



Searching for New Education Leadership

A Guide to the Search Process
For USCJ *Kehillot*

Introduction

Jewish education is the basis for the Jewish future. Your request for placement information means that you are considering a change of educational leadership for your school. This material is designed to help you accomplish that goal. It will help you through the process and inform your committee about ways to foster your new educator's success. *Please note: in this document, we will be using the term **Educational Leader**, which refers to both the religious school education director AND the early childhood education director.*

Consider Your Reasons for Wanting a New Educational Leader

Why is your *kehilla* (Jewish community inside or outside the walls of a synagogue) seeking a new Educational Leader?

Are you...

- Expanding to a full time job which your current director cannot take on?
- Reconfiguring the job and increasing the responsibilities?
- Reducing hours and responsibilities, which requires you to find someone new for the job?
- Looking for a different style of management?
- Cutting budgets, thus needing to decrease the educator's salary?
- Seeking to change or raise the level of the school through the hiring of a more experienced director?

Understanding the reasons that you require a different director can help guide your search.

Reconsider Your Present Education Leadership

Before beginning a search, deeply consider if it is possible to continue with your present Educational Leader.

- Is the current director retiring or moving away? If so, will you be looking for someone with similar skills, or are you moving to a new model?
- Is there a dispute? If there a contractual problem that needs to be discussed further, could there be a meeting of the minds before seeking a change?
- Before beginning with someone new, could the *kehilla* help the present Educational Leader to develop new skills and refine current strengths, rather than severing the relationship?
- Could sending your Educational Leader to the New Directors' Institute provide a renewed leadership vision and training? NDI has provided a welcome refresher course for some of our more veteran educational leaders.

Transition Requires Closing Appropriately

When a *kehilla* decides it will no longer retain and renew the contract of the Educational Leader, it must inform the director as early as possible. Fairness to the director and the school dictates informing the incumbent educational leader in a way that is both timely and compassionate.

The arrangements you make for your current director's departure say a great deal about the character of your *kehilla*. Honor your present director, as appropriate, for length of service,

special programs and unique innovations. It is important for both the *kehilla* and the incumbent educator to maintain a positive, professional and pleasant demeanor at all times.

Conduct an exit interview. It enables you to learn about the inner workings of the school, the relationship among the staff, and acknowledge the contribution of your current director.

Ask your present director to leave a “State of the School” report for the new director. The report should include the policies and procedures, a calendar of operations, information about the curriculum, and any other information that define the current practices within the school program.

If your present director is retiring and staying in the area, consider arranging the option of consultation and transition training at the end of the year.

Some Things to Consider Before You Start:

Schools grow and change over time. The educational leader that you will be hiring will need to meet your immediate needs, respect the school’s culture and history yet also yet be guided by the vision to move our school into the future.

Whether replacing a retiring long time veteran educator or replacing a relatively short-term educator, it is important to evaluate the strengths of your current director. What skills have helped the school prosper and grow? What skills will be needed to address the big issues facing your school? What skills are necessary to deal with the area that need improvement? USCJ’s tools: The Role of the Education Leader or The Role of the Early Childhood Educational Leader can help the committee with this task.

Understanding the Process of Change

Change can be a source of energy and excitement, along with tension. Teachers may be concerned that a new director will initiate a new learning approach requiring extra preparation. Parents and students might be concerned that bringing on a new Educational Leader will result in more work for their children, a change in school standards or structure. Conversations with all stakeholders in the learning process can inform you in your search, and prepare volunteer leadership, parents and teachers for the change ahead.

Research shows that when schools undertake a process of introspection as a guide to a change, the process itself has a positive influence on many aspects of school life. Stakeholders are enthusiastic about evaluating where things are and optimistic about making existing programs even better. The process of clarifying priorities and school direction can ease tensions and enhance overall support.

The Search Committee

Selecting the Committee

The process of choosing a Search Committee must be done carefully; it is both important and very political. Follow your congregation's policies to assure that members of the committee are formally invited to serve, approved as required, and announced to the entire membership.

Search committees should have an odd number of members and vary in size (but never more than 15) and should represent the various stakeholders. The committee's tasks are to:

- Develop a job description
- Establish the qualifications for the job
- Review incoming resumes
- Select and meet with the finalist candidates
- Make a recommendation to those responsible for the hiring

The committee should include appropriate lay leaders [Education Chair and Vice President of Education], a few school parents (some of whom have education training), a likely future school parent, 1-2 faculty members. Some *kehillot* include a high school student enrolled in the school. The president, rabbi, cantor and youth director should serve, *ex officio*. All deliberations of the committee are confidential; members of the committee must recognize and honor that condition.

