From the Director

Michael Zeldin ’77

Dear Colleagues:

In this year when so much that we see around us can be discouraging, it is encouraging to look out at Jewish education and to see the dramatic impact that our school has had on the field. The most dramatic impact, of course, is that over 300 of us are now alumni of the Rhea Hirsch School, and we serve in congregations, day schools, camps, agencies and institutions of higher learning, and our presence in these institutions has changed them and made them better.

Beyond our graduates, it is the Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE) that has had the most dramatic impact on Jewish education. Since its founding almost 18 years ago, ECE has significantly changed the landscape of congregational education into which we send our Rhea Hirsch School graduates. We are deeply indebted to our visionary colleagues Isa Aron, Rob Weinberg, Amy Asin, and Cyd Weissman for their pioneering work from which we have all learned and the Jewish world has so greatly benefited.

New Models

Through its work with 78 congregations in 12 different projects over the last 17 years, ECE has stimulated congregations to invent dozens of new models of Jewish learning for congregants of all ages — models that bear little resemblance to the conventional religious school or adult education class. The impact of these models goes well beyond the children, teens, and adults who now learn in far more engaging ways that bring Judaism into their lives. The Jewish education community now widely accepts the notion that new models are necessary and must not only build Jewish knowledge but also address behavior, belief, and belonging.

Reshaping National Discourse and Agenda

ECE’s role as an action and analysis arm of the RHSOE has permeated the national Jewish education scene. The field has embraced ECE ideas such as a Congregation of Learners and the assumption that meaningful change in Jewish education requires whole system change rather than single-lever interventions (such as a new curriculum or a teacher training program). ECE’s ideas and practices have captured the imagination of both Federations and private foundations, leading them to invest in change initiatives, whether ECE or other projects inspired by ECE. Further, central agencies of Jewish education across the country are rethinking their roles and looking for ways to support systemic change in congregational education locally. Agencies in New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Kansas City have entered into cooperative relationships and, in some cases, deep partnerships with ECE to bring about systemic change.

Increasing Leadership Capacity

RHSOE graduates find opportunities in ECE congregations especially attractive because they know they will find rabbinic colleagues ready to partner to advance Jewish learning and a cadre of energized lay people passionate about a new vision for learning in the congregation and prepared to invest their time and means to bring it to reality through a spiraling series of educational innovations.

As alumni, we can all be proud of how much ECE has done to transform the field of Jewish education.

Michael

Upcoming Events

From the Chairperson:
Who Are We? And Where Are We Going?

Julia Berger ’00

The RHSOE Alumni Association is a relatively young organization, but right from the start it was innovative, educational, and thoughtful; reflecting the training and values of its members. To continue that tradition, the Leadership Team meets in person once a year to consider where we’ve been, what our members want and need, and — most importantly — where we should be going next.

This past November, the Leadership Team met at HUC–JIR in New York City to once again examine these questions. The choice of this venue allowed us to meet with staff, study with faculty, worship with current students and to reconnect to the College-Institute, while looking ahead to new projects for RHSOE students and alumni.

But maybe I’m getting ahead of myself. Who are we? Who and what is the leadership team, and how does its work affect you as alumni? The Leadership Team is composed of the Executive Committee (Chair, Vice-Chair, Past Chair, RHSOE Representatives to the HUC–JIR Council of Alumni Associations, National Director of Alumni Affairs, RHSOE Coordinator of Alumni Affairs, and Director of the RHSOE) and the Working Group Chairs. Currently, the Alumni Association has nine working groups (or committees), which do the work that make our programs for alumni and students possible. Some of our working groups have been around since the beginning of the Association, while others, like the Rabbinic-Education Alumni Working Group and the Social Media Working Group, are fairly new and were created to meet the changing needs of our alumni. So, if you’ve received an honorary doctorate, attended a kallah, participated in a webinar, filled out a survey, talked to counselors at camp about RHSOE, joined the RHSOE Alumni Association group on Facebook, and/or helped financially support a special project of the Alumni Association, you’ve been touched by the efforts of our Working Groups.

