The Mandel Center provides a unique blend of pre-service, induction, and in-service learning opportunities for Jewish educators. In the short time it has been in existence, the Center has become a beacon for seasoned educators, academics, and young teachers. Through teaching several courses in the DeLeT program, participating in the Teaching Bible Conference, as well as in many conversations for Jewish professionals sponsored by the Center, my own professional horizons have expanded dramatically. And this is just the beginning of the Center’s impact on the world of Jewish learning. Yasher Koakh.

—Lesley Litman
DeLeT Instructor and alumna of the Mandel Jerusalem Fellows
Dear Friends of the Mandel Center,

I am pleased to share with you the Mandel Center’s annual report for 2004–05. This year marks the first time we have published our report in this form. We had many other “firsts” this year, as well.

On November 18, 2004, we celebrated the opening of our beautiful new home on the campus of Brandeis University with a well-attended colloquium featuring three visionary educational leaders, a ribbon-cutting ceremony, and a festive celebration where we honored the Mandel family for their generosity and continuing support. Being in our new space has enabled us to build a distinct identity on campus and a sense of intellectual community.

This year, we awarded our first postdoctoral fellowship to Susan Kardos, who completed her doctorate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in June 2004. We awarded our first dissertation fellowship to Susie Tanchel, an extraordinary Bible teacher at the Gann Academy and doctoral student in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis. And Professor Israel Schleffer, who joined the Center as scholar-in-residence last year, revived his Philosophy of Education Research Colloquia and taught us at several extended staff meetings.

Another first, and a highlight of the year, was a very successful research conference on the teaching of Bible in January. Chaired by Jon Levisohn, assistant academic director of the Center, the conference was a rare opportunity to bring together Bible scholars and Jewish educators from all levels in lively discussions about the purposes and practices of teaching Bible.

In its third successful year under the leadership of Judy Elkin, DeLeT partnered with local Jewish day schools to prepare and induct beginning teachers. DeLeT has helped develop school cultures that emphasize teacher learning at all levels. Nineteen graduates from the Brandeis DeLeT Program are currently teaching in day schools along the East Coast, and this year we recruited eight of them to continue their studies in the new Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Brandeis. Under the leadership of Vivian Troen, experienced teacher and teacher educator, DeLeT has also created a strong professional community of mentor teachers.

I hope you will read the report that follows to learn more about these
and other projects at the Mandel Center (11 projects in all). I especially want to emphasize the ways in which our research initiatives are beginning to bear fruit. When Brandeis cohosted the annual meeting of the Network for Research in Jewish Education in June of this year, Mandel Center researchers, faculty, and doctoral students were prominent on the program. The Bridging Initiative is preparing to publish a number of studies on the teaching of Bible, the *Beit Midrash* study will shortly produce its first set of articles, and the Boston Mandel Teacher Educator Institute has published results from a survey of participating schools.

We remain committed to our mission—improving the quality of Jewish education through close attention to teaching and innovative programs for Jewish educators—and we look forward to another year of firsts in 2005–06.

Sharon Feiman-Nemser Director

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**Introduction**

This report presents the Mandel Center’s 11 current projects, organized around two broad themes:

a) Educating Jewish Educators, pp. 4–9

b) Pedagogies of Jewish Studies, pp. 10–12

The first theme signals our interest in systemic approaches to professional learning that span initial preparation, induction, and continuing professional development for educational leaders. Mandel Center programs for Jewish educators at different career stages serve as laboratories for research on the challenges of teacher education and professional development as they manifest themselves in Jewish educational settings. The chart on page 9 represents the continuum of learning opportunities for educators at each stage of their careers.

The second theme encompasses a set of research questions regarding the purposes and practices of teaching Jewish studies and its subdisciplines, as well as other pedagogic practices that are particular to Jewish education.

The third section of the report describes activities and special accomplishments in the areas of community partnerships, awards, and general infrastructure building.
DeLeT, a program that partners with local Jewish day schools, aims to prepare day school teachers who can teach general and Judaic studies, create meaningful connections across subjects, ignite children’s curiosity, and approach teaching as an inquiry into the minds and souls of their students. Each year, fellowships are awarded to approximately 10 candidates who are expected to complete the 13-month program and go on to influence the field of Jewish day school teaching. We are committed to strengthening our school partnerships and providing high quality mentors for DeLeT fellows by helping experienced day school teachers develop the skills and dispositions of effective mentoring.