USCJ standards [see Standard 9] specifically state that a *kehilla* may not seek to hire staff from other local congregations. If a nearby Educational Leader voices interest in the position, the *kehilla* should insist that the director speak with her/his current employer and confirm that it was the Educational Leader, not the searching congregation, who initiated the discussions. A **word of caution**: It is inappropriate and unprofessional to contact an Educational Leader who is under contract to another synagogue or Jewish community institution and extend an invitation for an interview. You should not meet with a local director who is reluctant to notify his or her employer prior to a formal interview.

Serving on the Search Committee is an important honor. Members of the committee should commit themselves to attending all committee meetings, including interviews as well as all meetings with semifinalists and finalists, unless there is an unavoidable conflict. Only by being privy to all of the information offered will a member be able to make a fair and informed final decision.

The initial preparatory task of a Search Committee is to take a hard honest look at the state of the school. Is it a small school with strong Hebrew education or is it a medium size school with scattered attendance and average student performance? Is it a five day a week morning and afternoon program or three day a week morning only? Presenting the situation honestly in a straightforward manner will allow the Educational Leader to decide if his or her skills meet your needs, and gives all of the involved people a clear picture of your school.

Search Committee Timeline

Searching for a new Educational Leader usually takes between 4-8 months. Preliminary meetings of the committee should establish the structure and schedule, which will allow you adequate time to complete the search. It is good practice to create a written schedule of tasks with a timeline, to assure that each of these tasks are completed and to keep the search on target to a successful conclusion.

Search Committee Budget

Each search requires a budget. Set a budget which includes the areas noted below to assure the largest pool of candidates.

- Transportation [air tickets, train, ground transportation, taxis] for three interviews
- Hotel accommodations for three interviews
- Meals and refreshments for interviews and committee meetings
- Advertising
- Production of materials for candidates
- Relocation costs

The Job Description and Beyond

The Job Description

Review the current Educational Leader job description, and ask the following questions: Does it accurately describe the position *as it is planned*? Does it reflect your goals and values? Is it a valid document to move your school ahead? What are the important ideas? Answers to these questions inform the committee's task to review and rebuild the job description.

The job description must be comprehensive, and should include each area of responsibility required by your *kehilla*. USCJ's tools: The Role of the Education Leader or The Role of the Early Childhood Educational Leader can help the committee with this task.

Make a list of all the focus areas for your Educational Leader and the responsibilities in these areas. What will your Director oversee, manage, administer, teach and organize? Are your expectations realistic? Can one person do this job, or does your list include more items and areas of responsibility than one person (even an excellent candidate) can reasonably do and still be successful?

Items which should be considered for a job description include:

- Curriculum formulation/review of a prescribed course of study and educational materials
- Staff supervision and evaluation: teacher hiring, development, and retention
- Budget supervision: preparing budget and maintaining record keeping
- Maintaining student records: enrollment, health and safety, progress reports, etc.
- Student development creation and maintenance of a warm, nurturing learning environment where each student progresses as an individual

- Discipline/Behavior: standards and implementation
- Parent Communications: Proactive and Reactive
- Public Relations representing the *kehilla* in the community
- Family Education: creating integrated programming
- Adult Education: creating a program for ongoing adult and parent study

Sample job descriptions can be found in Appendix 1.

The Salary Package

In addition to job description, the committee should propose a cost to the congregation which includes contracted salary and benefits. USCJ's Guide to Contractual Relations lists some of the standard benefits as:

- Health, major medical, disability and life insurance
- Pension plan such as the Joint Retirement Board. The congregation's contribution should not fall below 7%
- Sick leave / personal leave / parental leave, including maternity, paternity and adoption
- Conference allowance and time
- Annual vacation of at least one month
- financial assistance for professional growth and development
- Allowance to underwrite attendance at the annual JEA (Jewish Educators Assembly) Conference
- Professional dues to JEA and other professional education organizations
- Sabbatical leave, after six years, for professional growth and personal renewal

Many congregations offer:

- Full membership status for the Educational Leader's immediate family
- Free early childhood, religious school and high school tuition

Attracting Candidates

The search committee should review the Conservative Movement's statement on Inclusive Hiring. The best candidate for your position may well be someone who does not match pre-conceived ideas of who the best candidate might be.

Writing an Advertisement

Your job description or advertisement serves as an initial candidate screening. Be specific without being too limiting or exclusionary. A candidate who meets 75% of your criteria can do an excellent job for you.

Sample Education Director advertisement #1

Seeking full time Education Director for 250 student (K-12) in the ___ area for a USCJ supplementary Religious School. As a Framework for Excellence School our school has been recognized among the top religious schools in the country. We are seeking candidates who possess: a strong Jewish identity, excellent communication skills and supervisory experience.

MA in Jewish Education a plus. Our *kehilla* community is knowledgeable as well as warm and heimische. Top Salary and Benefits Package. Send resume to _____

Sample Education Director advertisement #2

Vibrant, small Conservative shul (USCJ) in _____, is interested in engaging a warm, knowledgeable and energetic part time Jewish educator. Responsibilities will include administration, teaching, congregational programming and working with teens. Prior experience and expertise with teens in informal education settings a plus.

