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.
Letter from the Director

Research

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“The work of the Mandel Center at Brandeis University rests elegantly between superb scholarship and significant practice. Its scholars engage with serious theoretical questions of curriculum and mentoring, as well as investigate the practical challenges of Jewish education. With the creation of the Mandel Center, Jewish education has been significantly elevated as an academic field.”

—Lee S. Shulman, president, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Dear Friends of the Mandel Center,

I’m pleased to share our annual report for the 2006–07 academic year. I am proud of the Mandel Center’s accomplishments during the past year—our publications and conference presentations, our work with scholars and teacher-leaders, the growth of the center as a home for serious research, and the development of model programs that serve as sites for research.

Other highlights of the past year include transforming DeLeT (Day School Leadership Through Teaching) from a standalone fellowship program to an MAT (Master of Arts in Teaching) program in partnership with our colleagues in the Education Program at Brandeis; welcoming a new postdoctoral fellow, Eran Tamir; and hosting visiting scholars Elie Holzer from Bar Ilan University and Miriam Ben-Peretz from the University of Haifa.

Someone recently asked me why we call this a center for studies in Jewish education rather than a center for research in Jewish education. I explained that the phrase “studies in Jewish education” is intended to signal a broader set of activities, including not only research by academics but also studies carried out by thoughtful practitioners as well as formal learning opportunities for educational leaders and scholars. In addition to building the academic field of Jewish education through doctoral training, postdoctoral fellowships, and visiting scholars, we want to enlarge the group of people who contribute to the knowledge base in Jewish education by supporting the research of talented practitioners.

This annual report is organized around three questions that are key to understanding the Mandel Center and its work. The first deals with the kind of research we do and why we think it’s worth doing. The second asks how we use partnerships with other institutions, inside and outside the Jewish community, to further our mission. The third question concerns the critical matter of impact. While we can only begin to answer these questions in this short space, the following pages will give you a glimpse of who we are, what we do, and why we do it.

We have already begun another exciting year of inquiry and professional development. I invite you to attend our conference on the teaching of rabbinic literature, recommend a promising candidate for the MAT/DeLeT program, or explore the ever-expanding bank of research papers and resources available on our Web site. Be in touch with the center and join us in the important work of transforming Jewish education.

Sincerely,

Sharon Feiman-Nemser
Director, Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education; Mandel Professor of Jewish Education
Empirical research in Jewish education usually takes the form of program evaluations, sociological studies of how the general population or a particular cohort perceives its Jewish education, or descriptive surveys of the state of the field. All these studies increase our understanding of the complex enterprise of Jewish education. At the Mandel Center, however, we are pursuing a different model of research.

What does this model look like? First, our research emerges from practice—both conventional practice and innovative or experimental programs developed to address a need in the field. The work of educators inevitably generates pressing issues and dilemmas, so the next step is turning problems of practice into researchable questions. To pursue such inquiries, we design studies of practice that document and analyze the learning and teaching that occur in particular settings and the conditions that enable or constrain such teaching and learning. These studies are carried out by academic researchers as well as thoughtful practitioners who are uniquely situated to study their teaching from the inside with the Mandel Center’s support.

Studies of practice generate new ideas, images, and insights. A crucial next step is dissemination of this new knowledge via articles in journals and books, Web-based resources, presentations, and professional development programs. As educators encounter these ideas and materials, they imagine new possibilities, gain new understandings, and aspire toward more powerful Jewish learning opportunities.
Using his synagogue as a research site, Rabbi Carl Perkins of Temple Aliyah in Needham, Massachusetts, studies how a congregational rabbi develops intellectually engaging and compelling text-based study sessions.

Professional and lay leaders from JCDS, Boston’s Jewish Community Day School, review findings about new teacher support from the Induction Partnership. Shown (l-r) are Miriam Newman, teacher; Lucy Tannen, dean of students; and Arnee Winshall, founding president.

“I used your material in a presentation to the new Me’ah faculty. Your schema stimulated faculty to wonder about the influence of their own existential commitments to Jewish practice on their teaching. The analyses in your Mandel Center working paper were a great spur to that sort of conversation.”

—David Starr, dean of the Me’ah adult education program

Jeffrey Spitzer (left), chair of the Rabbinic Literature Department of Gann Academy–The New Jewish High School of Greater Boston, confers with Jon A. Levisohn from the Mandel Center about Spitzer’s research on the midrash curriculum at Gann.

In the Beit Midrash for Teachers, a program of the Mandel Center, researchers Elie Holzer (pictured, standing) and Orit Kent study text interpretation and hevruta learning.
How does the Mandel Center advance its mission through partnerships?

From its inception, the Mandel Center has sought strategic partnerships with a wide range of institutions, including Jewish organizations and foundations, day schools, universities, national networks, and the Boston Jewish community. These relationships contribute to our mission in several important ways.

