Dear Friends,

We are delighted to bring you the Mandel Center’s annual report for the year ending June 2009.

In the pages ahead, you’ll meet some of the talented and diverse people who make up the Center, learn about our insistent emphasis on inquiry, and explore the kinds of impact we have on the world of Jewish education. At the Center, we are committed to investigating and improving the practice of teaching in Jewish education—studying with specificity and rigor the interaction of teachers, learners, and content in the various contexts of Jewish learning and teaching.
As in the practice of law or medicine, the practice of teaching involves a set of professional activities that requires ongoing decision-making with imperfect information; continual reflection on the wisdom, efficacy, and ethics of those decisions; and mentorship by more experienced colleagues. The professional practice of teaching is also intellectual work. While much of the Center’s work of research and inquiry is carried out by experienced researchers, a great deal is done by veteran and novice Jewish educators investigating aspects of their own practice.

For inquiry to have an impact, it must become public, shared with peers and the field at large. In the past seven years, we have published dozens of working papers and peer-reviewed journal articles (including twenty-one in the past year alone). This year, three of our research projects—the Beit Midrash Research Project, the Bridging Initiative, and Choosing to Teach—arrived at a new stage: writing project-based books. And with a new grant from the Covenant Foundation, the Induction Partnership is creating an online toolkit for use by a range of schools in supporting beginning teachers.

The Mandel-DeLeT Project has grown into a set of connected teacher-learning initiatives. What began as a standalone fellowship program now includes (a) a year-long graduate program of teacher preparation; (b) two years of support and guidance for recent graduates; (c) an active alumni professional learning community; (d) longitudinal research on the teachers’ learning and careers; and (e) a network of local partner schools (which are critical to the work of teacher education).

For growth and learning to occur, time for restful reflection and writing is also necessary. It is fitting that, in our seventh year, our assistant academic director, Jon Levisohn, took a much-needed sabbatical to work on his research and writing. And as you read these words, I have already begun my own sabbatical—my first in fifteen years—during which I will be writing about teacher education for Jewish schools and learning to teach.

In this new academic and Jewish year, may we all—practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders in Jewish education—find the moments and the resources to look at our work anew and be refreshed by our inquiry.

Biv’racha,

Sharon Feiman-Nemser
The people at the Mandel Center make up a passionate and diverse community of professional learners: A senior educational leader from the world of congregational schools. A newly minted PhD with a strong background in classical Jewish texts and social justice work. Scholars bringing their expertise in general education to the field of Jewish education. A rabbi and Jewish adult educator shepherding and editing substantive works of teacher research. A postdoctoral fellow from Israel pursuing qualitative research and teaching teachers. A growing network of talented practitioners who serve as mentors and teacher-leaders in their schools.

The richness and impact of the Center’s work emerges from the quality of its educators, researchers, and thinkers—smart people asking smart questions.
AN ENGAGED SCHOLAR
As a postdoctoral fellow at the Center, Inbar Galili-Schachter completed her dissertation for the Hebrew University on how teachers of Jewish texts in secular Israeli high schools conceptualize the work of interpreting and teaching those texts. Her work at the Center also included supporting teaching interns at Gann Academy and serving as an instructor in the Tanakh MAT program—building on her years of experience as a teacher and teacher educator in Israel—and presenting her research locally and at the Network for Research in Jewish Education.

AN EMERGING TEACHER-LEADER
A graduate of the second cohort of the Center’s DeLeT teacher education program, Jared Matas has become an accomplished teacher at JCDS, Boston’s Jewish Community Day School, and this year served as mentor-teacher for DeLeT interns. With two other DeLeT alumni, he started a monthly study group in which veteran and novice teachers reflect on their practice using professional teacher study protocols. This year, Matas served on the organizing committee for the first North American DeLeT alumni gathering. His research presentation there focused on an election curriculum for kindergartners as an example of engaging young children in contemporary issues.

A SENIOR EDUCATOR WITH A NATIONAL REPUTATION
Serene Victor has more than thirty years of experience working in the world of congregational education as a teacher, teacher educator, and consultant. She was a participant in the Mandel Teacher Educator Institute and has designed and led a national institute for school directors. Victor received an honorary doctorate from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in recognition of her extensive professional accomplishments. In 2008–09, she brought her deep knowledge of professional development to her new role as faculty leader of the DeLeT/MAT program.