MS in Jewish Education or Judaic Studies preferred. Located only a half hour from ____'s cultural center, our *kehilla* offers a serious, high-quality egalitarian educational opportunity for all of our families. Competitive Salary. Contact: _____ at _____

Sample Early Childhood Education Director advertisement #1:

Kehilla in XXXX seeks a dynamic, energetic and creative Director for our Jewish Preschool. The Director is responsible for managing a nurturing environment for over 100 students ages 2-6 and directing professionals who teach and oversee early and late care programs along with Kindergarten Enrichment programs and a summer camp. The qualified candidate should possess the ability to hire, manage and develop teachers, have solid teaching and administrative experiences in early childhood education, a knowledge and passion for teaching Jewish values and customs to young children; the ability to develop strong relationships with Rabbi, Cantor, lay leaders and parents, requiring outstanding communication and interpersonal skills. A Bachelor's degree in Education or Early Childhood Education highly preferred.

Sample Early Childhood Education Director advertisement #2:

Our early childhood center has been thriving for over 40 years and is the gateway to membership and involvement for many of our families. Parents of our students consistently become important lay leaders. The Early Childhood Center is a key link in our efforts to create a vibrant Jewish learning experience for children and family members. We are the largest Conservative congregation in XX.

We seek an innovative, energetic, and passionate educator who can articulate a clear philosophy that a quality early childhood program is one that promotes learning through rich play experiences. The Director is responsible for all aspects of the school: administration, operation and budget. This includes day-to-day management, program development, staffing, and supervision, as well as outreach to prospective parents and ongoing communication with current parents and the broader synagogue community. Candidates require a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education or related field and 3-5 years experience as a director or assistant director of an early childhood program.

Where to Advertise

The local Jewish newspaper or your *kehilla* bulletin can be good choices for advertising. Word of mouth is often the best way of attracting candidates. If your community has an agency or Bureau of Jewish Education, be sure to check with them.

Using OnLine Job Searches

There are a variety of online recruitment strategies. JewishJobs.com is popular with Jewish professionals. The site lists positions at all levels of career opportunities in Jewish education and Jewish communal leadership. There is a fee charged for this service. Employers complete an online application and wait for approval. After receiving notification of approval the employer is able to post their job. A job seeker will be able to post his or her resume and also search for jobs. Your job will then be listed for a specific number of weeks before it will need to be renewed.

It is important to remember that job seekers applying to your position through online search engines, unlike candidates who are members of the JEA, are not subject to any screening process. Due diligence is foremost the responsibility of the congregation.

Other Recruitment Avenues

The Jewish community is small. When your position is announced, without doubt someone will pass the word along to others. Networking often leads to some interesting possibilities.

Don't overlook the obvious. There may be someone in your congregation that can be groomed for the position. Take a good look and see who might be around and available. Their dedication and devotion to the synagogue and a desire to see it flourish might be the ticket to a successful partnership.

Still More Places to Look for Candidates

Your search with USCJ/JEA will bring your position to many people. You might want to inquire about getting the word to each of the following institutions as well:

- [The Rabbinical School and the Davidson School of Education of The Jewish Theological Seminary](#), 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027, 2126788000
- [Brandeis University's Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service](#), Waltham, MA 02454, 7817362991
- [Hebrew College of Boston](#), 160 Herrick Road, Newton Centre, MA 02459, 6175598600
- [Baltimore Hebrew Institute \(Towson University\)](#), 8000 York Road, Towson, MD 21252, 410-704-7117
- [Fingerhut School of Education of The American Jewish University](#), 15600 Mulholland Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90077, 310440-1548
- [Reconstructionist Rabbinical College](#), 1299 Church Road, Wyncote, PA 19095, 215576-0800
- [Gratz College](#), 7605 Old York Road, Elkins Park, PA 19027, 215-635-7300
- [Spertus Institute](#), 610 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605, 312322-1700

Confidentiality

The search process must be confidential. Every candidate is entitled to complete confidentiality from the very first interview until a candidate is selected for the position. Candidates and their credentials are to be discussed only with other search committee members in private settings. Search Committee members must be directed that the details of the meetings or the names of the candidates should not be discussed with spouses, friends or other interested parties. The Jewish community is small, so it's best to remind committee members that gossip could impair a person's ability to earn a livelihood.

The Search Committee should contact references only after a candidate has given permission.

Interviewing

Receiving and Reviewing Resumes

The search process, done well, can be positive public relations for your school and synagogue; done poorly it can reflect negatively on your *kehilla*.

