



# CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF Israel Education

 **Project InCiTE**  
INNOVATING CREATIVE TEEN ENGAGEMENT



INSPIRING INNOVATION  
iCenter IN ISRAEL  
EDUCATION



Leveraging the success and hundred-year legacy of the Board of Jewish Education New York-SAJES, The Jewish Education Project (<http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org>) pioneers new approaches in Jewish education for every age. They recognize that as society changes, the way they educate must adapt right along with it.

The Jewish Education Project believes that every Jewish family should have a path to affordable, accessible, and inspiring Jewish education for their children. They connect forward-thinking educators to powerful ideas and resources so they can create new models that change how, what, and where people learn.

Together with their partners, they're transforming Jewish education for today's ever-changing world and helping to shape the future of the Jewish people.

The Jewish Education Project is a beneficiary of UJA Federation of New York (<http://www.ujafedny.org>).



The iCenter (<http://www.theicenter.org>) is dedicated to igniting a passion for and commitment to Israel in the hearts and minds of young Jews so that contemporary Israel becomes an integral component of their Jewish identity.

The iCenter is a national address and advocate for high-quality and meaningful Israel education for Jewish children in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, in both formal and informal settings.

In collaboration with the teachers, camp counselors, and administrators who are on the front lines of educating Jewish youth, The iCenter strives to make Israel a stronger and more integrated component of Jewish education in North America.

The iCenter was founded through the generous support of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation (<http://www.schusterman.org>) and the Jim Joseph Foundation (<http://www.jimjosephfoundation.org>).

In Cooperation With



*What is Makom?* Makom (<http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Strategic+Partnerships/Makom/About+Makom>) is a content development and training hub that works with leaders to reimagine the place of Israel in institutional and communal life. They believe that commitment is sparked and forged by embracing the vibrant complexity of Israel. Their team, based in Israel, New York, and Los Angeles, is made up of content and training experts with deep expertise in the field of Israel education and engagement. Makom works with individuals and with organizations, with communities large and small. They will work with anyone who is eager to hug and wrestle with Israel and the Jewish People.

*What does Makom do?* Makom works to empower Jewish educators, rabbis, arts and community leaders to develop sophisticated and honest Israel programming. They seek to generate innovative content, to cultivate the leadership necessary for innovation, and to advocate for a new kind of conversation about Israel.

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# History of Project InCiTE

## A Partnership Between The Jewish Education Project and The iCenter

**TEEN EDUCATION** is challenging. Many institutions and organizations are unsatisfied with their record for delivering high-quality experiences for learners in the years between bar/bat mitzvah and college. Additionally, the educators and youth professionals who work with Jewish teens often find themselves lacking the peer and professional support, communal resources, and professional development opportunities needed to bring new ideas to the table that better reflect 21st century teens and their families.

Inspired by this recognition and with a mandate to bring strong Israel engagement to teen settings, the Project InCiTE Innovating Creative Teen Engagement Fellowship (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) was created through the work of the New Center for Collaborative Leadership at The Jewish Education Project (<http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org>).

### We Started by Asking Ourselves:

- Is it possible to create an environment that fosters innovative ideas that will emerge as new models of Israel engagement for teens?
- How do we facilitate a process that will see these ideas through the creative, design, and implementation process?
- Can we deliver innovative projects that meet the needs of the organizations and settings where they will be piloted?

Charged with this task, we gathered together a diversely affiliated group of educators from national and regional institutions and organizations, and we designed the Fellowship to address these questions in four fundamental ways:

### Innovation Training

We invested in working with SIT (Systematic Inventing Thinking) (<http://www.sitsite.com>), an Israel-based company of thinking trainers who worked directly with the Fellows. SIT facilitated retreats and training sessions and provided ongoing support to the Fellows. Participants were immersed in this process during the ideation and creative phases of Project InCiTE, learning strategies that broadened their capacity to think and innovate as they began to develop ideas for their projects.

## Coach Support

We selected a group of seven high-level professionals in the field, each who brought his or her own expertise, experience, and perspective to the table. Coaches were assigned to individual Fellows whom they met with regularly, providing multiple support and guiding roles that varied during each phase of the Fellowship. As projects began to develop, coaches worked with cluster groups around common themes that emerged, allowing for their particular expertise to impact Fellows they had not worked with in the earlier stages of the Fellowship.

## Institutional Sponsors

In addition to the qualifications of each Fellow candidate, we took into consideration two equally important factors during the selection process. We understood that for an educator to succeed, he or she must have buy-in from his or her institution and strong support from a professional (sponsor) within the organization. The sponsor could act as a champion to advocate for and help facilitate with the development and implementation of the educator's project.

## Peer Relationships

We recognized early on the value of the Fellows working in groups, especially the insight they gained from the perspectives of others who were as committed to teen education, yet came from a significantly different educational or denominational setting. We invested in building these relationships by designing multiple experiences that fostered both personal and professional bonds—particularly during the ten days the Fellows spent together in Israel. These new relationships have had a positive effect on the educational landscapes the Fellows all participate in. We expect that the relationship webs that have formed will continue long after participation in Project InCiTE ends.

## A Note on the Organizational Process and Personalities

One aspect of Project InCiTE that did not make its way into the *10 Things We've Learned About Innovation* report or *Contribution to the Field of Israel Education* report is our internal management process. From an organizational perspective, we feel it bears mentioning.