FROM GENERAL EDUCATION TO JEWISH EDUCATION
Sarah Birkeland’s research—which she presents in many general and Jewish education forums—focuses on new teacher induction. She has a doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she continues as a research affiliate with the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. At the Center, she has collaborated with Sharon Feiman-Nemser on several articles about building professional learning communities and was lead researcher/evaluator for the Induction Partnership. She currently coaches a day school in Seattle as part of our effort to understand and promote schoolwide induction practices.

MORE ABOUT PEOPLE AT THE CENTER
LISTEN TO INBAR GALILI-SCHACHTER PRESENT HER RESEARCH
LEARN ABOUT THE DELET ALUMNI CONFERENCE
> AVAILABLE AT WWW.BRANDEIS.EDU/MANDEL
Learning begins with inquiry. The Mandel Center brings together teachers and scholars across multiple contexts, refining their practice and knowledge through the cultivation of inquiry, disciplined curiosity, and shared learning. Some of our projects are carried out by highly trained investigators; others promote practitioner research, shaping educators into partners in the study of practice. Some of our professional development programs bring together experienced educators in the field; others nurture novices. In all this work, oriented toward the particulars of teaching and learning in Jewish education, we seek to transform teachers’ thinking, their professional settings, and the enterprise of Jewish education.
STUDYING CLASSROOM CONVERSATION
What do academically productive classroom conversations look like—and how can we foster them? In January, Sarah Michaels, professor of education and senior research scholar at the Jacob Hiatt Center for Urban Education at Clark University, presented her research on Accountable Talk™ in K–8 classrooms as the inaugural Mandel Teacher Forum Scholar. She worked with the DeLeT mentors’ study group in the months following the presentation, exploring the teaching of prayer. With Michaels’s participation, the group designed model lessons (which were then taught by two of the mentors) and analyzed videotapes of the lessons in action. Veteran teachers developed their pedagogical thinking through shared inquiry and disciplined peer discussion.

THE “PEDAGOGY OF SLOWING DOWN”
When Jane Kanarek, assistant professor of Talmud at the Hebrew College Rabbinical School, reviewed data from her summer teaching at the Northwoods Kollel at Camp Ramah of Wisconsin, she was struck by the pervasive theme of “slowing down” in her teaching. After a systematic analysis of this theme in her data, in consultation with Center staff, Kanarek presented her research first to a Center-sponsored faculty research seminar and to our Conference on Teaching Rabbinic Literature in 2008. She then worked with Susan Fendrick, senior research associate, to develop her paper for publication. Kanarek’s thick description of the pedagogical model of slowing down illustrates how those practices can help students at all levels become more attentive readers—bridging the gap between ancient text and contemporary students.

WHY DO TEACHERS “CHOOSE TO TEACH,” AND WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM WHEN THEY DO?
In late spring, Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Eran Tamir interviewed faculty, staff, and leaders of the Alliance for Catholic Education at the University of Notre Dame. They recorded the various ways that different faculty members understand and support teachers’ spiritual and professional growth. This was one of the last steps in data collection for Choosing to Teach, a comparative, longitudinal study of beginning teachers in Jewish, Catholic, and urban public schools. This year, the Choosing research team produced a set of memos on the concepts that undergird the study: context-specific teacher education, identity formation in teaching, teacher retention and leadership, and visions of good teaching in practice. Researchers also shared preliminary findings in five scholarly papers and at an international research conference in Israel. A book, Inspiring Teaching, is in its early stages.

MORE ABOUT INQUIRY AT THE CENTER
DOWNLOAD JANE KANAREK’S PAPER
HEAR FROM STUDENTS WHO CHOOSE TO TEACH
> AVAILABLE AT WWW.BRANDEIS.EDU/MANDEL
The impact of the Mandel Center is measured in terms of ideas, institutions, and people: new and powerful ideas about teaching and learning, institutions with improved ways of working, and people with stronger capacities to create the conditions for learning for students and colleagues. Our research, professional development programs, and publications are shaping the discourse in the field of Jewish education. Teachers bring practices developed in the laboratory setting of the Center to other teaching contexts. And intensive, ongoing work with schools to improve their cultures for teaching and learning pays off in systemwide transformation. This is the Center’s core mission: studying Jewish teaching to revitalize Jewish learning.
Abby Shapiro, an English teacher at Gann Academy in Waltham, Massachusetts, and a participant in the Induction Partnership, now applies what she learned toward mentoring newer teachers at her school.