- An e-mail should be sent to every candidate submitting an application the day the application arrives. The note should confirm receipt of the application, outline the time frame for the search, including when initial interviews will begin and when you anticipate a final decision.
- Two or three Search Committee members should review **each resume**. Review the resumes for employment and academic background, additional training and professional experience. Be aware of gaps in employment or if the candidate has a long list of short-term positions. Such history may not indicate a problem, but the committee should ask about it early in the review process. Candidates eliminated at this early stage should be thanked and told their candidacy is not being considered. An example of such a letter: "Thank you for sending us your resume. We are specifically looking for someone who has extensive experience doing ____."
- Promising resumes should be presented to the full committee for review. Contact the candidate to receive permission to check references (no calls or e-notes can be sent before permission is received). Once you receive permission, references should be checked, but only by members of the Search Committee. It is reasonable for the committee to investigate further. Speak with one or two people with whom the candidate has worked committee heads, administrators, and faculty members. Your rabbi could call the candidate's rabbi for more information. If the candidate will not give permission to make even limited reference calls, give the candidate an opportunity to explain why not, or thank the candidate and end the candidacy.

Due Diligence

USCJ and JEA are membership organizations offering job referral services for our constituents. In referring potential candidates to schools and/or congregations, ***we do not make reference checks or qualitative judgments regarding the applicant's professional experience.*** The school's Search Committee should read each resume with care, and verify personal information

(including degrees awarded) and the candidate's professional performance references, as well as conduct background, criminal, drug and child abuse checks, which are standard employment practice in most states. If you are hiring a candidate who is finishing a degree program, you should ask to receive confirmation (either a copy of the degree or a transcript that states that all requirements have been completed and the degree awarded).

Interviews

Set up a preliminary interview for all candidates who passed the first review. Write a list of the questions you will be asking at all interviews, to assure you gather the same information from each candidate. If your list of candidates includes anyone who is at a distance, plan a teleconference or video conference [such as Skype® or ooVoo®]. There is a natural tendency to give preference to an in-person interview. For all candidates to have a similar opportunity to present themselves well, consider either, if *any* interviews are being done electronically then *all* the interviews should be conducted electronically, or some other way to "even the playing field."

No matter how tempting it may be to schedule several candidates back to back on the same date, for both confidentiality and the comfort of the candidates, plan a gap of at least 45 minutes between interviews. Plan to spend 1 ½ hours for the interview and another 30 minutes to debrief and discuss what you have just seen and heard.

Immediately after the interview, poll the committee. Decide if each candidate is worth pursuing, holding for later consideration, or not worthwhile to interview further.

Putting Your Best Foot Forward

A well-planned interview is a good way to begin what will, hopefully, be a longterm relationship. Once you have set the date and time for the interview, provide your candidate with the following either by mail or electronically:

Your pre-interview information should include:

- How the interview will be conducted, including the name of program to be used (if electronic) and any necessary screen/account names
- A complete job description
- A brief outline of the interview schedule
- A list of who will be at the meeting
- Any ground rules for the interview

Each candidate should also receive these materials before the preliminary interview, either by mail or electronically:

- Basic school and *kehilla* information
- *Kehilla* New Member's information
- Early Childhood and Congregational School Parent and Staff Handbooks
- Family Education flyers
- Adult Education brochures
- Basic community information and statistics on the general and Jewish community

- Information about the local Day Schools
- Housing information, such as a local realtor's map

At in-person interviews, provide water for the candidate. For a dinner meeting, allow time for the candidate to eat, and keep the discussion informal for a few minutes.

Record Keeping

Provide a standard form to each committee member for taking notes. The form should include all the standard questions asked and any standard measures the committee has accepted. In addition to personal notes, one person should take notes for all the interviews to provide consistency. Consider attaching a photo of the candidate to the notes.

Some Thoughts Before The Interview

The questions provide you with an opportunity to determine if this candidate is appropriate for the position. Observe the candidate's demeanor and presence under pressure, but remember that the camera does not always show people at their best.

What to learn about your candidate through the interviews:

- Judaic knowledge
- Professional experiences
- Understanding of how students learn
- Experience with lay committees
- Definition of organization
- Educational vision
- Core values
- Supervisory experience
-

What to look for in each candidate through the interviews:

- If the candidate is poised
- How each candidate responds under pressure
- How the candidate responds to lay leaders
- If the candidate is articulate
- If the candidate has a good sense of humor
- If the candidate inspires confidence and respect

Sample Interview Questions for an Educational Leadership Candidate

1. Describe your own Jewish educational journey.
2. Why are you interested in this position?
3. Tell us about your home congregation.
4. Describe your knowledge of the tenets of Conservative Judaism. How does this reconcile with your own beliefs?
5. Tell us about your own Jewish role model. How do you see yourself in the position of a role model?