We had in place at the beginning of the Fellowship three foundational understandings:

- End Goals: Developing projects and spreading the ideas to the wider community
- Strategies: Intentionally picking an eclectic cohort, SIT training, coach support, and peer development
- Structure: Overnight retreats, an intense Israel experience, monthly or weekly coach support calls and meetings

Other than this overall working plan, we intentionally left room for Project InCiTE to be open and fluid. Meaning, we knew that we would discover things along the way that we could not anticipate or expect and wanted to have the capacity to evolve as we went along, which we did. We also learned that personality types present in a process like this one or any other initiative could influence the undercurrent of how it will flow, what will be reacted to, and what will rise to the surface and require attention. It proved to be an exciting, challenging, and often elevating experience to be both responsive and proactive in this way, and we learned not to underestimate its value.

## Project Information

- Funding: In just eighteen months, fourteen of the twenty Fellows were

granted seed funding to launch their projects.

- Projects: The Project InCiTE webpage houses pages for each Fellow. Each page has a description and assessment about the project that the Fellows developed and a “how to” for implementing it in other settings.
- The Project InCiTE webpage also contains copies of process documents including a list of the outstanding educators in Israel with whom we worked. The website will be updated as projects are implemented and assessed.

The Project InCiTE team is proud of the wonderful group of professionals who embarked on this journey with us. Their collective commitment and hard work has contributed a body of work that will positively impact the wider educational community. We wish them *hatzlachah* as they continue in their personal and professional Jewish journeys.



**Debbie Seiden**

Project Manager for Project InCiTE Fellowship



## PROJECT INCITE TEAM

From The Jewish Education Project  
*David Bryfman, Debbie Seiden,  
and Jill Minkoff*

From The iCenter  
*Anne Lanski and Aliza Goodman*



## Some InCiTES on Israel Education

**AS YOU WALK** into my family's home in Australia, one cannot help but be drawn to two enlarged photographs. The first is a black-and-white photo of my father in 1967 shaking hands with the former Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. It was taken when my parents went to Israel as volunteers shortly after the Six-Day War. The second, a color photograph taken in 1990, is of me (a few years younger than my father in his photo) shaking hands with current Israeli President and former Prime Minister Shimon Peres. There is an uncanny resemblance between the two photographs. From them emerges a story far greater than two Australian blokes meeting two icons of Israeli history.

My parents went to Israel in '67 because as they say, "We had no real choice." As I read the history of that perilous time period, I understand precisely why they felt that way. When I decided to go to Israel for the first time immediately after high school, I also felt I had no choice—but for entirely different reasons. For me, in order to become a complete Jew and perhaps even a complete human being, I needed to experience firsthand this somewhat mythical country and its people. To various degrees my school, my youth movement, and my family all contributed to instilling this within me; and yet, I can't pinpoint the moment in time when I first decided that I wanted to go to Israel. It was just something I always knew I would do—that in my estimation at least, I didn't really have a choice.

Fast forward twenty years, and I find myself living and working with Jewish teens in North America who, unlike me and my parents, really do have a choice. An attachment to Israel in our youth and young adult populations can clearly no longer be taken for granted. And for those of us who believe that the Jewish people will be so much stronger and more vibrant if all Jews do have some personal connection with Israel, the country and its people, this attachment is our challenge.

Project InCiTE ([www.projectincite.blogspot.com](http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com)) was conceived from the recognition that what once may have worked to engage young Jews with Israel was in need of modification, adaptation, and, in some cases, transformation. It made sense that if young Jews today were so different from previous generations then the ways to reach them had to be adjusted accordingly.

When we embarked on this journey, I don't think any of us would have imagined it would get us to where we are today. As I write this, in the lead up to Israel's sixty-third Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration, I am proud of where we have come in such a short amount of time. We have influenced the lives of twenty Fellows, seven coaches, dozens of Jewish professionals, and already hundreds, if not thousands, of Jewish youth in North America and Israel. I know, almost with certainty, that

someone influenced by this project will one day shake hands with another Israeli Prime Minister. And, I can't wait for the day when I will be able to hang a photograph of my two-year-old son Jonah with a future Israeli leader, alongside the photographs of his father and grandfather.

**David Bryfman**

Director of the New Center for Collaborative Leadership  
The Jewish Education Project

**DAVID BRYFMAN** is currently Director of the New Center for Collaborative Leadership at The Jewish Education Project (formerly the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York-SAJES). David recently completed his PhD in Education and Jewish Studies at NYU focusing on the development of Jewish adolescent identity development and experiential Jewish education. He is also a graduate of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship Program. Prior to moving to New York, David worked in formal and informal Jewish educational institutions in Australia, Israel, and North America. David is also currently an educational consultant for The iCenter. In his spare time David also enjoys (sort of) running marathons.



# A Note on the Cluster Reports

As Project InCiTE Fellows began developing their project ideas, five major themes emerged: Personal Narratives, Leadership, Curriculum, *Mifgashim* (interaction between Jews from around the world and their Israeli peers), and Technology.

In order to maximize the potential of each project, we decided to form working groups around these overall themes. Fellows in each group took this opportunity to learn from and draw support from one another as their projects took shape.

Coaches were matched together with a group whose area of focus resonated with that coach's particular experience and expertise in Israel education. The coaches facilitated a range of rich conversations, documented personal observations and stories, and together with their Fellows explored the many questions these meetings generated.

The following essays document the work that took place within these cluster groups. They attempt to articulate and explore the challenges and successes of meaningful Israel experiences for our youth and represent their contribution to the wider community conversation, taking place around this very important work.

Together these stories share an emerging description and vision for Israel engagement for the twenty-first century.

