

# What's What With Jewish Education In Pittsburgh?

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the sixth 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**

Measured by the yardstick of standards for school quarters acceptable to our own public school set-up—or minimum standards acceptable for Jewish education in other metropolitan cities—Pittsburgh's Jewish educational schools, with few exceptions, are still in the horse and buggy age.

The report of the Committee on School Facilities, which was headed by Herman Marmins, and which visited eleven of the fourteen Jewish schools listed in Pittsburgh pungently reflects a basic and almost insurmountable handicap to good pedagogy.

"In the majority of cases", the School Facilities probers reported, "facilities used are remodeled residences with partitions removed in order to create class rooms."

The Marmins' report added, "In one of the schools seven classes are being held in a large auditorium, another class in the kitchen, another on stage, in converted cloak rooms, in an office and on a balcony....In one school, it is noted that the building is not physically equipped to attract children, their heating system is poor...there are neither indoor nor outdoor play facilities and it is too noisy."

Of the schools visited by the School Facts group, it was found that five schools "are so located

that a majority of the children walk to school; six schools are so located that a majority of the children travel to school by school bus, public conveyance or private car."

In reviewing existing Jewish school facilities, the Marmins' committee measured local conditions against the Minimum Standards for School Quarters developed by the Jewish Education Committee of New York which survey was appended to the local group's Report on School Facilities.

The New York minimum standards require "(1) Minimum size of classroom—ten square feet per desk (2) Natural Light—one-fifth  
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of floor area (3) Artificial light—one watt for every square foot of floor space (4) Heat—minimum temperature of 65 degrees (5) Ventilation—a minimum of 30 cubic feet of air per minute per pupil (6) Rooms equipped with regulation pupils' desk and chairs, regulation teachers' desk and chairs, regulation blackboard, sufficient and proper accommodations for hanging of pupils' clothing."

These standards also require adequate fire protection, which include "(1) Regulation fire alarm system (2) Sufficient number of regulation fire extinguishers (3) Regular fire drills—at least one drill once a month for each class (4) A minimum of two fire exits with each class no more than fifty feet from an exit (5) Iron or fireproof staircases."

Measured against these minimum requirements the School Fact Committee reported "there are only a few of the facilities which come near meeting these minimum standards. In the main there are insufficient or inadequate toilet room facilities. From a standpoint of fire hazards, in one instance, a regularly built fire exit had a chain and lock on it. Fire extinguishers are not placed in proper position for most efficient use and in one instance had not been inspected for two years. Stairs are not fireproofed in accordance with safety standards."

"In the face of these obvious inadequacies of facilities, Jewish education per se is handicapped. It is probably true that if these facilities are to be brought up to standard it would require community understanding and acceptance of minimum standards and also a considerable outlay of money to achieve minimum standards"