6. Tell us about a successful program that you created and facilitated. What made it successful?
7. What is your philosophy of education?
8. What is your vision of a successful school program?
9. Describe a collaborative experience in which you enjoyed participation.
10. How would you support faculty in issues of discipline? What is your own philosophy of keeping a school in order?
11. What do you consider to be an effective faculty supervisory approach?
12. Do you have questions for this committee?
13. Anything else we should be asking you?
14. Do you have any skills that do not appear on your resume that you should tell us about?
15. If we were to call your last place of employment, what would they tell us?

Sample Additional Questions Specifically for Education Directors

1. What approaches to Hebrew decoding and prayer study for school age children do you believe is most effective?
2. How do you view parents in the school framework?
3. How would you encourage teachers to engage students in an afternoon classroom?

Sample Additional Questions Specifically for Early Childhood Education Directors

1. How do you build relationships with parents in your program?
2. Describe your educational approach to early childhood education?
3. How might you strive to connect EC families to the life of the congregation? Who would your partners need to be?

Sample Scenarios for an Education Director

1. Your 4th grade teacher has planned one of the best lessons ever, but the class gets side tracked on a discussion about God. How do you deal with this?
2. The sixth grade teacher comes to tell you that she has one very *difficult student*. This student calls out, disrupts the lesson multiple times, is rude, doesn't participate in the lesson or complete assignments and goads other students when they make mistakes...and it's the President's child. How would you deal with this situation?
3. Your teachers have been given a specific curriculum to teach. A veteran teacher decides that the students need to learn something different. How do you deal with this?
4. Because of enrollment numbers it is sometimes necessary to switch a teacher from one grade to another for a year. How do you accomplish this?
5. Your teachers are asked to participate in the creation of school wide assemblies and special programs. Not all the teachers wish to participate. How do you work with this to get the end results that you need?
6. The *kehilla's* biggest contributor continually calls you asking you to create a tailor made individual curriculum specifically for his child. How do you deal with this?

Sample Scenarios for an Early Childhood Education Director

1. The classroom of a teacher in your school is filled to the brim with posters, toys, adult and children's books....too much stuff. How do you work with this teacher to make her room more appropriate?
2. A child in the three-year-old room is biting other children. How do you work with the teachers? The child? The parents of both the biter and the bitten child?
3. You would like to steer the school in a new direction educationally. How do you get the teachers on board?
4. Only 5 % of graduating students continue on in the *kehilla's* religious school. Only 2% of families from the early childhood program join the congregation. Who do you work with to improve this situation? What are some strategies you use?

Questions that May Not Be Asked

It is illegal to discriminate based on nationality, age, marital or family status, gender, and health and physical abilities. Because you are hiring for a synagogue education position, you may ask if the candidate is Jewish and other relevant faith-based questions.

After the Initial Interview

Discuss points from the interview immediately after the interview. Discuss the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. The chair of the Search Committee should speak with the candidate and give a fair assessment of how the interview went within a few days of the candidate's interview.

If the committee has decided not to pursue the candidate, say so, as positively as possible. This allows a candidate in whom you have no interest to pursue other possibilities. For those candidates who are still considering, the call is to express reasonable interest and review the remainder of the process.

The Second Interview

Once you have a shortlist of candidates, arrange for on-site interviews for all candidates. Remember that interviews are two way meetings. You are finding out all you can about the candidate; the candidate is looking at the synagogue and the community, the school and its leadership.

Set times for the final interviews. If candidates are coming from out of town, the *kehilla* is expected to pay all expenses [travel, meals and lodging]. If the *kehilla* does not make the arrangements, reimbursements should be made within one week of the interview.

Candidates Need Information Too

A prepared candidate is someone who has learned as much as possible about your community and school before arriving at the interview. It would not be unlikely for him or her to call the local Jewish agencies, members in the congregation that he or she has a relationship with and even your incumbent director for information and insight into the job.

Expect candidates to ask for further information before the in-person interview. **Be prepared to provide each candidate with the following information:**

- What is the current term of the Rabbi and the Hazzan?

- What is the turnover rate of the professional staff?
- Why is the present director leaving?
- What were his/her strengths and challenges?
- Describe the working relationship between the lay leaders and professionals.
- What is the long-term picture of the *kehilla*? Is it growing? Contracting?
- What is religious nature of the *kehilla*? Egalitarian? Center or right/left of center?
- Is the membership comfortable with that status?
- How many children in the school? What is the potential for growth?
- Has the job description been updated since the initial interview?

Allow time for the candidate to ask questions of your committee. **Questions that may come up during the candidate's question time could include such issues as:**

- What are the lines of authority in the professional staff? To whom would I be immediately responsible?
- What is the working relationship between the Rabbi and the Educational Leader?
- What are the school's educational goals?
- What is the school's financial basis? Is it expected to break even or earn a profit?
- What fundraising responsibilities does the director have?
- What are the sources of funding? Tuition? Grants?
- What is the makeup of the faculty/staff? What is the rate of turnover?
- What are the strongest and weakest points of the administrative system?
- What is the relationship between the Board of Directors and the professional?
- What changes have there been in the student body that would affect the overall effectiveness of the school?
- What are the projected demographics for enrollment?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the school?
- Is there any area of the school or its program that will need immediate attention?

