

## A PROPER PREPARATION OF TEACHERS

by Barbara Rosoff

There is a hot debate taking place today in the arena of secular school teacher preparation. It is truly a great debate in which the National Council on Teaching Quality just issued a study noting that the "Training of Teachers" is flawed.<sup>1</sup> Kate Walsh, president of the Council, noted that "this is shaping up to be a battle royale, not just between the education schools and us, but between K-12 education and higher ed."

Much of the battle focuses on student teaching, the standards of which (i.e., how many weeks required by each school of education) are structured differently in each school of education. Models of education also concentrate on diverse areas; some pay more attention to traditional classroom study, others point to student teaching as being more significant.

While no research has taken place indicating a positive correlation between student teaching and teachers eventually being more efficacious in the classroom (i.e., academic progress of students), some "thinking out of the box" new programs for teacher preparation focus on the student teaching segment. In an article "Pedagogical Puzzle" in the New York Times' supplement EDUCATION LIFE, it is noted that the Holmes Group (a collection of deans from education schools) in 1986 warned that in too many teacher preparation schools curriculums were outmoded, and too many schools were indifferent to the importance of hands-on teacher preparation.<sup>2</sup>

Little has changed since 1986 or there would not be new models for teacher preparation being planned now, e.g., the Relay Graduate School of Education, which has opened in New York. At Teacher's College (Columbia University), graduate students spend three and a half days a week in student teaching. It is interesting to note that Arne Duncan, President Obama's Secretary of Education, states that "there is little evidence that teachers with Masters' degrees improve student achievement more than other teachers."<sup>3</sup>

So ..... what does all of this have to do with the efficacy of teachers in the Jewish school? There are many Jewish schools (synagogue schools and day schools) who do not have the luxury of having on their staff teachers who have attended and/or graduated from teacher preparation schools geared toward the teaching of Jewish subjects. Correlating their efficacy with teachers who have had that preparation does not necessarily make them poorer teachers.

I propose that the answer to this predicament is simple: Set up in the school a program of mentoring. One or two (or three or more, depending on the size of the school and the faculty) quality teachers would be chosen to mentor (one on one) teachers, both in efficacious use of teaching methods and (if necessary) in subject matter. Video-taping would assist in the process.

You are encouraged to share this article with colleagues. We ask only that you let people know that this article originally appeared in NewCAJE's online journal, *The Jewish Educator*. Other articles on this topic may be found on the NewCAJE website, [www.newcaje.org](http://www.newcaje.org).

The mentor would make use of emotional intelligence that would encourage a positive relationship. Obviously, the type of program would be dependent upon the school and, especially, the principal. Good mentoring and encouragement by both the principal and each mentor are crucial. I have seen this type of program succeed and eventually result in a strong, ongoing faculty.

Endnotes:

1. *New York Times*, Thursday, July 21, 2011.
2. *New York Times*, Sunday, July 24, 2011.
3. Ibid.

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