Allison Cook and Orit Kent design a *beit midrash* for Kesher, an afternoon school in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
**SYSTEMIC IMPACT ON JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS**

Through its partnerships with seven local Jewish day schools, the Center effects systemwide improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Novice teachers learn to teach within DeLeT partner schools; experienced teachers—over one hundred to date—participate in our mentoring workshops; and the Induction Partnership is significantly improving new teacher induction and professional development. All of these develop and deepen each school’s wider capacity for professional learning. The Center is now extending its work by creating and piloting an online induction toolkit for use by a wide range of schools. In addition, a cross-school study group has chosen to continue meeting at the Center, with our support, to pursue collaborative work.

**SHAPING THE DISCOURSE ON JEWISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

The only research center of its kind, the Mandel Center helps shape the discourse around inquiry and practice across educational settings. “The Mandel Center makes a distinctive contribution to the development of transformative ideas and practices in Jewish education,” says Alex Pomson, senior researcher at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and former chair of the Network for Research in Jewish Education. “Its DeLeT program has created a new paradigm for preservice Jewish teacher education. The published writings and presentations at national and international conferences by Center faculty, staff, and affiliated scholars have significantly advanced our understanding of areas as diverse as the pedagogy of classical Jewish studies, havruta learning, and teacher induction. In the short time since its founding, one strong thread—disciplined investigation of the core practices of teaching and learning—has become the Center’s most prominent signature.”

**FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE, CONCEPT TO PUBLICATION**

Concepts and strategies from our Beit Midrash research project for designing batei midrash (environments for intensive text study) and teaching the practices of havruta learning (paired study of sacred texts) are being piloted in a third-grade classroom in Marblehead, Massachusetts; in a summer institute for rabbis and teachers at the University of Cincinnati; and in a Jewish after-school program in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Two books are currently in the works—one offers conceptual and practical tools for teaching havruta text study in a batei midrash, while the other presents a contemporary theory of six distinct practices of havruta learning with illustrations of its use in three educational settings.

**MORE ABOUT THE CENTER’S IMPACT**

READ ABOUT THE NEW INDUCTION GRANT
SEE ORIT KENT PRESENT HER WORK ON HAVRUTA
> AVAILABLE AT WWW.BRANDEIS.EDU/MANDEL
The Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education is dedicated to transforming the quality of teaching and learning in Jewish education by supporting innovative research, pioneering new approaches to professional development, and shaping discourse in the study and practice of Jewish education.

**RESEARCH PROJECTS**

**Beit Midrash Research Project**
This project investigates two distinctive forms of Jewish learning: the interpretation of Jewish texts in a group context (*beit midrash*) and paired study (*havruta*). Research is carried out within the DeLeT/MAT program at Brandeis, as well as within a professional development project at the Center for Jewish Education and Culture at the University of Cincinnati.

**Induction Partnership**
The Induction Partnership generates knowledge about the support, development, and retention of beginning teachers in Jewish day schools. The project creates strong pilot induction programs in schools locally and nationally that serve as sites for research.

**DeLeT/Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)**
A joint initiative of the Education Program at Brandeis University and the Mandel Center, the DeLeT/MAT program prepares teacher-leaders for Jewish day schools and serves as a laboratory for research on teacher preparation, induction, and retention.

**Scholars Program**
The Mandel Center builds capacity for the academic field of Jewish education by supporting scholars at various stages of their careers.

**Choosing to Teach: A Study of Beginning Teachers in Jewish, Catholic, and Public Schools**
This comparative study examines the interactive effects of personal background, teacher preparation, and school context on the identity, teaching, and career commitments of new teachers in Jewish, Catholic, and public schools.

**Longitudinal Study of DeLeT Graduates**
Through ongoing surveys of students and alumni of the DeLeT program at the Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles and the DeLeT/MAT program at Brandeis, this project studies the career patterns, teaching practices, working conditions, and Jewish and other life choices of Jewish day school teachers. This study also surveys individuals before and after the programs to assess their impact.

**Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy in Jewish Studies**
The Bridging Initiative promotes new images and deeper understandings of the teaching of Jewish studies in multiple settings by facilitating critical dialogue among scholars and teachers at all levels and by developing a new tradition of practice-centered research.