**Accomplishments**

- In three years, DeLeT has produced 19 day school teachers who currently teach in five cities along the East Coast: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Providence.
- We expanded our pool of DeLeT partner schools to include Reform, Conservative, Community, and Modern Orthodox day schools.
- This year, eight DeLeT graduates enrolled in the Jewish day school track of the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program at Brandeis. The Program provides ongoing support to beginning teachers and involves a third summer of graduate study leading to a M.A.T. degree.
- M.A.T. students presented their classroom research projects at a mini-conference in July 2005.
- 2004–05 was the first year of a three-year post-pilot phase for DeLeT. During this period of decreasing national funding, we are developing ways to integrate DeLeT into the Brandeis University structure and secure long-term funding for the Program.
- DeLeT offers an intense, coherent, substantive program of professional and clinical studies that combines the latest research on teacher education with our best insights about the formation of Jewish educators. It has influenced national initiatives such as the JERRI (Jewish Educator Recruitment and Retention) project of JESNA and contributed to a broader conversation about quality teaching and learning in Jewish day schools.
- DeLeT meets the state of Massachusetts requirements for initial licensure.

“**DeLeT provided a wonderful doorway into the world of Jewish day school teaching. I feel much more confident, comfortable, and skilled as a first-year teacher thanks to my DeLeT year.”**

—Jared Matas, first grade, Jewish Community Day School
Mentor Teacher Development

Leader: Vivian Troen

As a professional development initiative, the Mentor Teacher Development Program is structured to support both teacher and student learning. The goal is to create a community of practice among Jewish day school teachers in which active leadership and rigorous exchange about teaching and learning among colleagues are normal instruments of continuous improvement. This requires a commitment to teacher development as part of the ongoing work of teachers, and recognition that mentoring is an important skill in the toolkit of the professional classroom teacher.

Accomplishments

• Nine mentor teachers have been actively engaged in creating a cross-school learning community that helps to combat the traditional isolation of classroom teachers.
• Ongoing professional development for mentor teachers takes place through a summer institute, as well as a monthly cross-school study group throughout the school year.
• Leadership opportunities for experienced mentor teachers have been created including facilitating the Beginning Teacher Network, instructing in the DeLeT Program, planning and implementing workshops for new mentors, and doing teacher research on teaching Bible.

“Mentoring has been an experience that has really exceeded my expectations. It has given me a place to grow as a teacher, and an educational learner. My teaching has been changed forever—and for the better.”

—Participating Mentor, Mentor Teacher Development

“Being part of DeLeT means reflecting on the art of teaching for new teachers, for experienced teachers, and for administrators. We have benefited from the infusion of ‘new blood’ each year as the DeLeT Fellows become a part of our staff in every way. We have also had the tremendous resource of the DeLeT faculty to help guide us. It is hard to imagine our school without our partnership with DeLeT.”

—Jane Cohen, head, South Area Solomon Schechter, Stoughton, MA
Beginning Teacher Network

Leader: Nili Pearlmutter

The primary goal of the Beginning Teacher Network is to nurture new teachers in Jewish day schools during their difficult first years of teaching and to provide tools to help them develop a professional practice. Through the Network, we hope to encourage the development of a community of teacher-leaders across Jewish day schools in the Greater Boston area. The Network also provides an opportunity for experienced teachers to share their expertise and continue their own professional development.

Accomplishments

- The Beginning Teacher Network met nine times (monthly, from October–June); each meeting included 6–13 participants and three experienced teachers as leaders.
- Participants reported that the sessions were both enjoyable and helped them improve their teaching. Experienced teacher leaders expressed satisfaction with the effect of their leadership roles on their own professional development.
- An email group was created, which the participants and leaders used for discussion and problem solving.

At our final session we asked participants to fill out feedback forms. These were some of the comments:

“This is one of the most helpful things I have done this year of teaching.”

“[It’s] good to always think about issues with other teachers, be inspired, know that other new teachers go through similar issues/problems.”

“It is amazing to get support through such a tough year.”

“Choosing to Teach” Study

Leader: Susan M. Kardos

Choosing to Teach is a collaborative venture with Notre Dame University and the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE). The project is a comparative study of beginning teachers in Jewish, Catholic, and mission-driven public schools. The results of this research project will contribute to our understanding of professional and religious identity formation and will have important implications for teacher recruitment and retention.