When we were in New York City, we asked the Leadership Team to think about:

1. how we could involve more alumni in the work of the Association,
2. how our work could be more efficient and more collaborative, and
3. how we could make our organization more vibrant.

These three questions led to many great ideas, and over the last couple of months the Executive Committee has been reviewing the information gathered and preparing to start some new projects.

Many of our short term goals are focused on improving communication between Working Groups, the alumni, and the larger college community. Some of our projects include: clarifying the roles of the Chair and Vice Chair so that they can better serve the organization and represent the alumni; publicizing the work of our Association not just here in Tikshoret but also in other College publications; providing information about up-coming alumni events earlier and in a regular location; and finding new ways to share information with alumni.

While our Leadership Team has been instrumental in leading the way towards these new initiatives, we can’t do all of it without your help. If you are interested in getting involved and volunteering some of your time to the alumni Association, please contact a member of the Executive Committee. This is our alumni association, and we want it to represent all of us.
BOOK REVIEW
A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future
by Daniel H. Pink

Reviewed by Jane West Walsh, EdD ('85)

Daniel Pink's *A Whole New Mind* (Riverhead Books, paperback 2006) makes the case for why new educational strategies, policies and personal choices in response to the new global economy are within reach inside our own heads, on the right side of the brain. He tells why they are urgently needed now.

As we settle into the 21st century, reading this book will both reinforce your growing sense of just how much, and how fast, our global milieu is changing. It will challenge assumptions which undergird the way you have understood socially acceptable priorities glorified in the recent past. You will be inspired to move forward in generative ways at a time when reactive discourse dominates. For these reasons alone, if you have not yet read this book, you should. If you read it when it first came out in 2005, pick it up again and have another look now in light of accelerated changes in American society in the past six months.

Pink makes the case that we are moving out of a left-brain dominant Age of Information. In the Age of Information, education predominantly focused on the development of convergent thinking skills. Graduates of the system were rewarded for being knowledge workers focused on analyzing and manipulating a treasure-trove of information mastered in school. Throughout this Information Age divergent thinking was seen as less important, at best. Pink says right-brain attributes that foster empathy and creativity will dominate in the dawning Conceptual Age in which detailed knowledge and data analysis skills will still be necessary, but insufficient. Pink's whole new mind idea calls us to take research about the strengths that reside in the right brain seriously in order to participate successfully in the changing 21st century social and economic milieu.

Six specific capacities Pink calls “six senses” are presented to readers as being essential for success in the Conceptual Age. These six senses are outlined below:

1. **Not just function but also Design**: Democratization of good design means we have to generate learning and marketing materials that are not only functional, but beautiful and engaging for the audience;

2. **Not just argument but also Story**: Compelling narrative speaks to the right-brain;

3. **Not just focus but also Symphony**: Beyond specialized knowledge, symphony means keeping the big picture in mind, identifying and creating porous boundaries, collaboration and understanding things in new combinations and new ways;

4. **Not just logic but also Empathy**: In a world of ubiquitous information those who will thrive will foster their right brain capacity for empathy, the ability to foster new relationships and care about others;

5. **Not just seriousness but also Play**: Laughter, lightheartedness, games and humor are essential for good health, well-being and success; and

6. **Not just accumulation but also Meaning**: In a world characterized by striving for material goods, the right brain capacity for meaning-making, connecting daily actions to a larger sense of meaning, and spiritual fulfillment increases in importance.