## Project InCiTE Fellows



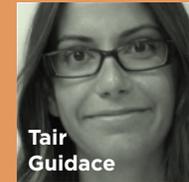
Carine Warsawski



Renee Goldfarb



Andrew Fretwell



Tair Guidace



Dana Sharkarchy



Shahar Gal



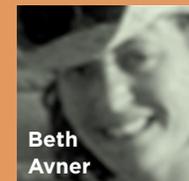
Efron Sturmwind



Hope Chernak



Sharna Marcus



Beth Avner



Rachel Winkler



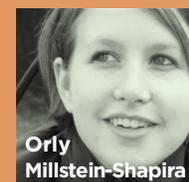
Rebecca Leibowitz



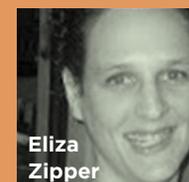
Alan Sufrin



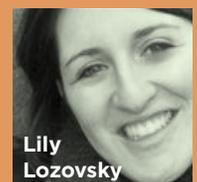
Brandi Argentar



Orly Millstein-Shapira



Eliza Zipper



Lily Lozovsky



Ben Fink



Jodi Mishkin



Lilach Bluevise



# Inspiring Innovation in Israel Education

**SINCE ITS FOUNDING** in 2008, The iCenter has been engaged in tackling issues in Israel education, namely that the field had been defined by a “reaction to crisis,” that Israel was often taught as a discrete subject rather than an integrated component, and that a lack of connection to or interest in Israel prevailed among many Jewish educators and students.

What is emerging is a focus on Israel as an integral component of a larger vision of a meaningful Jewish education for twenty-first century Jewish life. In particular, the integration of Israel into all aspects of Jewish learning serves as a powerful and dynamic building block for strong, positive Jewish identities among youth. By shifting the focus from teaching “about” Israel to facilitating learning experiences whereby Israel “becomes” part of who the learners are—the point at which the Jewish narrative becomes their narrative.

A primary focus of our work at The iCenter has been to develop a shared vision and common language to strengthen the field and help achieve our ultimate vision—that all Jewish educators view inspiring a connection to and engendering knowledge about Israel as essential to their educational agenda.

Effective Israel education is holistic and touches all parts of a learner’s being: the intellectual, the spiritual, the emotional, and the behavioral, all of which are interwoven in such a way as to tie the learner to Israel and the Jewish people in the deepest of ways. This could not be truer in the context of youth education and engagement—making partnering with The Jewish Education Project and thus Project InCiTE, a particularly attractive pilot project for The iCenter.

From its inception, and now looking back upon its successes, Project InCiTE is reflective of three of the iCenter’s core values:

## **1. Collaboration and Diversity**

Project InCiTE succeeded in fostering collaboration on multiple levels. The program was developed and implemented in partnership with The Jewish Education Project and in collaboration with a number of organizations that each brought

different expertise to the table. Participants in the program represented a wide range of learning environments, institutions, and approaches to education, and throughout the eighteen-month initiative, collaboration among participants and their coaches was encouraged as an invaluable process. The results of this collaboration among participants and coaches are reflected in the joint essays that have been included in this booklet as contributions to the field.

## 2. Innovation

Project InCiTE emerged out of the belief that educators and institutions that want to engage teens beyond their bar/bat mitzvah years must take a learner-centered approach. One of the unique qualities of Project InCiTE was that it insisted that *innovation could be taught*. With the help of SIT, Project InCiTE aggressively pursued that mantra by weaving innovation training into all of the immersive experiences of the cohort: the initial conference, the Israel program, and the final retreat. Indeed, engaging today's teens is a significant challenge. Thinking innovatively about how to develop educational programs that meet the interests and needs of today's youth is necessary if we are to successfully foster positive Jewish identities and connections to Israel. Project InCiTE has made enormous strides in creating a cohort that understands the power and the possibilities in using innovation tools.

## 3. Excellence Through Authenticity

Project InCiTE was about empowering Jewish youth professionals to broaden both their own and their institutions' horizons and to embrace Israel as an integrated component of their agenda. Participants came to understand that teaching youth to love the people, the landscape, the language, and the culture of Israel—all authentic encounters—is foundational in developing a love for the Jewish people, Jewish history, and being part of this evolving and thriving religion and culture.

The Israel trip served as a laboratory for experiencing programs, meeting people, and engaging ideas, and Fellows were encouraged to explore how to creatively integrate this authentic understanding of Israel education into their learning environments.

Israel education must provide youth with a multifaceted look at Israel. Jewish educators must passionately illustrate the diversity of Israel and the richness of the country by teaching about multiple aspects of Israel, including the history, people, culture, and politics. In doing so, we provide students with opportunities not just to learn about, but to feel Israel, to embrace Israel at the core of their Jewish identities, and to understand how Israel is a part of who they are and who they will become.

Project InCiTE's collaborative spirit, emphasis on innovation, and authentic experience, provide a model for meaningful and inspiring Israel education in the twenty-first century.

### **Anne Lanski**

President of The iCenter

**ANNE LANSKI'S** personal and professional passion for Israel education started three decades ago. As a pioneer in cross-cultural education and teen travel to Eastern Europe and Israel, Anne is the Founder and former Executive Director of Shorashim, a nationally-recognized Israel education organization. She is regarded as the seminal figure in making the *mifgash* a central component of Israel educational programs and is the recipient of numerous grants and awards for her pioneering work in this field. Anne received her MA from the Steinhardt School of Education at NYU and is a graduate of the Senior Educator Program at the Melton Centre of Hebrew University. She served as Director of Education at Congregation Hakafa in Glencoe, Illinois and taught Hebrew at New Trier Township High School in Winnetka, Illinois, where she developed new methodologies of the Hebrew language and culture instruction. Anne also has experience in the world of Jewish youth group and camp settings. Anne resides in Riverwoods, Illinois with her husband, Barry, and their three children.



# Personal Narratives

## Transformative Stories of Experiencing and Becoming

BY JOSHUA YARDEN

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM REBECCA SYKES  
AND PROJECT INCITE FELLOWS

*Experiencing, crafting, and sharing one's personal story of Israel and Jewish peoplehood unleashes the curiosity and creativity that links teens to the continually unfolding narrative that began with biblical ancestors and continued to future generations.*

**JEWES HAVE BEEN** telling and retelling the stories of peoplehood in texts, folktales, and celebrations for millennia. We don't know who first began telling these stories, but each of us is the first person to tell our own stories.