If the committee cannot answer any of the candidate's questions immediately, it is acceptable to tell the candidate that someone on the committee will get back with the answer within a few days, and it is then important to follow up.

If there are expectations that the candidate deliver a *D'var Torah*, meet with students or teach a demonstration lesson, be sure to let the candidate know well in advance so he or she can prepare.

If the candidate is coming from out of town, be sure the candidate has:

- Name and cell phone number of the person who will bring the candidate from the airport or train
- If appropriate, the name, phone and confirmation number of rental car agency
- Confirmation of flight arrangements
- Confirmation of hotel name and address or host, if home hospitality
- Information on local transportation that might be needed

After each interview visit, it's wise for the committee to meet and evaluate each candidate. Each member of the committee should explain how s/he rates the candidate and why. It is worth

spending time in serious discussion to see if a consensus can be reached as to the best choice for the school.

The Formal Second Interview

The formal interview should last no longer than an hour. If the candidate is coming in from out of town, there will be other times for informal discussions. The Rabbi and President of the congregation should participate in the formal interview. The candidate should see the school in session. The time before the formal interview should include a tour of the school and synagogue, introducing the candidate to staff, some parents and students. Consider providing the candidate with some of the questions to be covered during this interview.

The purpose of the on-site interview is to meet the candidate *while presenting your school as a very attractive employment opportunity*. When you are ready to make your offer you want the candidate to have chosen your school as well.

Selecting a New Director and the Compensation Conversation

After all the interviews are complete, the committee meets and makes its final choice. The chair of the search committee then calls the selected candidate to make the offer.

The discussion shifts to the compensation package. The *kehilla's* compensation offer must be within the range noted on the application. It is inappropriate to make an offer below the amount indicated in the application. Negotiations will determine the exact values; items to determine include the complete compensation package, starting date, and other arrangements. Relocation costs need review, but are not part of the compensation package. There may be some give and take in these negotiations. Some candidates want to negotiate for themselves, while others may hire a third party to participate in the negotiations. Once all of the details have been discussed, a formal contract is written and signed. It is important for the synagogue/school to have a lawyer review the contract before it is finalized.

Final Approval

Have the appropriate group at the *kehilla* give final approval to the contract and hire. In some *kehillot* that is the Board or Executive Committee, in others approval might be needed from the rabbi or other staff as well. Contact all unsuccessful candidates to thank them for their interest in your school and wish them well in their future search. Contact USCJ, both your KRM and either Sue Wyner or Maxine Handelman, to let them know the position is filled.

New Director on Board

Introducing Your New Director to Your Community

When the hiring process is complete, you will want to share the good news with your *kehilla*, school and community. Publish a welcome article in the *synagogue's* newsletter, website and in

the local press. Update the congregation website with the new Educational Leader's bio and contact information. Provide a biography of the new director in the new school year information packet. Teachers should receive written information about the new director as well.

Provide your new director with contact information for each returning teacher to allow for an introduction and discussion of school history and initial plans.

Insuring Your New Educational Leader's Success

A savvy congregation and committee will do everything possible to insure the new director's success. Establish open lines of communication to help support your new director. Your director needs to feel safe in asking for help and direction. The congregation must assure your director that a misstep or a mistake is not the end of the world.

Supervision and Evaluation

The director's job description is the basis for the ongoing evaluation process. Evaluation should be conducted as a process of support and professional growth. The congregation should provide the director with a designated supervisor and a clear evaluation process. Even if your former director didn't "need" a supervisor, begin the new administration with one. Appropriate supervisor candidates include (but are not limited to) the Rabbi, the education vice president or chair, the director of education (if s/he oversees several schools or the entire educational endeavor at the synagogue). The supervisor should not be a person in a peer position.

Supervision can be divided into a consultant role (the Rabbi or the Educational Leader) and a more evaluation oriented role (the executive director or board member). The evaluation process should be established when the director is hired, and a formal evaluation and setting of goals should occur on a regularly scheduled basis (at least yearly).

New Directors Institute

USCJ's New Directors Institute (NDI) is a multi-day summer gathering that features learning and reflection, experiential models of education and a like-minded community of colleagues.

Whether for an early childhood director, education director or director of congregational learning, NDI offers a great introduction to best practices within the profession, as well as continued education and support upon completion of the course.