If you have not had a chance to read Mihaly Czikszentmihalyi's book *Creativity*, I recommend it as a more thorough presentation of research on the right-brain based capacities with which we are born that form the foundation for Pink's six senses. But Pink's clear journalistic style, real-world examples, personal stories and engaging exercises will take you (and your teachers, students, significant other and children) a long way down the trail to bolstering your own right-brain capacities. Like talking with a smart friend telling you how things really are, and what to do about it, you will enjoy the journey.
Reflection on Mindy's Visit from Current Rabbinic-Education Student Jordi Schuster

In mid-November, my classmates and I had the opportunity to make for ourselves a colleague-to-be and acquire for ourselves a true teacher in the person of Mindy Davids, this year's RHSOE Alumna-in-Residence. Mindy, who graduated from the Joint Masters Program of RHSOE and the School of Jewish Communal Service in 1990, was selected by her colleagues in the RHSOE Alumni Association to return as a teacher for Los Angeles campus students. She is currently the Director of Education at Temple Shaarey Tefila in New York City but is no stranger to the Southern California Jewish community or to the RHSOE faculty, given her tenure as Education Director of Temple Beth Sholom in Santa Ana. While there, she served as a member of the RHSOE clinical faculty, and (in fact) holds the record for having the greatest cumulative number RHSOE student interns!

Mindy’s stay with us this fall began with an evening of learning for current RHSOE students and faculty, hosted at the home of Professor Isa Aron. There, on the basis of DuFour and Eaker’s model of “Professional Learning Communities,” Mindy shared her own insights about and experience in building, working with, and supporting a community of teachers in synagogue supplementary school settings — a vision that is too often thought unattainable in part-time institutions but that Mindy believes (and demonstrates) is not only a possibility but is part of the *ikar* (essence) of congregational education. We continued our formal learning with her as she guest-taught Professor Michael Zeldin’s Leadership and Management course, where we looked at the role of a congregational education director in partnering with lay leaders. Finally, the entire campus studied with Mindy in the Monday *tefillah* Torah service, where she both read from...

continued on page 5
people and performs miracles, I honestly do not think that this would be an unfair or even uncommon response.

But, I want to think today for a few minutes not only about Sarah’s laughter and response, but to explore our own laughter and responses in our work. How many times have you chuckled in your student pulpits, teaching jobs, or internships, and said, “yea, right.” “That will never happen here…” “Parents will never…” “The kids are too busy to…” “No one will come to…” God gives Sarah a hard time for laughing. Maybe we should start to give ourselves a hard time for often laughing and making assumptions about what is and is not possible. I think that we all know the common definition of the word “assume.” But, if you look assumption up in the dictionary, we learn that it is something taken for granted or accepted as true without proof. Most of us in the field do this a hundred times a day without giving it a second thought.

I truly believe that in order to make Jewish life meaningful and engaging for our congregants, our students, our volunteers, and our clients, we must start to seriously challenge the assumptions that we hold — yes, we hold, not just our lay leaders and those that we work with, but that we hold — that keep us from exploring the wondrous and exciting possibilities for Jewish learning and Jewish living.

Most of you have some time before you really have any control over the big picture work. So I encourage you to use this time while you are in school to practice. Start by learning to catch yourselves making an assumption, and then work with it. Take it apart. Challenge it. Ask yourself if there is a small way that given your new thinking you can change the way you will run a program, meet with a volunteer, teach a class, or talk to a parent. I think that you will be amazed at what you can do.

It would be nice if God would send us some messengers and let us know what is true and help us to do our work in the most meaningful way. We don’t live in the time of Sarah, in the time of divine miracles. But, maybe in addition to hard work, challenging assumptions, and thinking outside of the box, we can hope for a little divine inspiration as well. At the end of a chapter about Sarah in her book Sarah Laughed, Vanessa Ochs offers this blessing: “May we be blessed, as our mother Sarah was, to receive dreams that come true in their own season.”

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Parashat Vayera and offered the dear Torah (excerpted above.)