The tour guide is a storyteller, and so is every tourist. Shifting the focus between the grand narrative of "The Israel Experience" and personal narratives of young people experiencing Israel for the first time enables adolescents to embrace their own experience, encouraging them to be the transmitters of their own culture. Participants reflect, retell, and relive the great moments of their journeys. In this way they shift from being spectators to actors as they become part of the evolving story of Israel.

Israel programming is as much about the stories yet unwritten as it is about understanding the past. The stories teens tell about their experience in Israel are about friends, counselors, and guides as well as about the places they visit. They develop three levels of relationships in Israel. They discover a place, build personal connections as they share exhilarating experiences almost every waking hour of each day, and they are on a journey of self-discovery. Exploring these three levels of relationship building with the participants before, during, and after their experiences in Israel is part of building a bridge to a Jewish future.

Fellow A came to Project InCITE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) from a national organization as an assistant regional director of marketing and recruitment for Israel Programs. Her project provides teens with the opportunity to reflect on experiencing Israel through sharing video logs.

"The goal is for our teens to feel more knowledgeable, more confident, and able to articulate their impressions and empowered to share their story. We asked several questions: What does it mean to tell a Jewish story, and what is the story that you want to tell? We engaged them in the process of creating vignettes through which they would tell their personal story and cultivate their own identity.

Successive generations have told ancient and contemporary stories, written them down, added their own context in Hebrew, Aramaic, various Jewish and not particularly Jewish languages, and they have taken advantage of technological advances from papyrus to the printing press in order to spread the word. Songs, plays, drawings, paintings, photography, films...nearly every conceivable cultural and artistic medium has been employed. Today's adolescents are adapting to rapidly evolving technologies, and they are no less interested in words and images than at any time in the past. Their social networks

(school, youth group, camp, or Internet) are how people experience community, find role models, seek guidance, develop their identities, and share their own visions of the future.

Each project was both a retelling and a reliving of a meaningful moment, relationship, or encounter. The 'Israel experience' provided the framework for personal transformation. This project enabled them to become active transmitters of their own culture, inspiring peers at a friend's house, online, or in front of their religious school class."

Fellow B joined Project InCiTE as the regional advisor in the New York metro area for a major youth group. He focused on making sense of personal connections to the nuances and even the controversies surrounding national symbols.

"Different places in Israel precipitate different reactions from different people, including connecting with Israel through conflicting emotions. I was excited to see the Palmach museum, for instance, but the actors and their superficial stories made the experience disappointing. The Yitzhak Rabin Center (<http://www.rabincenter.org.il>), on the other hand, was powerful, informative, and emotional, telling the story of Israel through the biography of Rabin. Having both positive and negative experiences has enabled me to cultivate a very honest and dynamic relationship, with valid opinions and conflicting emotions. I strongly support Israel, yet I can at times disagree with the actions of the government or the positions of certain communities.

There are times when a relationship can be personal and meaningful without being weighed down by any struggle to make meaning. I am troubled by the physical environment and the politicization of the Western Wall, yet I love the Eilat boardwalk. I once joined a group for a weekend excursion to Mitzpeh Ramon, in the

Negev. I walked to a high peak near the edge of the crater early on Shabbat. Inspired by the light and the beauty of the desert, I began to stretch my body on the edge of a high cliff, in a light breeze, the sun just above the horizon. It was exhilarating.

That afternoon, while talking with some friends, someone asked, 'Did you see someone doing yoga during services?' Apparently, everyone had. They compared their prayer to my yoga, assuming that whoever it was on the cliff must have been on a spiritual journey. I told them that it was me—and that it was an amazing experience, and I loved the scenery, but I didn't have any spiritual awakening. My friends attempted to impose their expectations, and they seemed disappointed when my experience on the cliff did not live up to their expectations."

And Fellow C came to Project InCiTE as the regional youth advisor in the Chicago area and Northern Midwest regions for a national youth group. Her project focuses on leadership development through encouraging Israel trip participants to return and share their personal stories with their peers.

"We asked, 'How can developing a personal narrative about Israel create a dynamic connection?' The answer unfolded before our eyes in Israel. Each of the teens was touched or moved by a moment on a mountain, a time at the Wall, or a visit to a mosque. Three months after returning, during a follow-up call, they reminisced at length about the moments they enjoyed. I asked them if anything had surprised them or affected them differently since they returned.

One of the teens told us how snorkeling in the Red Sea had been a transformative experience. He contrasted the beauty of the pristine Gulf of Eilat with the Gulf of Mexico after the recent oil spill. Thinking about the ecological damage close to home, he unsuspectingly found his personal

connection to Israel. 'What would happen if there was an oil spill there?' A boy from California said that the story about the Red Sea and the Gulf of Mexico had affected him as well. He said it came to mind every time he saw the Pacific Ocean. The first boy's story became a part of the second boy's narrative. Now, every time he sees the ocean, he reflects back on his Israel experience.

One girl shared how her experience meeting Israeli teens influenced the way she has acted at home. Meeting an Israeli peer preparing for two years of army service inspired her to take ownership for her actions and responsibilities. 'If she can handle this responsibility, there's no reason I can't also.' Reflecting on her connection to Israel pushes her to be more mature, to realize her own potential.

They explained how Israel became the backdrop for the amazing friendships that they built while on the trip. I asked them why they thought this was the case, especially considering that most were traveling with people they had grown up with at

summer camp. Israel provided a new environment—unlike any other they had experienced before, and they were pleasantly surprised to see how that enabled them to form new relationships with old friends. The depth and the power of narrative enables people to connect and reconnect to their groups. Individuals who share their experiences define the nature of the group experience, even when they relate very private moments.”