Membership in Jewish Educators Assembly and JEA Annual Convention

USCJ recommends that the education professionals in USCJ *kehillot* be a part of their national professional organization, the [Jewish Educators' Assembly](#). Like the Rabbinical Assembly for Rabbis and the Cantor's Assembly for Cantors, the JEA is the organization that provides

continuing professional development and professional support for its membership. Colleagues work together to initiate, promote and maintain levels of excellence in the field of Jewish education. They create and support professional services, innovative programs and stateoftheart resources that enrich Jewish educators and also the people they work with.

The objectives of the JEA include:

- Creating a forum for the exchange of ideas, programs and materials
- Conducting professional development seminars, workshops, webinars and activities
- Establishing and maintaining high professional standards
- Recruiting qualified individuals for Conservative Jewish educational positions
- Coordinating the Annual JEA Conference
- Enhancing the development of Jewish education in congregations and ECE programs, day schools, community organizations and national agencies
- Promoting and sponsoring research in Jewish education.

Recognizing the need to inspire and encourage a new generation of Conservative Jewish educators, the JEA works closely with the Davidson School of Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary, The Fingerhut School of Education at the University of Judaism, and with other members of the Association of Institutions of Higher Learning for Jewish Education (AIHLJE).

Appendix 1 – Sample Job Descriptions

A job description should be focused and not too detailed. The job description should be reviewed and updated every year.

Education Director

Religious School Responsibilities

1. Administrative responsibilities for the Congregation's religious school program
 - a. Record keeping
 - b. Teacher supervision
 - c. Curriculum alignment
 - d. Home-school communication
 - e. Reporting of student progress
 - f. Providing the resources needed for quality education
 - g. Managing the religious school budget
 - h. Providing for the supplies needed to run the school and its programming
2. Administrative responsibilities for the Congregation's adult education program
3. Administrative responsibilities for the Congregation's family education program
4. In-service training for Religious School Faculty
5. Attendance at meetings, including:
 - a. Professional Staff
 - b. Education Committee
 - c. All other meetings as are appropriate to effectively carrying out responsibilities both within the Congregation and the Jewish educational community
6. Articles written monthly for the Congregational Newsletter, and other appropriate communications with the Congregation and the Religious School Families

Congregational Responsibilities

1. Programming and staffing of Family and Congregational *Shabbatonim*
2. Holiday programming for children and families
3. Planning and programming to meet the goals of the Congregation's Strategic plan.
These goals relate to all families in the Congregation, both supplementary and day school.
4. Hebrew class for adults
5. Teaching at the Adult Education Academy and Tikkun Leyl Shavuot
6. Creating and supervising the outlying community bus system (as appropriate)
7. Promoting and coordinating the joint Day School-Religious School Preschool class
8. Additional early childhood programming to entice families with young children to the Congregation and to the Religious School, which include:
 - a. Part of the professional team overseeing and staffing our Kinder Shabbat program, both at our congregation and the outlying community preschool.
 - b. Monthly programming in early childhood for families of children ages 3-5.

Early Childhood Education Director

General Responsibilities:

Implement Congregation xxxx's Mission Statement as applies to early Jewish Education. Ensure the development of ongoing Judaic programming that contributes to the growth and development of children.

Early Childhood Enrichment Programming:

Planning and implementing Holiday Celebrations and special programming for families with young children. These events are hosted by the ECE department with the director responsible for purchasing supplies, hiring staff, supervising and evaluating programs.

Parent Education and Parent Resources:

The Director serves as a resource contact for young families with infants and preschool aged children, and is available to offer information pertaining to parenting in all areas, social, emotional, and developmental. Judaic resource books are made available which offer insight into topics specific to Jewish Parenting.

Development of outside resources, arrange for guest speakers, Shabbat and Passover workshops, Tot Shabbat programming, High Holiday programs and assist in the implementation of congregational family programs.

Attend weekly professional staff meetings, monthly board meetings, and committee meetings as needed to facilitate programming plans and needs.

Financial:

1. Prepare annual budget.
2. Monitor expenses and collection of tuition and fees.
3. Establish such fees and develop enrollment policy.
4. Solicit unpaid accounts and stay in close contact with the accounting department.
5. Work with the accounting department, budget committee and board treasurer to ensure proper bookkeeping records are kept.
6. Be aware of funds available for the support of extra programming and special supply purposes not in the annual budget.
7. Fundraising projects as needed.
8. Prepare and submit monthly payroll. Ensure that teaching staff is compensated for appropriately.
9. Inventory materials, order and purchase art and educational supplies, daily snack supplies, etc.

Staff Supervision:

1. Maintain supervision and instructional guidance through regular staff meetings and in-service training opportunities.
2. Hire, terminate, and evaluate performance.
3. Involve teachers together as a group, in their teams, and individually to allow for planning, creating, and implementing curriculum and new policies and ideas.