Accomplishments

- In May 2005, we organized a joint DeLeT/ACE new-teacher retreat focused on the questions: Why do I teach? Why do I teach in a Jewish or Catholic school? The three-day retreat was attended by approximately 24 new teachers, four Mandel Center staff, four ACE staff, Rabbi Allan Lehmann...
Induction Initiative in Jewish Day Schools

Coleaders: Pearl Mattenson and Vivian Troen

Like most public schools, Jewish day schools are not organized to support and sustain beginning teachers. Yet, we know from research and personal experience that the first years of teaching often determine whether novices stay in teaching and what kind of teacher they become. The purpose of this research and development initiative is to build the capacity, in a diverse set of day schools, to support new teachers, while learning more about what it takes to create the formal and informal structures for this purpose. Institutional case studies that document the opportunities and barriers to quality induction in Jewish day schools will enable others to learn from this new initiative.

Accomplishments

• Teams from six day schools in Boston and New York, including heads of schools, participated in a two-day working conference to review relevant research on new-teacher induction, discuss a set of guiding principles, reflect on current efforts in Jewish day schools to support new teachers, and discuss the conditions for participation in the initiative.
• Five schools that vary in size, sponsorship, and structure signed up to participate in the Induction Initiative.
• We assembled a talented team of coaches and documenters to work with the schools in this three-year initiative.
• Project leadership (Pearl Mattenson, Susan Kardos, Sharon Feiman-Nemser) presented at a national conference on new-teacher induction sponsored by the JERRI initiative of JESNA (Jewish Education Services of North America).

—I know that I have walked away with a new appreciation of the Jewish faith, their fervent study of text, and their dedication to keeping the Jewish tradition alive. Also, I walked away with a deeper appreciation for my own.”

—ACE Teacher

“I was blown away by the quality of the people.... It is very inspiring to be with peers that are engaged in very similar work and struggling with similar challenges as I am. Teaching can often be isolating—it was inspiring to have this opportunity to share stories and reflect deeply on what we are doing.”

—DeLeT Teacher

“I was much more reflective during Tfillot (the morning prayer services) in my classroom this week, asking myself what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how we could be more effective in fulfilling our goals.”

—DeLeT Teacher
Teacher Education and Professional

The project built a sense of community among like-minded educators and educational leaders from a variety of settings, and developed connections to the Mandel Center at Brandeis. Together we explored the core idea of vision in contemporary general and Jewish education. The group engaged in both theoretical and practical discussions related to Jewish education.

Visions of Jewish Education Study Group

Leaders: Barry Holtz and Sharon Feiman-Nemser

Open to Boston senior educators who are graduates of programs funded by the Mandel Foundation (Jerusalem Fellows, MTEI, Boston MTEI), and with scholars and educators who have ongoing affiliations with the Mandel Center at Brandeis, the study group met monthly to explore the concept of vision in Jewish and general education, and to study the volume *Visions of Jewish Education* (eds. Fox, Scheffler, Marom).

Accomplishments

- Twenty-one participants met nine times during the academic year for two-hour sessions.

Accomplishments

- Throughout the year, participants worked on the design and implementation of professional development projects, reported on their school-based projects, and received help and feedback from the group as well as from BJE consultants.
- Year-long professional development initiatives took place in all the participating schools (Beth Elohim, Acton; Kesher, Cambridge and Newton; Maimonides School; Rashi School; Temple Beth David, Westwood; year-long mentoring projects occurred at Beth Elohim, Acton; Kerem Shalom, Concord; and Temple Emunah, Lexington).

Boston Mandel Teacher Educator Institute (MTEI)

Leader: Gail Z. Dorph

Boston MTEI is a professional development initiative sponsored jointly with the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston, with support and guidance from Combined Jewish Philanthropies. Its purpose is to create a cadre of school-based educators to work on the design and implementation of innovative learning opportunities for teachers in their own settings. The goal of the program during the 2004–05 academic year was to sustain and deepen the professional development initiatives of participating schools in order to foster teacher learning and develop a collaborative professional culture. Six school teams (representing eight schools in total) participated in a year-long study group.
“Working as a team on an ongoing basis helped us to creatively work to create opportunities for our teacher and to solve problems related to MTEI. In a way, our MTEI team was a microcosm of our site project. MTEI gave us opportunities to come together as professionals and discuss teaching together. It helped us to work and grow as a team and deepened our professional relationships.”

—MTEI Participant

“I grew to have a common language with teachers from Reform to Orthodox, from after-school programs and from day schools. Discussions that were a bit hesitant at first, because of our differences, grew easier over time, as we got more friendly, came to respect each other regardless of where we came from and trusted that we were all in the same game and were there to help each other. And the icing on the cake was the networking, just getting to know more teachers from all over the Boston area and learning a bit about their schools.”