In conclusion, Yehuda Amichai’s poem “Tourists” ([http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA\\_Archive/2000\\_2009/2003/9/Yehuda%20Amichai-%20Poems](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA_Archive/2000_2009/2003/9/Yehuda%20Amichai-%20Poems)) suggests that Israel’s story is one of simple people and the stories they tell, as much as it is about heroes, battles, and archeology. Likewise, each one who makes the journey from the Diaspora to Israel embodies an entirely meaningful experience, which is also a part of the story of the people of Israel.

Israel programming is as much about the stories yet unwritten as it is about understanding the past.

The Torah devotes a lot of space to storytelling. Abraham becomes the first Hebrew on his journey to Canaan. Jacob actually becomes Israel on his way back to Canaan, the land that will come to be known as Israel. Each of us, each descendent of Jacob, discovers our own connection to the people, the culture, and the land of Israel in a personal way. Getting adolescents talking, writing, Facebooking, blogging, vlogging—and who knows what’s coming next—enables their personal narratives to pick up where the biblical narrative leaves off. Unleashing the curiosity and the creativity of teens to express themselves, to ask questions, and to begin to provide their own answers helps them to become engaged and carry on the discussion for another generation. ■

**JOSHUA YARDEN** holds an MA in Judaic Studies from the University of Haifa and a PhD in education, culture, and society from the University of Pennsylvania, where he wrote a dissertation entitled, “Embracing Complexity: A Reflective Investigation of Cultural Transformation through Reflective Practice in Experiential Learning.” He has extensive experience in Israel and in North America, working with individuals, camps, schools, community organizations, and national initiatives engaging learners and teachers in the process of “becoming Israel.” His many presentations include: “In Search of Solutions: Understanding Israel through Problem-Based Learning,” “The Binding of Abraham,” “Jacob’s Struggle to Become Israel,” “The ‘Torosophy’ of Experiential Learning,” and “The Well-Framed Empty Space.”



**REBECCA SYKES’** time at Camp Ramah set things back on fire anytime she strayed from blazing a path as an artist who also wants to live a Jewish life. Time at camp also led to degrees from Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary in theater and music. Ramah Darom and Ramah Wisconsin feel like home, the kind of home where you can write, direct, teach improv, and create a staff-training curriculum while you eat tater tots. Currently, Rebecca serves as Artist in Residence at Hillel of University of Chicago where her Anusara-inspired yoga classes allow the diverse community to explore an integrated approach to mind-body awareness, using each yoga pose to powerfully open to new possibilities. And do handstands. As a singer, actress, yogini, mentor, and educator, Rebecca helps individuals and organizations take reliable risks towards inevitable inspiration.



# Personal Narratives

As part of her InCiTE project, Fellow Carine Warsawski gave flip cameras to a selected group of teens on a recent summer experience trip to Israel. Here are some examples of the personal narrative experiences recorded during the trip.

For more information about Carine's project, or other projects developed through Project InCiTE, please visit our webpage at <http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>

**“Matt”**



**“Maya”**



**“Rachel and Liz”**



**“Liz”**



# Leadership

BY SIMON KLARFELD

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PROJECT INCITE FELLOWS

*Communally, we must articulate relevant new assumptions for teen-leadership development and training. This includes a new clear framework for understanding teens, empowerment, leadership development, and the Jewish mission of change.*

**THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS** an insight into several critical conversations among Project InCITE Fellows (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) in discussion about innovation in teen-leadership development and training.

In order for innovation to take place and for us to take the next leap off the current plateau, which is now “leadership training” in youth programs, the community at large (e.g., national youth movements, local community youth infrastructures, and informal Jewish educational institutions focusing on teen services) must address the following questions in a way that will empower its youth educators to design and evaluate more effective leadership programs:

1. What is explicitly Jewish about our approach to leadership? What do our texts and traditions tell us about leadership? Is it a singular approach

(e.g., the strong leadership models of Moses and David or the shared leadership of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam)? If so, what is it? If not, what does that mean for leadership training? Do Jewish leaders require different skills or outlooks than non-Jewish leaders? Can a non-Jew be a leader of a Jewish community? Is a Jew who is a leader of a non-Jewish community/organization a Jewish leader?

2. What exactly do we mean by leadership? There are so many models and definitions of the term—what do we mean in our institutions? Is it the management school approach: a leader is someone with vision, can communicate that vision, and can motivate/mobilize others to follow them? Or is it the service approach to leadership: anyone can lead by understanding needs in society and doing the right thing by actively addressing that need? Or is it a community facilitator approach to leadership: to create a group process among community members that will empower them to create leadership from within?

Each model has very different ramifications for not only what we mean by “leadership,” but also who is a leader and what skills they need to be able to lead according to that model/tradition.

3. Is leadership by its nature elitist in terms of whom we should be selecting or recruiting for leadership training? How do we ascertain who are the “best” of our teens to be involved in leadership programs? What are the implications of doing so? How do we create welcoming communities and at the same time make certain programs exclusive? If we do not make these programs exclusive, what will be their attraction to the best and brightest teens?

4. How should we be designing our programs in the twenty-first century? Our methodologies, programs, and approaches have to be redesigned for the extremely busy, multiple-identity teens of today. We are now competing so much for quality time with teens. When teens are involved with the Jewish

community, we want to also engage them with other activities beyond leadership, so we must be extremely selective in our approaches to them.

5. What separates our Jewish leadership development programs from what they are potentially receiving in their secular high schools, college-prep programs, sports coaching, etc.?