Some partnerships provide sites for learning to teach and for studying teaching, learning, and institutional change. Others enable the center to reach a broader audience by providing a forum to disseminate new ideas. In some cases, collaborations generate diverse perspectives on areas of inquiry. Working closely with local and national partners enables the Mandel Center to have a greater influence on the field.

“We are delighted to be building a new partnership with our colleagues at the Mandel Center, who are models of academic excellence and whose work inspires our own. We look forward to future collaborations and successes as together we create new avenues for enhancing and strengthening Jewish education in the Midwest and across the country.”

—Miriam B. Raider-Roth & Mark A. Raider, codirectors, Center for Jewish Education, University of Cincinnati

The Mandel Center partners with area day schools to promote excellence in day school teaching. Mentors Hilary Mofsowitz (center) and Shira Horowitz (right) of South Area Solomon Schechter Day School confer with teaching intern Kathy Kanigsberg (left).

Alumni from the Mandel Teacher Educator Institute (MTEI) and the Mandel Jerusalem Fellows participated in seminars at Brandeis on “Visions of Jewish Education.”
Professor Jay Harris of the Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies addresses a conference on religion and education, which was cosponsored with the Mandel Institute for Jewish Studies at Hebrew University and the Mandel Center.

"The University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) program benefits tremendously from working with the Mandel Center. Together we are producing scholarship that will improve the preparation and support of teachers in Catholic education as well as Jewish education."

—Father Timothy R. Scully, professor of political science, University of Notre Dame; founder of the Alliance for Catholic Education

"New programs and initiatives have the best chance of taking hold and achieving success in schools where the organization and culture support teacher collaboration and growth. How lucky we are in the Greater Boston community to partner with the Mandel Center in the work of building professional learning communities in our day schools. The expertise, experience, and passion that the center brings are as good as it gets."

—Susan M. Kardos, director, Initiative for Day School Excellence, Combined Jewish Philanthropies
What kind of impact does the Mandel Center have on Jewish education?

The value of a research center is directly related to its impact—on thinking and practice, on individuals and institutions, in the present and over the long term, as ideas develop, practices are implemented, and research traditions grow.

While it is difficult to measure the impact of research, we have increasing evidence that the knowledge and tools generated by the Mandel Center and presented by its researchers are influencing the field of Jewish education, by promoting more thoughtful and purposeful teaching in the service of engaged and transformative learning.

First-person accounts reflect the impact of the center’s programs on educators at every career stage from novice to expert, as well as on researchers and scholars. Data on dramatically increased usage of the center’s Web site indicates the center’s extended reach and visibility. Institutions with which we work most intensively show evidence of change in their cultures and practices. And leaders in the field of Jewish education attest that the Mandel Center is fulfilling its mandate to contribute new ideas to communal discussions of Jewish education.

Publications and Presentations
Mandel Center researchers published their work in Jewish Educational Leadership, the Journal of Jewish Education, Schmoozing about Education, Teachers College Record, the Third Handbook of Research on Teacher Education and What We NOW Know about Jewish Education: Perspectives on Research and Practice.

We presented at the American Educational Research Association, the Association for Jewish Studies, the Harvard University Religion and Education Conference, the Network for Research in Jewish Education, the Solomon Schechter Day School Association, and the Cambridge University/University of Haifa Conference on Religious Schooling and Liberal Democracies.

For the full list, go to www.brandeis.edu/mandel and click “Events and Activities” and “Publications.”

Web Site Visitors, 2006–2007

The number of visitors per month to the Mandel Center’s Web site increased dramatically over the course of the year. Additionally, visitors downloaded nearly 12,000 copies of Mandel Center research papers and viewed videos of conference sessions almost 4,000 times.
“I have been interested in your work and impressed by your reports.... The research and professional development that you produce is of the highest importance. Your work is notable both for the quality of the thinking as well as for the subtlety and importance of the issues it deals with.”

—Rabbi Irving “Yitz” Greenberg

“Four years ago, I never could have predicted that participating in a new program whose acronym means ‘door’ in Hebrew would eventually lead me through many more doors—into collaboration with superior educators as well as valuable opportunities for professional development.”

—Jocelyn Segal, Cohen Hillel Academy teacher, MAT ’05, and mentor teacher

“Next June, see if you can attend the annual DeLeT Portfolio Review. You will leave both inspired and convinced of the value of a Jewish day school education.... Knowing what DeLeT is doing in producing teachers...can inspire all of us who value day school education and education in general.”