In each of these settings, Mindy focused on how she navigates the educator’s perpetual tension between quantity of content-to-teach and quality of community-to-build in our educational settings. As a rabbinic and education student, an intern (at TBS, Mindy’s former professional home), and a teacher myself, I found Mindy’s naming of this struggle and her responses to it important reminders of both the big picture and the passions that bring students into the field of Jewish education and which motivate educators in the field — when we are not feeling lost in the sea of day-to-day data and details. Mindy models the practice and power of surrounding ourselves with those who can help us to see that big picture: citing Moses standing on the battlefield over Amalek, supported by Aaron and Hur, she said, “There is only so long you can hold your hands up on your own.” She shared her own journey from “thinking I had to know what I was doing” as a beginning teacher (“My goal was to get through the day and making sure no one came into the room!”) to realizing the possibilities inherent in a camp model in which educators, counselors, unit heads, and others support each other to do their best work. She explained her realization that it is not “more time that is better” but “better time that is better” — time spent building the structure you love, a structure that works, time spent empowering committee members, growing a community of people who will themselves lead text studies, rather than relying on the educator to provide Jewish knowledge for them.

I found Mindy’s time with us to be a wonderful chance to step back from my studies and internship, to remember why I do the work I do, and to shift my assumptions about what congregational education can and should be. I look forward to the next time I have the opportunity to learn with Mindy in person, but my learning from her model continues even now that she has returned to New York and I to my assignments.
As we read in RH SOE Director, Michael Zeldin’s article in the Spring ’08 issue, Pursuing an Ethic of Excellence, “We at the Rhea Hirsch School of Education have always made excellence our goal.” Throughout the year we will focus on excellence in Jewish education as reflected in the work of our colleagues. We continue that series with the work of fellow alum, Julie Lambert (’97) Senior Educational Consultant, Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education of Miami, FL.

SHARSHERET©

A Program for Congregational Religious School Excellence

In Hebrew a sharsheret is a strong linked chain. At the Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education we believe that the expertise of our human resources is the key to educational excellence and success. With this as our guiding principle CAJE launched Sharsheret during the 2005-2006 school year. Sharsheret: A Program for Congregational Religious School Excellence is funded by the Greater Miami Jewish Federation.

Sharsheret is a congregational school improvement initiative that addresses leadership development and support. Based on the work of the National Staff Development Council’s Standards for Professional Development, Revised and in consultation with Dr. Stephanie Hirsh, Deputy Executive Director of the NSDC at the time, Sharsheret was launched. The program includes four main components:

1. A Leadership Academy for congregational school education directors comprised of expert-led institutes and facilitated networking among school leaders;

2. School-based Professional Learning guided by the implementation of Institutional Professional Development Plans (IPDP) focused on student achievement goals.

3. Support and consultation from CAJE staff and NSDC consultants.

4. Web-based Resource Library providing tools and materials that school leaders can access to enrich professional learning for educators.

As participants in the Leadership Academy, Education Directors are introduced to the elements of high quality staff development; explore strategies by which to design professional learning opportunities for their own schools; and develop skills to recognize how these efforts are impacting student learning. The Education Directors then apply this learning in their own schools through the design and implementation of Institutional Professional Development Plans based on the National Staff Development Council’s Standards for Professional Development.

Summative and formative feedback garnered from a formal evaluation conducted by Linda Munger of Munger Educational Consultants indicates that Sharsheret is impacting congregational schools on several levels. School leadership, both lay and professional, have a new understanding of professional development and the research that supports the link between professional development and student learning.

Fellow alumna Beth Young (’02), Director of Education at Temple Judea in Coral Gables, Florida commented, “Sharsheret has provided me with a rich arsenal of high quality educational tools. I have been able to use these to deepen the level of work that transpires at faculty learning sessions as well as in working with members of our senior staff. The chair of my Education Committee was so excited about the ideas of Sharsheret that she used them to transform our committee meetings. As a newcomer to the community, I am learning to become a better educator and doing so with a network of colleagues.”

On the Move!