6. What should the focus of our leaders be? Are today's teens in a culture, position, and ability to be major change agents? If not, what is the role of youth organizations and movements to inspire a level of commitment to change and counterculture?

7. What support should be given from the broader "adult" Jewish community to acknowledge and support these leadership programs

the first place. The time has come for us to confront these challenges head-on: to create a new clear framework for our understanding of teens, empowerment, leadership development, and the Jewish mission of change at large into which youth leadership development and training programs will reside and ultimately flourish. ■



So many of the assumptions underscoring youth leadership programs— if articulated at all—had been articulated many years ago in a different era, not necessarily relevant to today's environment.

and alumni of teen leadership programs—so that they have meaning beyond the isolate sessions/ classes/summer programs that the leadership programs provide?

While our "cluster group"—consisting of very talented, reflective, and well-networked youth educators—had opinions relating to each of these questions, our discussions in many ways hit a brick wall as we realized that many of the answers to these questions reside in the broader community and in the larger institutions in which our educators operate. It is clear to this group that so many of the assumptions underscoring youth leadership programs—if articulated at all—had been articulated many years ago in a different era, not necessarily relevant to today's environment or were never clearly articulated in

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# Curriculum

BY CLARE GOLDWATER &  
REUVEN GREENVALD

*Informal education is particularly challenged with what content to leave out. To make this decision effectively, consider pedagogy before content. Achieve this through focusing on 1) each learner, 2) enduring understandings, and 3) outreach.*

**ONE OF THE KEY** elements in the work of many Project InCITE Fellows (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) has been to create a new curriculum that fits their educational goals about Israel and their target audience. This has raised numerous issues regarding content selection, curricular structure, and educational planning. In this cluster, the Project InCITE Fellows reflected on their own processes in this arena and the ways in which they built and continue to build interesting and robust Israel curricula for their students.

Although the Fellows in this cluster shared an interest in curriculum planning, their projects all focused on different populations, and took place in varying educational settings. They were also at very different stages of project implementation. As a result we saw a great deal of interesting difference between them, as well as significant common learnings that they have shared with one another.

## Making Choices About What to Leave Out

In many ways this is *the* key issue for all educators involved in building a curriculum. There is always more material than there is time, and the key struggle is deciding what is more important, more relevant, or more significant. And the answer of what to leave out depends, of course, on many factors, including the target audience, the goals of the project as a whole and how the curriculum will be measured.

All the Project InCITE Fellows grappled with this issue and, in the end, all of them made their decisions about what to leave out on pedagogic grounds, rather than on the basis of the content itself. If all content was good, or at least equally significant in many ways, they turned to other criteria as a way to filter and make difficult decisions. They all found different ways to make these decisions, and we hope that their learnings are also relevant to others involved in this process:

### Focus on the Learner

One Fellow used her potential students as key elements in her decision about what to leave out of her curriculum. She decided that, ultimately, the pedagogy would be successful if it was guided by personalizing the learning experience and making it as accessible as possible, even though it was explicitly designed to expose learners to complexities of Israeli society and therefore required some background explanation in order to understand the topic, making it less accessible by definition.

In terms of lessons learned about this type of curriculum planning in an informal educational setting, the Fellow believes that knowledge of what is accessible to students should come from conversations the planner has with them, specifically trying to understand what their learners already know, and particularly, what issues are engaging them generally in their lives.

### Focus on Enduring Understandings

One Fellow turned to the broader literature of curriculum planning to help her with her difficult content decisions. Unfamiliar at first with the experience of other practitioners and researchers who had grappled with these same questions, she was able to turn to the methodology known as “Understanding by Design” (<http://grantwiggins.org>), which posits that curricular planning should start by identifying the end goals of the learning process and work backwards towards the concrete decisions of what content to include and what to leave out. Using this methodological framework, the Fellow focused on “Enduring Understandings” (<http://www6.grafton.k12.wi.us/district/eclipse/essentialquestions/enduring.html>), which are the outcomes of the learning process in any given content area. She found that by defining the “Enduring Understandings” that she wanted her students to achieve, she was able to make more thoughtful choices about what content to include.

We would assume that most young and inexperienced curriculum planners, and particularly those in informal settings, rather than schools, tend to jump into writing a curriculum “by the seat of their pants.” They are less likely to be familiar with methodologies that can help them, and we saw in this particular case how helpful it was for this Fellow to find support and guidance in a proven methodology.

### Focus on Outreach

It is typical of informal educational settings that a group of learners is not closed or fixed. Participants join and leave from one meeting to the next, and participation one week is no guarantee of participation the following week. For curriculum planning, then, this is a signifi-

cant challenge since it requires the educator to use each learning opportunity as outreach so that the learners will return *and*, if possible, bring their friends the next time.

This is a common difficulty for informal educators, but it is not dealt with in any significant way in the literature of curriculum planning because most of that literature comes out of schools where this is not an issue. As a result, we saw that for one Fellow in particular, his challenges, and any potential solutions and learnings, have particular resonance for the field of Israel education and informal education as a whole.

Overall, this Fellow’s solution to this issue was to focus on a variety of pedagogic techniques and to ensure that the content was personally engaging and highly relevant to the learners.

