Serve as staff support for pre-planned activities such as performances or guest sessions, participate in programming that other CEs and/or groups of participants have planned.

Late Evenings

Be around the dorms in the evenings before curfew, take turns being on check-in duty to make sure that the participants return to their dorms and quiet down so that everyone can go to sleep.

Scheduled Time off

Community educators will have three 24-hour days off on the first three Sundays of the program. They will also have two nights out (beginning at dinner and ending at curfew) that will be coordinated at the beginning of the summer.