

**The United Synagogue of
Conservative Judaism**



**The 2009
Solomon Schechter
Awards
for Synagogue Excellence**
GUIDELINES and CRITERIA
for
Early Childhood Education

*to be presented at the
Biennial Convention
December 6-10, 2009*

Jerry I. Klibanoff
Committee Chair

Aaron L. Kischel
Staff Consultant

Carole Korowitz
Biennial Convention Chair

Rance Block
Biennial Convention Vice-Chair

Rabbi Paul Drazen
Biennial Convention Director

Raymond B. Goldstein, PhD
International President

Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein
Executive Vice President

Solomon Schechter Award Guidelines

Please review and follow these guidelines when applying for a Solomon Schechter award. Entries must be in our hands by the deadline of 5:00 pm Eastern time, Monday, **April 17, 2009**.

1. United Synagogue's Solomon Schechter Awards program recognizes congregations, not subgroups or affiliates. Therefore, please be sure that all entries are submitted by the congregation. We do not accept submissions from separate departments, programs, or people from the congregation.
2. Multiple entries are allowed but only one entry per award category. Please choose the category for each entry based on the printed guidelines and criteria, and indicate that category on the application.
3. You may put more than one entry in a box, but each entry must have its own application. You may copy the application form [or download the application from www.uscj.org] if you need more application forms.
4. Entries are accepted and judged based on your responses to the guidelines and criteria in each of the award category. We provide guidelines and criteria to simplify the application process and to help the judges to evaluate entries. *You need not respond to every item in the guidelines.* You may describe your entry in narrative form; be sure to include samples of all supporting materials. We encourage materials be submitted in *green formats*. Provide as much in electronic [CD or DVD] media as possible. The web site awards must be submitted in electronic form.
5. **Only congregations in good financial standing as of JUNE 30, 2009 are eligible to receive an award.**
6. Each entry must meet the basic criteria stipulated for its award category. To win an award, an entry must demonstrate extraordinary characteristics or unusual and outstanding aspects that go beyond the expected norms. Entries within award and congregational size categories are compared to each other.
7. We plan to award one gold and one silver award for each congregational size division for each category.
8. **Please note: Materials submitted will not be returned.** All submissions become the property of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism for its use. United Synagogue reserves the right to use materials from the submissions, in whole or in part, with appropriate credit, in materials to be produced or distributed by United Synagogue
9. Award-winning entries will be on display at United Synagogue's biennial convention in December 2009. We strongly encourage representatives from the award-winning congregations to attend the convention to accept the awards and to share information about the programs.
10. Applications **must** include an executive summary (**with a maximum of 2-3 brief paragraphs**) on the summary form sheet on the reverse side of the application.
11. The application must be signed as indicated on the application form.
12. Applications and supporting materials must be shipped by delivery services that allow for package tracking (such as Federal Express, USPS Priority Mail or UPS). Materials **MUST** be in our possession by the deadline of **April 17, 2009**. Entries, which include application, supporting material and summary, must be sent to:
Solomon Schechter Awards - The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rapaport House – 10th Floor
820 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017

For additional or clarifying information, please talk to our staff consultant, **Aaron L. Kischel**, at the New England office of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Phone: 617-964-8210 e-mail: kischel@uscj.org

II. EDUCATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

There are three awards within this category:

1. Program as a whole.
2. One time program
3. Specific on-going element of the program

For any award, early childhood programs must fulfill these criteria:

1. The school shall have been in existence for at least five years, shall run five days weekly, for a minimum of 2.5 hours each day (including total elapsed time, i.e., luncheon, snack time, etc.) and have a minimum enrollment of 12 children and appropriate licenses.
2. The school shall be supervised by a licensed principal with a Jewish teachers' institute degree or its equivalent. The equivalent can be a demonstration of ongoing adult Jewish learning through: college level courses in Jewish subjects, completion of Melton, Wexner, Me'ah adult education courses, or an ongoing program of study at a synagogue, the BJE or Federation. The majority of teachers shall have a Jewish background and meet the local early childhood school standards.
3. The Early Childhood Director is a part of the senior or executive staff of the synagogue, and attends any and all senior or executive staff meetings. Information about the program, including the Director's name and contact information, is easily accessible on the synagogue's website.
4. The program of the school shall be approved by the congregation's Rabbi and shall include:
 - a) specific indications of integration of Judaic and general curriculum;
 - b) an environment that delivers the message that "Jewish life happens here" through visual displays, toys, books, and other children's materials;
 - c) age-appropriate celebration of all Jewish holidays;
 - d) involvement of all the clergy in the early childhood program and with the early childhood families on a regular basis, with the program as part of the/one rabbi's portfolio.
 - e) observance of *mitzvot* such as correct blessings before meals and snacks, simple *tefillot* and *tzedakah*;
5. The physical facilities shall include furnishings designed for the age range of the classroom and properly equipped outdoor play area.
6. The school shall maintain all norms of religious observance required by the Conservative Movement as discussed with the synagogue rabbi.
7. Descriptions of the school's approach to parent and family education and involvement, including specific programs, should be submitted with this application.
8. While not required, photographic and video materials [on CD or DVD] are recommended as part of the application.

In addition to the above, the following apply for the specific sub-categories:

1. The early childhood program as a whole
 - Schools which have received The Solomon Schechter Award for the early childhood program as a whole in the past must demonstrate growth and improvements in the school since the most recent award.
2. A one time program of the early childhood program (e.g. an imaginary trip to Israel or a tzedakah project)
 - a. Indicate long and short term goals of the program.
 - b. Indicate outcomes and reactions to the program
3. A specific, on-going element of the early childhood program (e.g. an intergenerational program or parent education)
 - a. Indicate long and short term goals of the program
 - b. Indicate outcomes and plans for growth and change of the program