

# THE WEXNER FOUNDATION



Wexner Newsletter: July 1, 2010 19 Tammuz 5770 Parshat Pinchas

## Wexner Heritage Consultation Call Series



On May 26th, Wexner Heritage members and alumni participated in the latest installment of our consultation calls series. These consultation calls are designed to share best practices of successful alumni programming. On these calls, alumni-led initiatives are showcased to inspire other Heritage communities to develop and adapt similar programs.

This most recent consultation was led by Jan Reicher, a Wexner Heritage San Francisco alumna. Jan was also joined by San Francisco alumnae, Sue Diamond and Amy Rabbino.

## Leadership Learning: A Defining Leadership Moment



### "Leadership: On Stage and Off"

**By Rabbi Joanna Samuels**, an alumna of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship Program. Joanna serves as the Director of Strategic Initiatives at Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community [www.advancingwomen.org](http://www.advancingwomen.org). She can be reached at [joanna@joannasamuels.com](mailto:joanna@joannasamuels.com)

Recently, the small and busy staff of three at Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community participated in an online course organized by the Sloan School of Management at MIT. One of the sessions was taught by Peter Senge, whose life's work has been dedicated to how people, teams and organizations can work together effectively. One thing he said helped me to better understand what I strive for in my leadership.

Leadership, said Senge, is about "creating a context for people to feel they can create the future."

What I like about this idea is that leadership is not necessarily about what we are doing at the top of the organizational pyramid – it is about enabling everyone around us to have the agency to be creative, energized and empowered. This is actually much harder work!

This resonates for me in thinking about my years as a congregational rabbi – a job that is rife with the tension between being a superstar "public" persona and quietly helping others to take small steps towards deeper Jewish living.

But it also helps me to isolate what is most meaningful about my role at AWP. One of my projects has been to bring small groups of women together who agree, over the course of 18 months, to attain the skills that they need to advance professionally, and to intervene in issues of gender inequity in their work places or communities. Although we are at the beginning of this initiative, women in our cohorts are already working on everything from enhancing their visibility in their field to working to improve work-life practices in their organizations to correcting gender-based pay inequities. I would like to think that having support, mentorship, and a structure in which to take on

On the call, they shared ideas that have served as successful models to keep their San Francisco alumni class engaged, sustained and vibrant. Please [click here](#) to read a more comprehensive report about their efforts and programming initiatives, written by Jan Reicher.

We invite you to contact Jan to consult further if you are considering creating a similar model for your own community. Jan Reicher can be reached at: [jcrara@yahoo.com](mailto:jcrara@yahoo.com).

A recording of the Consultation Call can also be accessed by [clicking here](#).

these challenges enables our participants to feel more present in creating their professional futures. I am proud to be coordinating this initiative – and in that way, moving towards Peter’ Senge’s idea of what leadership really is.

**To volunteer to submit a Defining Leadership Moment article please contact Karen Collum at [kcollum@wexner.net](mailto:kcollum@wexner.net) “I’ve Been Thinking...”**



**“Addressing the Needs of All Students”**  
**By Yael Bendat Appell**, *an alumna of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship Program. Yael currently runs the Hebrew and Judaic Studies Resource Program at the Sager Solomon Schechter Middle School in Northbrook, IL, and is passionate about making Jewish education accessible to all students. Yael can be reached at [ybendat@gmail.com](mailto:ybendat@gmail.com).*

In this very space, Jonathan Woocher recently wrote about the future of Jewish education and asked this essential question: “How do we build on the positive achievements of recent years to make it not just possible, but nearly certain that every Jewish young person and adult will have rich, meaningful, and impactful Jewish educational experiences...”

Even more recently, an article entitled “City Pushes Shift for Special Education” appeared in the New York Times. The article described a shift in New York City’s approach to educating students with diverse learning needs; many students who previously were sent to self-contained learning environments are now being sent to regular schools to allow these students to benefit from a typical classroom setting. The article stated: “This is fundamentally looking to change the way kids with special needs are treated in the city—they’re talking about changing the culture of all schools in the city so that they can serve students that many of them were previously shipping out...”

I can’t help but think about the striking relevance of this statement to Jewish education. Moreover, I would argue that in the context of Jewish education, the stakes are much higher. The article refers to shipping children out of schools. We, the Jewish community, instead of shipping our children out to just another school, have been shipping our children out of Jewish life. Think back to the op-ed by R. Dov Linzer and Devorah Zlochower, published only last November in The Jewish Week. In it, they, two prominent religious and Jewish educational leaders, courageously pleaded with the Jewish community to rethink its approach to individuals with special needs. Their argument was simple but painful: Our organizational structures exclude individuals with special needs, and their families, from partaking in Jewish life. In fact, they went so far as to say that their own family was essentially being cut out of the Jewish community.

**To continue reading click here** [READ MORE](#)

**Abigail and Leslie Wexner,  
Chairmen**  
**Larry S. Moses, President**  
**Rabbi B. Elka Abrahamson &  
Cindy Chazan, Vice Presidents**