**Philosophy of Education Research Colloquia (PERC)**
PERC offers a series of colloquia, open to the public, that deals broadly with educational matters from a humanistic, comparative, and historical perspective.
RESEARCH PRODUCTS

Mandel Center researchers share their research in a variety of venues before audiences of scholars and practitioners. They are invited each year to present at conferences across the United States and in Israel, and they publish their work in books and academic journals such as *Educational Policy* and the *Journal of Jewish Education*.

A comprehensive list of our presentations and publications can be found at our Web site, www.brandeis.edu/mandel.

Selected Presentations


Selected Publications


FACULTY AND STAFF
Sharon Feiman-Nemser  
Director; Mandel Professor of Jewish Education

Jon A. Levisohn*  
Assistant Academic Director; Assistant Professor of Jewish Education

Nora Abrahamer  
Senior Associate Director of Operations and Development

Sarah Birkeland  
Senior Research Associate

Jacob Cytryn  
Research Assistant

Janna Rogat Dorfman  
Assistant Director of Communications and Development

Susan P. Fendrick  
Senior Research Associate

Karen Hammerness  
Senior Researcher

Galit Higgins  
Executive Assistant

Elie Holzer  
Senior Research Associate

Bethamie Horowitz  
Senior Researcher

Kavita Kapadia  
Senior Researcher

Orit Kent  
Senior Research Associate

*on sabbatical 2008–09

Deb Laufer  
Program Coordinator, DeLeT/MAT

Stacie Martinez  
Office Manager

Gevelyn McCaskill  
Financial Consultant

Nili Pearlmutter  
Senior Education Specialist

Marcie Quaroni  
Senior Events and Projects Coordinator

Rebecca Silvera-Sasson  
Jewish Teacher Education Specialist

Eran Tamir  
Senior Research Associate

Vivian Troen  
Senior Education Specialist

Serene Victor  
Faculty Leader, DeLeT/MAT

Student Workers
Anne Carver  
Emily Fishman  
Abby Laufer  
Leah Loeterman

SCHOLARS PROGRAM
Israel Scheffler  
Scholar-in-Residence; Victor S. Thomas Professor Emeritus of Education and Philosophy, Harvard University

Susan Shevitz  
Affiliated Scholar

Inbar Galili-Schachter  
Pcostdoctoral Fellow

DELET/MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING
Field Instructors
Leslie Bazer  
Cindy Shulak-Rome

Core Instructors
Ellen Alt  
David Bernat  
Jennifer Douglas  
Sharon Feiman-Nemser  
Leila Joseffer  
Orit Kent  
Jon Levisohn  
Lesley Litman  
Nili Pearlmutter  
Joe Reimer  
Faye Ruopp  
Rebecca Silvera-Sasson  
Francesca Stark  
Serene Victor

Mentor Teachers
at South Area Solomon Schechter Day School
Shira Horowitz  
Shira Loewenstein  
Sharon Packer

at JCDS, Boston’s Jewish Community Day School
Emily Beck  
Jared Matas  
Lee Silverberg

at Cohen Hillel Academy
Meg Lederman  
Jocelyn Segal
FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

The Mandel Center is a partnership between the Mandel Foundation of Cleveland, Ohio, and Brandeis University, which has enabled Brandeis to establish the Center’s home on the Brandeis campus and to recruit talented researchers and teacher educators to carry out a distinctive program of research and professional development.

The Mandel Center and Brandeis University gratefully acknowledge the additional support of the following foundations and individuals:

- Induction Partnership
  - Covenant Foundation
- Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy
  - Targum Shlishi

Mandel-DeLeT Project
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The Mandel Center collaborates with the following institutions:

School Partners
- DeLeT/MAT
  - Cohen Hillel Academy
  - JCDS, Boston’s Jewish Community Day School
  - South Area Solomon Schechter Day School

Induction Partnership
- Cohen Hillel Academy
- Gann Academy
- JCDS, Boston’s Jewish Community Day School
- Maimonides School
- The Rashi School
- South Area Solomon Schechter Day School

Partners in Research and Professional Development
- Alliance for Catholic Education, University of Notre Dame
- Urban Teacher Education Program, University of Chicago
- Center for Studies in Jewish Education and Culture, University of Cincinnati