—MTEI Participant

“I felt much less isolated as a teacher. I had people around me with whom I could share strategies on challenges and the highs of successes. I was no longer behind that shut door. I became much more invested in my own learning and in the learning of my students as my horizons were widened beyond my classroom.”

—MTEI Participant

A Continuum of Learning Opportunities for Jewish Educators

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<tr>
<th>Career Phases</th>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>Continuing professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Opportunities</td>
<td>DeLeT</td>
<td>Beginning Teacher Network Choosing to Teach Induction Initiative</td>
<td>MTEI Visions Study Group Mentor Teacher Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11
Leader: Jon A. Levisohn

The Bridging Initiative rests on the following convictions: (1) teachers of Jewish studies at all levels and settings share common questions and may productively engage in collaborative inquiries, even if they arrive at different answers; (2) Jewish education should not be isolated from the academic pursuit of Jewish studies scholarship; (3) the improvement of teaching in the subfields of Jewish studies, such as Bible, will be enhanced by the development of a “scholarship of teaching,” much as has occurred in the fields of mathematics, history, and elsewhere. The project currently focuses on the teaching of Bible, supporting both empirical and conceptual research by teachers and scholars of Bible.

Accomplishments

- In January 2005, the Bridging Initiative hosted a research conference entitled Teaching Bible: Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy. The conference attracted 150 registrants—a maximum-capacity crowd of teachers, professors, and researchers from Boston, as well as from across the Northeast, Chicago, Toronto, Montreal, Baltimore, and Cleveland. The program included over 40 presenters and respondents from universities, supplementary schools, day schools, synagogues, agencies, and no fewer than six different rabbinical schools, of all denominations.

- The Initiative has generated six papers in draft form to date, in preparation for publication, as well as five movies based on conference footage that will be made available on the Web. Four more presentations may be converted into papers in the future, as well as a number of additional movies. In 2005–06, the project will focus on editing and publishing written and visual material, and on the further development of the project website as a resource for teachers, scholars, and researchers.

- In June, a plenary session at the conference of the Network for Research in Jewish Education focused on the work of the Bridging Initiative, with presentations by Jon A. Levisohn, Susie Tanchel, Alex Sinclair (JTS), Marc Brettler, and Sharon Feiman-Nemser.

“It was the best experience of blending disciplines and the world of practice that I have ever had.”

—Lisa Grant, Professor of Jewish Education at JTS

“I just wanted to congratulate you on putting together an important and substantive conference. I felt that it was very unusual—and very necessary—to bring together Bible scholars and elementary school teachers, for example, into the same discussions. I hope this will be the beginning of many more such conversations.”

—Allison Cook, Director, Kesher–Cambridge

“[There were] over 100 participants, extremely engaged in the very important issue of bridging the gap between...”
**Beit Midrash Research Project**

Leaders: Orit Kent and Elie Holzer

In this pilot project, we are investigating the DeLeT Beit Midrash (Study Hall) for Teachers. The project has the following purposes: (1) to conceptualize the role of text study in *hevruta* (pairs) in the context of a teacher education program for Jewish day school teachers; (2) to investigate the curriculum and pedagogy of a Beit Midrash for Teachers; (3) to analyze the learning process, especially the intellectual and social dynamics that take place in *hevruta* study.

Accomplishments

- We prepared advanced drafts of two papers. One paper explored the conceptual foundations of a Beit Midrash for Teachers; the other explored the dynamics of *hevruta* learning in this context. In addition, we drafted a multimedia presentation on the goals and curriculum of a Beit Midrash for Teachers.
- In June, we presented the papers and the multimedia presentation at the conference of the Network for Research in Jewish Education.
- We collected video and audio data of teaching and learning in the DeLeT Beit Midrash and lesson plans and other classroom artifacts in 2004. These materials have been transcribed and/or organized into useable formats for analysis.
- We continued to refine a framework and system for analyzing *hevruta* (paired) study of Jewish texts in the context of the Beit Midrash for Teachers.

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professional Bible scholars like me and Bible teachers in a wide variety of settings. Well beyond the expectations that I had, the two groups spoke to each other in a noncondescending, and a nondefensive manner, and learned a great deal from each other. I not only learned from my professional colleagues, but from several teachers, whose methods and questions continue to force me to reevaluate how I teach and how I write.... It is very exciting to me that this first conference was so very successful, and is likely to have a very broad impact, as the insights shared and developed will be disseminated by the many participants.”

