

What's What With Jewish Education In Pittsburgh?

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the third in a series of seven articles detailing the preliminary reports of the Self-Study on Jewish Education which was carried out during the past spring.)

By WILLIAM MAZEFSKY

The existing Jewish Educational system in Pittsburgh cannot function effectively because of lack of professional qualifications of most of the teachers.

This was the substance of the preliminary report of the Committee on Personnel and Teachers' Training of the Self Study on Jewish Education. The Teachers' Training group which was headed by Mrs. Sydney S. Munter placed the onus for this grave situation on the lack of community supported Teachers' Training facilities.

Detailing the situation as they found it, the Committee in its view of Sunday School teachers stated that "The Jewish training of the Sunday school teachers is very inadequate 81% of the teachers received training either in Sunday school or in a weekday religious school. Only 19% received their Jewish training in higher institutions of Jewish learning."

The Teachers' Training Committee found that "The majority of teachers in Sunday schools are very young." The Committee reported that 30% are teen agers and only 30% over twenty-five years of age; 16% are high school graduates or high school students.

"It is evident," the report stated, "that Sunday school teachers whose Jewish training consists only of what they had learned in a Sunday school, are totally unequipped to function as Jewish teachers. . . . They lack the knowledge of the Jewish subjects they are supposed to teach. And the Jewish religious teacher without conviction and without knowledge is a very poor teacher indeed."

The Weekday Schools

Turning to the personnel in weekday schools, the Teachers' Training Committee found "only between 35% to 40% have professional training." Some of the teachers are employed in schools, which are open only two or three hours a day. This makes it uneconomical for the school to employ teachers on a full-time basis and to pay them full salaries . . . (which) has a very bad effect on developing a professional group of teachers without which no educational system can function effectively."

The age grouping and background of week day teachers differ radically from the Sunday school group, according to the report. Sixty-eight per cent (68%) of the weekday teachers, it is found, were born abroad. They are a much older group than the Sunday school teachers with 20% over 50 years of age and 30% between 35 and 50.

Recommendations

As a result of its finding, Committee on Personnel and Teachers' Training urged that "Since the present program for the training of Hebrew teachers is very inadequate, we recommend that the present program of Teachers' training facilities be strengthened, enlarged and supported by the Pittsburgh Jewish Community, which will endeavor to attract and adequately train teachers for our weekday schools. This school should also offer training for teachers in service."

Turning to Personnel Practices Code, the committee stated: "Since there is no Personnel Practices Code for the Jewish teachers in Pittsburgh, and the lack of such a code results in a feeling, on the part of the teachers, of insecurity and lack of status, we recommend that the Jewish community (through the Central agency of Jewish Education, which, we hope it will establish) in cooperation with the Jewish teachers and school administrators, work out a professional code of practice which will include adequate salary scales, and make provisions for tenure, insurance, sick-leave, retirement, etc., and any other measures which will enhance the security and status of the Jewish teachers in the community."

And finally, the committee hammered home the following thesis: "That the Jewish community undertake the responsibility of reorganizing the school system in a way that would allow for a fuller employment of the Jewish teacher. In such a system the teacher would be able to function in multiple capacities—as a supervisor and critic teacher, recreation worker, instructor in arts and crafts, music, dramatics, librarian, leader of parent-teachers groups, club leader, leader of a Junior Congregation, etc. Such fuller employment would make possible the payment of more satisfactory salaries and therefore attract more capable and idealistic young men and women to the field."

(Next week: Parents' Attitudes)

N. Y. Philanthropies Set \$20,000,000 Goal

NEW YORK—The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York will try to raise \$20,000,000 in the next four months for the operation of its 116 affiliated hospitals, health and social service agencies, it was announced this week by Ralph E. Samuel, federation president, at a special press conference.