The RHSOE Alumni Association Executive Committee proudly announces changes in leadership! Julie Vanek (’88), who has been serving as our Vice Chair, has been asked to take on the role of Vice Chair of the Council of Alumni Associations. As a result, Cindy Reich (’84) will take over as Chairperson of the Alumni Association in July 2009. Ellen Lefkowitz (’99) now serves on the executive committee as our second representative to the Council of Alumni Associations. We are grateful to all of our leaders for their commitment of time and energy on behalf of our Alumni Association.
A New Take on an Old Course: SOE 410/411: Human Development

Larry Garf, Instructor

As a long-time member of the Human Development faculty at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, I was delighted to have been given the opportunity to teach this class at HUC. While the connection with Jewish studies may not, at first, be obvious; I deeply believe that an understanding of human development does, in fact, have a profound relationship to Judaism and can serve to strengthen and enhance the careers of Jewish professionals.

In order to be conversant with the basics of human development, one needs to cultivate an understanding of the foundational theorists in the field, thinkers such as Erik Erikson, Arnold Gesell, Maria Montessori, Lawrence Kohlberg, Abraham Maslow, Lev Vygotsky, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau. Our goal was to begin to comprehend the means by which individuals develop, by examining theory, as well as students’ own life experiences. We analyzed the ways in which various theories fit (or do not fit!) a range of life cycle issues and looked at the influence of such factors as family, religion, school settings, class, race, culture, and sexual orientation. Students were strongly encouraged to ponder, stretch, struggle and grapple with ideas. (I often describe my primary function as wrestling coach.)

In addition, I believe it is vital for all students to become thoroughly grounded in Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). I have become increasingly concerned about the fact that the educational climate in this country has become severely toxic for all too many children. We are living in an era where the general thrust involves pushing academics on younger and younger children, in hopes that this will lead to better scholars down the road. As a result, we witness the sad spectacle of preschoolers getting academic homework assignments, and kindergarteners displaying signs of stress that were previously reserved for adults. While it may seem counterintuitive, this early “push” by well-meaning adults can be severely counterproductive, resulting in mislabeling children as learning disabled when, in reality, they are perfectly typical children who are simply not developmentally ready to do work which, in past years, was taught to older students. In my writing (Hey, Quit

Pushing: How We Put Children At Risk By Starting Academics Too Early) I describe such children as victims of WRS, Wrong Room Syndrome, youngsters who are quite normal but who are struggling as a result of being in the wrong classroom for their developmental level. When children who attend “academic” preschools are compared to those who come through “developmental” preschools, the results are revealing.

1. young children who are formally taught to read early on will — at first — read more than their peers who have not been taught.

2. within a couple of years the difference in test scores disappears completely.

There is one significant difference which persists: the children who were academically pushed too early for their developmental “clocks” continued to display higher anxiety and self-esteem issues throughout elementary school. For example, when children who attend “academic” preschools are compared to those who come through “developmental” preschools, the results are revealing. First, the obvious: young children who are formally taught to read early on will — at first — read more than their peers who have not been taught. That’s a given. However, within a couple of years the difference in test scores disappears completely. Nevertheless, there is one significant difference which persists: the children who were academically pushed too early for their developmental “clocks” continued to display higher anxiety and self-esteem issues throughout elementary school.

As we explored all of these topics, I found the HUC students to be extraordinarily motivated, caring, intellectually curious individuals… one of the most inspiring experiences I’ve had as an educator.

RHSOE Alumni — A culture of giving

Our Alumni Association has worked hard to create a Culture of Giving back to the College-Institute amongst our alumni. We are proud of and grateful for the support our alumni provide to the College-Institute.