—Shulamit Reinharz, Jacob Potofsky Professor of Sociology at Brandeis, director of the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, “Watching New Teachers at Work,” The Jewish Advocate, June 29, 2007
**Research Projects**

**Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy in Jewish Studies**
**Leader:** Jon A. Levisohn  
**Senior Research Associate:** Susan P. Fendrick

The Bridging Initiative promotes the improvement of the teaching of Jewish studies in multiple settings, through research by and critical dialogue among scholars and teachers.

**Beit Midrash Research Project**
**Coleaders:** Elie Holzer and Orit Kent

This project investigates two distinctive forms of Jewish learning: the interpretation of classical Jewish texts and hevruta learning. The research has been carried out in the Beit Midrash for Teachers.

**Induction Partnership**
**Coleaders:** Pearl Mattenson and Vivian Troen  
**Researcher/Evaluator:** Sarah Birkeland  
**Coach/Documenters:** Nili Pearlmutter, Sue Stibel

The Induction Partnership develops tools and understandings about the support and retention of beginning day school teachers. To date, the project has helped five pilot day schools create strong induction programs.

**Choosing to Teach: A Study of Beginning Teachers in Jewish, Catholic, and Urban Public Schools**
**Leader:** Eran Tamir  
**Senior Research Associates:** John Watzke, University of Notre Dame; Sharon Feiman-Nemser; Bethamie Horowitz, Mandel Foundation; Karen Hammerness, Stanford University

The Choosing to Teach project investigates the impact of context-specific teaching and teacher education on the identity, practice, and retention of new teachers in Jewish, Catholic, and urban public schools.

**Philosophy of Education Research Colloquia (PERC)**
**Director:** Israel Scheffler

PERC offers a series of colloquia, open to the public, that deal broadly with educational matters from a humanistic, comparative, and historical perspective.
**Scholars Program**

**Scholar-in-Residence**: Israel Scheffler, Victor S. Thomas Professor Emeritus of Education and Philosophy, Harvard University  
**Doctoral Fellow**: Orit Kent  
**Postdoctoral Research Fellow**: Eran Tamir  
**Visiting Scholars**: Elie Holzer, Bar Ilan University; Miriam Ben-Peletz, University of Haifa

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

**Professional Development**

**DeLeT (Day School Leadership Through Teaching) Program**

**Director**: Judy Elkin  
**Mentor Teacher Development Coordinator**: Vivian Troen  
**Core Instructors**: Ellen Alt, Chris Brumbach, Heidi Chapple, Judy Elkin, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Elie Holzer, Orit Kent, Beth Levin, Jon A. Levisohn, Lesley Litman, Nili Pearlmutter, Joe Reimer, Faye Ruopp, Francesca Stark, Sue Stibel, Susie Tanchel, Vivian Troen  
**Field Instructors**: Heidi Chapple, Sharon Duman Packer, Nili Pearlmutter, Sue Stibel  
**Mentor Teachers**: Deborah Barolsky, Heidi Chapple, Batya (Beth) Forman, Shira Horowitz, Sharon Miller, Hilary Mofowitz, Kathy Parnes, Cookie Rosenbaum, Leslee Rotman, Faith Spencer, Eve Youngerman, Sara Zenlea

*DeLeT prepares beginning teachers, develops mentor teachers, improves the conditions for teacher learning in partner schools, and serves as a national model for the education and induction of Jewish day school teachers.*

**Beginning Teacher Network**

**Co-leaders**: Shira Horowitz and Nili Pearlmutter

*The Beginning Teacher Network builds a professional community among beginning teachers in Boston-area Jewish day schools.*
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 acknowledges the guidance and support of the Mandel Foundation and its leadership.

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

**DeLeT Founding Donor Partners**

*We thank the Founding Donor Partners for their vision, generosity, and support since 2001. They, and the Mandel Foundation, have enabled the Mandel Center at Brandeis to establish DeLeT as a national model, in cooperation with our partners at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles.*

- Laura Heller Lauder, Founder
- Edgar Bronfman/Samuel Bronfman Foundation
- The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, Inc.
- The Covenant Foundation
- The Crown Family Foundation
- Helen Diller Family Foundation
- The Harold Grinspoon Foundation
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**Partner Day Schools—Internship Support**

- JCDS, Boston’s Jewish Community Day School
- The Rashi School
- South Area Solomon Schechter Day School
- Striar Hebrew Academy of Sharon

**Induction Partnership Support**

- The Covenant Foundation
“My time at the Mandel Center has shown me what can be done when a community of dedicated and gifted scholars and teachers engages jointly in the journey toward strengthening and promoting Jewish education. The center is involved in many projects that contribute significantly to Jewish education in the region and have the potential to have a wide impact on Jewish schools globally.”

—Miriam Ben-Peretz, professor emeritus of education at the University of Haifa, recipient of the Israel Prize 2006, and Mandel Center visiting scholar in spring 2007