### Reflection on Process

Considering that all these Fellows were dealing with the same subject matter, which is Israel, one might have assumed the need to discuss more

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about the content they were choosing. For this particular cluster of Fellows, their thinking about the content of Israel education was not something they could reasonably discuss in this framework. They recognized their different starting points (settings, personal background, and approaches to education) and felt more comfortable talking about process instead of probing together the big questions about why Israel education and what content best meets those goals. This would be a useful process as a next step in deepening their work in Israel education. ■

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# Mifgashm

## An Encounter Between Peers in Israel and the Diaspora

BY ADAM STEWART

*Because teens are particularly attracted to the mystique of the “other,” mifgashim deepen immersive experiences of Israel. Shlichim, visitors, teachers, and technology can create and provide a means to authentic relationships when travel isn’t possible.*

**THE PROJECT INCITE** (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) *mifgash* cluster group consisted of five Fellows for whom *mifgash* was a key component of their project or as a field area to which their project, or their experience building their project, could contribute. The Fellows were from a variety of professional settings. The format of the cluster centered on several conference phone conversations and an online dialogue (facilitated partly by Google Docs and mostly by e-mail exchange). At several points the notion of a cluster “group project”—either a survey of the field or a group document on key contributions—was discussed as a possible next step. After the first discussion, the cluster was encouraged to read Minna Wolf’s dissertation on the *mifgash* in Israel Experience.<sup>1</sup>

The cluster agreed that there were certain *prima facie* arguments for *mifgash* that are well accepted among Israel educators, but we attempted to establish a set of core values as a means to explore the current implementation and possible future manifestation of *mifgashim*.

We determined these core values or, perhaps more accurately, strategies of the programmatic element:

- There is a perceived value in diversity, and the competing narratives of difference and commonality are powerful educational tools.
- *Mifgash* is a way to provide deeper context to an already immersive experience.
- The mystique of the “other” is attractive, particularly among teens, adolescents, and/or young adults.

In practice, *mifgash* is well established in the context of the Israel experience. Most high school, and many eighth-grade and younger trips, have *mifgash* as a program element and understand—or have been convinced to understand—the programmatic value in the interaction between Jews from around the world and their Israeli peers. The cluster discussed the Taglit-Birthright Israel project (<http://www.birthrightisrael.com>) at some length, which is now the largest and most comprehensive experiment with *mifgashim*, where hundreds of thousands of students and young adults have seen Israel—at least in part—alongside Israeli participants their age. Additionally, the BRI (Birthright Israel) program has stimulated creative approaches to *mifgash*—mostly around subject-interest areas—by offering grants for implementation. Studies conducted by the IDF (<http://idfspokesperson.com>) and the Cohen Center at Brandeis University (<http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs>) found Israeli soldiers returning from *mifgash* were “more committed to military service, more committed to their future in Israel, and more committed to learning about their role in maintaining Jewish survival than they had been prior to their *mifgash*.” In the same study, ninety-six percent of participants said the *mifgash* made them proud to be Israelis and to serve in the Israeli army, and a similarly high percentage felt the experience deepened their personal Jewish identity.<sup>2</sup>

The discussion around this research pushed the cluster to consider the reciprocal nature of *mifgash* and ways in which it brought Israel education to an Israeli audience. The cluster—particularly the participating member who was Israeli—seemed to think that this was a powerful consideration. Indeed, it seems according to the Taglit-Birthright Israel study that successful *mifgashim* move beyond the binary relationship—and as a result, seek less to highlight competing narratives, and more to authenticate things or ideas. Instead of using the other to explore something about the self, we use the other to represent something authentic. In this relationship, each presents the other rather than compare and contrasts the other.

The cluster was resistant to thinking about ways in which *mifgash* could be furthered or re-conceptualized in the case of the Israel experience, perhaps assuming that the pioneering work had been done or simply a reflection of their chosen

projects. Interestingly, only one of the Fellows was engaged in a project that could be defined as a traditional *mifgash* program, i.e., teens from outside of Israel encountering Israeli peers in the context of an Israel experience program. Even this program was as much focused on the pre-trip interaction as it was on the program in Israel. Instead, the cluster focused on other areas of Jewish and Israel education—outside of the Israel experience—where *mifgashim* could play a significant role. The cluster fixed on two main areas:

- “Twinning projects,” which created real and virtual connections between classrooms, mostly using different forms of technology to achieve results

- Israelis (as *shlichim*, teachers, and visitors), who helped to create and authenticate relationships with ideas about Israel

Since two of the projects were directly related to “twinning” (and at least two others tangentially used the concept), we set an agenda to explore and inventory different technologies that were currently available to facilitate twinning.

The results of the inventory were sparse and consisted of several companies that implemented telecommunication solutions to create ways in which classrooms could communicate in planned teleconference sessions. Melitz (<http://www.melitz.org.il>), has developed “Israel Connect,” a more comprehensively conceived program, which seeks to carefully fit schools to promote long-term success, has a curricular component, and attempts to integrate with existing Israel experience programs. One of the Fellows, whose project

however, is the suggestion that there is significant potential to apply technology in facilitating a meaningful and authentic relationship between peers in Israel and in the Diaspora. ■

<sup>1</sup> Minna Wolf, “Adjusting the Boundary: Exploring Identities During Israel Experience *Mifgashim*” (PhD diss., Melton Centre for Jewish Education, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Sasson, David Mittelberg, Shahar Hecht, and Leonard Saxe, “Encountering the Other, Finding Oneself: The Taglit-Birthright Israel *Mifgash*” (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2008).

Successful *mifgashim* move beyond the binary relationship—and as a result, seek less to highlight competing narratives, and more to authenticate things or ideas. Instead of using the other to explore something about the self, we use the other to represent something authentic.

was at an advanced stage, shared her use of a social-media platform that put aside the logistical difficulties of telecommunication and focused on a medium where students on both sides were already familiar.