In addition to our on-going campaigns for the Sara Lee Chair in Jewish Education and the Clinical Education Fund our alumni continue to provide support for the various funds that support the work of the RHSOE.
It's certainly not an unusual occurrence for Jews to be expelled from their homeland. Think Roman Empire, Babylonian Exile, Spain, Portugal, England, France, Austria, and — of course — Germany. In the late 1930s, there were few countries, including our own, that would accept Jewish immigrants from Nazi Germany. But there was one location halfway around the world that did not require a passport, a visa, or funds: Shanghai, China. So it's no wonder that approximately 20,000 Jewish refugees from Europe traveled there to find sanctuary. One of those was Fred Marcus (z”l), an only child whose mother died in 1938, who fled Germany in 1939 with his father.

When Fritz and his father and the other European passengers stepped onto the soil of Shanghai, they were totally unprepared for what greeted them. A cacophony of sounds assailed their ears: the honking of cars, ringing of bicycle bells, the chant of workmen carrying heavy burdens, the sharp whistles of Sikh traffic policemen, the warning cries of rickshaw men winding dangerously in and out of vehicles. Along the Bund, smells of garbage and fish wafted from the brownish waters of the Whangpoo, mixed with those of sweat, gasoline, foods, and occasional whiffs of opium. More than a bit different from clean and sedate Germany!

After a few nights in a dormitory room with 50 other men, the sale of a crystal bowl enabled Fred and his father to move into a single room in a bombed out building. During the next year and a half, Fred helped his dad (by then 60 years old) establish a small importing business. Times were hard, but somehow they managed to get by. Yet these difficulties paled in comparison to what was to come. After Pearl Harbor, stateless Jews were interned by the Japanese in a small, war-torn section of the city. Then, sadly, Fred's father died, leaving him bereft and alone, with no job, no education, and no prospects.

During and after the war years, Fred kept a diary in German. In 2002 he died without ever translating it into English. A year later, I was fortunate to meet Rena Krasno, an author and lecturer who was born in Shanghai, once a simultaneous translator for various international organizations. Rena completed the translation, and she and I decided to write a book based on the diaries, adding background information and commentary.

Fred left Shanghai in 1949 for San Francisco. After a stint in the hotel business, he became a full-time Jewish educator, earning a B.A., and later an M.A. from the Rhea Hirsch School of Education. He was Director of Education (and sometimes Administrator, too) at Temple Emanu-El, San Jose for 17 years. He served as president of NATE from 1979-80. After his retirement, Fred and I moved to Denver where he continued to teach adults and to lecture on the Holocaust before schools, organizations, and churches and synagogue groups.

**Survival in Shanghai: The Journals of Fred Marcus 1939-49** has recently been published by Pacific View Press. To obtain a copy, visit, <www.fredmarcusmemorialwebsite.com>.

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### Mazel Tov!

The Jewish Book Council announced that *What We Now Know About Jewish Education: Perspectives on Research for Practice* edited by **Roberta Louis Goodman ('81)**, Paul A. Flexner (NYSOE ’72), and Linda Dale Bloomberg (Torah Aura Productions) is the winner of the 2008 National Jewish Book Award in the Education and Jewish Identity category.

On January 30, Dr. **Michael Zeldin** was the Wulfe Lecturer at Temple Beth-El in San Antonio, TX. Dr. Zeldin was invited as the Lecturer to honor Teresa Parker’s officially receiving the R.J.E. designation at the NATE Conference in Nashville, TN. Pictured with Dr. Zeldin is (left) **Rachel Stern ’97**, Director of Education, Institute for Southern Jewish Life, and **Teresa Parker ’04**, Education Director for Temple Beth-El.

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### RHSOE Executive Committee 2008–2009/5769

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Julia Berger

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Julie Lambert

**Vice Chair**
Cindy Reich

**National Director of Alumni Affairs**
Joy Wasserman, ex-officio

**RHSOE Coordinator of Alumni Affairs**
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**Director of the RHSOE**
Michael Zeldin, PhD, ex-officio

**RHSOE Representatives to the HUC–JIR Council of Alumni Associations**
Ellen Lefkowitz
Julie Vanek