—Marc Brettler, Dora Golding Professor of Biblical Studies at Brandeis and Chair of the NEJS Department
Teacher Education and Professional Cases of Jewish Teaching and Learning

Leader: Susan L. Shevitz

Recent decades have seen the rapid growth of Jewish educational institutions that describe themselves as “pluralistic” without sufficient attention to what this means and the particular challenges that pluralism poses in education. This project aims to create a “virtual library” of such cases by enabling talented teachers of Torah and other Jewish subjects to produce multimedia cases of their work. Such cases combine videoclips of teaching and samples of student work with teacher reflections on the goals and dilemmas of teaching and learning. Eventually, the materials will be used for professional development purposes.

Accomplishments

• As a fellow with the Quest Project at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Sharon Feiman-Nemser participated in two three-day national meetings to learn about new technology for creating multimedia cases of teaching and teacher education and to help conceptualize the work and its potential impact. This connection will enable us to build on national developments to create an initiative focused on the teaching and learning of Jewish subjects.
• The project began working with a talented first-grade teacher who has developed a thoughtful approach to teaching the weekly Torah portion to first graders. During the school year we videotaped four sessions, collected and scanned student work, and interviewed the teacher. These materials and artifacts will form the basis for our first multimedia case of Torah teaching.
• We began conceptualizing the goals, structure, outcomes, and costs of an academy that would promote the development and use of multimedia cases of Jewish teaching and learning.

Studying Pluralism in Jewish Education

Leader: Susan L. Shevitz

Recent decades have seen the rapid growth of Jewish educational institutions that describe themselves as “pluralistic” without sufficient attention to what this means and the particular challenges that pluralism poses in education. This project seeks to understand what pluralism means to Jewish educators and how it is enacted in Jewish educational settings that explicitly embrace this ideal. The project includes both conceptual and empirical goals. Besides tracing the Jewish historical roots of pluralism and developing a framework that illustrates a range of meanings for this critical concept, we plan to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with enacting pluralism in Jewish educational settings.

Accomplishments

• The project sponsored a year-long Seminar on Pluralism in Jewish Education with 19 participants, which met nine times from September 2004 through May 2005.
• The project developed a Spotlight Presentation at the Network for Research in Jewish Education conference, in which we presented and received feedback on a conceptual scheme for the analysis of pluralism.
• The project prepared a proposal for field-based research on pluralism. The work included preliminary field observations, discussions with practitioners and potential collaborators in the research, and the clarification of a research approach.
During 2004–05, the Mandel Center grew its core staff from six to eight. Another 25 people work with the Center as researchers, adjunct faculty, field instructors, and mentor teachers.

Each month throughout 2004–05, Center staff and guests gathered for a lunch seminar focused on aspects of Jewish education and educational research. Scholar-in-Residence Professor Israel Scheffler led several of these sessions.

The Center cohosted the annual conference of the Network for Research in Jewish Education. Work from the following Center projects was presented in plenary, spotlight, and/or research sessions: the Bridging Initiative, Beit Midrash for Teachers, Boston MTEI, and Pluralism.

Susan M. Kardos, the Center’s first postdoctoral fellow, received the Outstanding Writing Award for 2005 from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education for Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools, an important new book of which she is a contributing author.

Susie Tanchel, recipient of the Mandel Center’s first dissertation fellowship, received the Keter Torah Award from the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston. The award recognizes outstanding achievements in Jewish education.

The Spencer Foundation awarded a second three-year grant to Brandeis for a continuation of the Discipline-Based Scholarship in Education (DBSE) project. DBSE supports doctoral students interested in education research and sponsors a year-long interdisciplinary seminar. Sharon Feiman-Nemser, director of the Mandel Center, coordinates the project, along with Professor Joyce Antler from the American studies department.

Scholar-in-Residence Professor Israel Scheffler revived his popular Philosophy of Education Research Colloquia with four seminars on diverse topics, from history of American Judaism to arts education.

Assistant Academic Director Jon A. Levisohn’s article, “Ideas and Ideals in Jewish Education,” was chosen to be the focus of the inaugural symposium in the newly relaunched Journal of Jewish Education.

Susan Kardos and Sharon Feiman-Nemser helped lead a national consultation sponsored by JERRI (the Jewish Educator Recruitment and Retention Initiative) in March 2005.

Sharon Feiman-Nemser was appointed a Carnegie Fellow in the Goldman/Carnegie Quest Project at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education is dedicated to transforming the quality of teaching and learning in Jewish educational settings, by supporting innovative research initiatives and pioneering new approaches to developing Jewish educators.