The initial work of the cluster suggests that there is a great deal more exploratory work to be done in the area. The field of Jewish education has not normalized *mifgash* as an integrative part of Israel education, and the cluster Fellows and their participation reflect a more narrow conception of *mifgash* as an Israel experience component. The contribution of this cluster,

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# Technology

BY BRADLEY SOLMSEN

*In ways previously impossible, twenty-first century technologies (e.g., virtual worlds and social networking) provide effective methods and incentives to more deeply engage and connect with Israel in a manner that is meaningful, sophisticated, and encouraging.*

**WHAT CONTRIBUTION** can technology make to the field of Israel engagement? Technology, in relation to Israel engagement, holds the promise of bringing Israel to the learner in ways that we have not seen possible in the past. The two projects that were part of the Project InCiTE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) technology cluster included a project to introduce high school students to Israel through journeys and manipulation in the virtual world software platform (referred to here as Pitriworld, <http://pitriworld.com>) and a project to provide educational and social follow-up experiences for high school students after a trip to Israel (referred to as Follow-Up).

The Pitriworld project has the potential to answer the question: How do we introduce Israel to students in a meaningful, sophisticated way that encourages them to build a connection and want to deepen that connection? In this case technology plays two roles. Initially it provides the way to “get to” Israel. Students are transported virtually to a wide variety of places in Israel and presented with scenarios and activities that are context specific. Secondly, technology, in this case, is used as a motivational force. Many students sign up for this course because of the promise of a virtual world experience not because of the chance to “visit” Israel. If the course is well constructed the result will include opportunities to become better acquainted with the software and (probably less anticipated or expected) a better connection to elements of the land of Israel.

The Follow-Up project aims to use technology to both continue to foster social bonds as well as deepen the learning and educational agenda. We know that when students travel to Israel in organized groups they tend to form strong social connections. The Follow-Up project promises alumni of these Israel trips the opportunity to continue these social connections. With this project the technology provides the incentive (staying in touch or reconnecting). While students are enjoying one another’s company—well-crafted, engaging, familiar educational content is inserted into the context.

### **What Are the Three Things That I Learned in Working With These Two Fellows?**

1. In both cases the components identified as incentives turned out to be effective as incentives. In the case of Virtual World, students were attracted to the courses because of the opportunity to “play” in Pitriworld. In the case of the Follow-Up project, we know from focus groups as well as other related work that students seek one another out to continue to socialize after the conclusion of an Israel trip.

2. The content side of technological forms of engagement is more elusive. The goal for both of these projects is to make sure the level of actual learning or engagement is not overshadowed by the technology itself. Learning and engagement in these settings is challenging and difficult to measure.

3. The Pitriworld project presented a hybrid model. In this project the students were using technology while the majority of them were co-located. They had the chance to interact with one another in person while also interacting with the technology. Solutions like this must be

potential. At the same time, newer tools such as the iPad also hold tremendous potential for both deep learning—and deep distraction. ■



Make sure the level of actual learning or engagement is not overshadowed by the technology itself.

explored because they present educators and learners with the best of both models.

#### What Questions Are Yet to Explore?

1. How do we make online content engaging *and* challenging? We have seen online experiences that are engaging—the combination of engaging and intellectually challenging seems to be more elusive.

2. How do we see technology as more than the hardware in front of us? Jewish educators need to work more closely with software developers both to help produce more and better software and to better understand how software developers work and think. Software developers, in turn, would benefit from better understanding Jewish education and Jewish learning.

There is a great deal of low-hanging fruit that is underutilized in Jewish educational settings. The smart board is a powerful technology that few educators are trained to use to its fullest

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# Resources

## Selected Resources in Israel Education and Teen Engagement

**All information for Project InCITE:** <http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>

### WEBSITES AND OTHER RESOURCES

#### **ISRAEL21c**

*Presenting Israel beyond the conflict*

<http://www.israel21c.org>

#### **Makōm**

*Makōm website at The Jewish Agency for Israel*

<http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Strategic+Partnerships/Makom>

#### **Media Midrash**

*Linking videos with compelling curricular content*

<http://www.mediamidrash.org>

#### **Nu Campaign**

*T-shirts aimed at inspiring people to take action*

<http://www.nucampaign.org>

#### **SIT (Systematic Inventive Thinking)**

*Helping organizations and individuals to innovate*

<http://www.sitsite.com>

#### **Sviva Israel**

*Connecting young people to Israel through environmental education*

<http://www.svivaisrael.org>

#### **TED Talks**

*"Ideas worth spreading"*

<http://www.ted.com>

#### **The iCenter**

*Links to innovative, cutting-edge programs, projects, and resources*

<http://www.theicenter.org>

#### **The Jewish Education Project**

*Links to resources and educational programs*

<http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org>

#### **The Jewish Lens**

*Using photography in the exploration of identity and peoplehood*

<http://www.jewishlens.com>

## Toldot Yisrael

*Telling history without the textbooks*

<http://www.toldotyisrael.org>

## JEWISH EDUCATION BLOGS

### AVI CHAI Educational Technology

<http://edtechexp.blogspot.com>

### Chag Haatzmaut at Makōm

<http://chaghaatzmaut.com>

### Hararetz at Makōm

<http://www.makom.haaretz.com/blogs.asp>

### Innovation in Jewish Education

<http://blogs.brandeis.edu/movingje>

### Jewish Education Change Network

<http://www.jedchangenet.ning.com>

### Migdalar Guy's New Blog

<http://migdalorguysblog.blogspot.com>

### New Jewish Education

<http://newjewisheducation.blogspot.com>

### Welcome to the Next Level

<http://nextleveljewisheducation.blogspot.com>

## ONLINE JEWISH RESOURCES

### Legacy Heritage

*SMART Board Jewish Educational Database*

<http://www.legacyheritage.org/SJED>

### Lishmoa

<http://lishmoa.org>

### Lookstein

<http://www.lookstein.org>

*This resource list will be continually updated on the Project InCITE webpage*

## VIDEO RESOURCES

### “Ani Yehud!”



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_UJn14n49E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_UJn14n49E)

### “21<sup>st</sup> Century Education In New Brunswick, Canada”



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjJg9NfTXos>



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