4. Provide teachers with appropriate curriculum materials and encourage exploration of innovative techniques and materials within their classrooms
5. Serve as a leader and a guide. Observe and offer suggestions for change as needed.
6. Know the needs of the teachers and their students. Act as a referral/intervention system for the parents of those children with special needs.
7. Demonstrate and maintain positive and respectful relationships among the staff.

Parent Relations:

1. Maintain positive communication with parents, both written and oral.
2. Address issues and concerns and enhance parental involvement in the school
3. Make Early Childhood Jewish Education a family educational experience
4. Act as a consultant to early childhood issues. Serve as a positive communicative link between staff and parents when necessary.
5. Act as a public relations representative/liaison presenting parental concerns and issues to the education staff, executive staff and the board as the need arises.

Public Relations:

1. Represent the Congregation and the preschool at relevant occasions and events in our community.
2. Develop communications with local Jewish agencies
3. Provide information and calendar of events for community publication information
4. Publish monthly newsletter for Congregational families and our preschool families.
5. Represent the Congregation with required licensing agencies as necessary: CSD, Health and Immunizations, etc.
6. Serve as the liaison between the ECE department, the congregation, and the community.

Appendix 2

The USCJ Guide to Contractual Relations contains this section outlining the relationship between the Congregation and the Educator.

Article 5 – Contractual Relations With An Educator

Section 1. Introductory Statement:

Professional Jewish educators are vital to the education of the community in the tradition of our people. The Educator represents this tradition through training, vision and personal role modeling.

As used in this Guide, the term “Educators” refers to directors of educational programs, including Educational Directors, Principals, Family Educators, and Educational Program Directors. The dignity of these professionals is essential to the success of this endeavor. The Educator(s) work(s) in partnership with the rabbi(s), other Jewish professionals, the governing body of the school/congregation and its membership. To this end it is imperative that institutions and educators have clearly communicated guidelines for this relationship.

Section 2. Duties/Responsibilities of Educators:

The Educator provides vision, leadership and direction for the institution’s educational programs. Responsibilities are not limited to the following; but can include:

1. The creation of a positive school climate.
2. The formulation of the curriculum and the course of study in consultation with (where applicable) the rabbi(s) and the School Board/Education Committee.
3. The engagement, supervision, and discharge of staff, in consultation with the appropriate committee(s).
4. The administration and supervision of the school, including budget planning, record keeping, enrollment and classification of pupils.
5. The selection of textbooks and the preparation of educational materials in cooperation with the teaching staff.
6. The organization and supervision of all curricular and co-curricular school activities.
7. The planning and conducting of staff meetings.
8. The organization and guidance of parents’ groups and other groups that promote the welfare of the school/congregation.

Section 3. The Agreement Between Institution and Educator:

The relationship between the Educator and the institution is a professional one. Every effort should be made to ensure a harmonious and lasting appointment. All relationships and agreements between the Educator and the Institution should conform to the following guidelines:

Recommended Period of Engagement:

The initial engagement of the Educator should be for a minimum period of two years. An Educator with no prior experience, may be engaged for one year.

Renewals

1. The first renewal should be for a minimum of (3) three years.
2. Each additional renewal should be for a minimum of (3) three years.
3. In all events, by mutual agreement, no later than January 31 of the last year of each contract period, the Institution and the Educator should agree in principle upon their future relationship. Their detailed negotiations should be concluded, in writing, no later than March 15.
4. In the case of an Educator with no prior experience who has been engaged for one year, in the first renewal only the dates should be March 1 and April 15 respectively.

C. Terms of Agreement:

1. Upon the appointment of the Educator, a contract, letter of agreement or similar document should be signed by the Educator and the authorized officer or officers of the Institution. Such document should include:
2. A compensation arrangement including the following:
 - a. Base compensation and amount or percent of annual increments.
 - b. Health, major medical, disability and life insurance coverage provided by the Institution.
 - c. Pension— Educator enrolled in a suitable pension plan such as the Pension Plan of the Joint Retirement Board. The contribution of the Institution should not fall below 7%.
 - d. Sick Leave—Reasonable time should be allowed for sick leave, not charged against the Educator's vacation time, (except in case of prolonged illness (in excess of 30 consecutive days) which may be charged against vacation time).
 - e. Personal Leave—Reasonable time should be allowed for personal leave due to unforeseen or emergency circumstances in case of the Educator and his/her immediate family.
 - f. Shiva Leave—As provided in Article 1, Section 8, of this Guide.
 - g. Parental Leave—The institution will minimally follow Federal guidelines for parental leave (maternity, paternity and adoption). A Director who becomes pregnant should give ample notice to the Institution.
 - h. Annual vacation of at least one month after serving the Institution for eleven months.
 - i. Conference allowance and time—should be granted to participate in professional growth programs. To encourage the Educator's professional growth and development, the institution should:
3. Assist the Educator with opportunities to enhance scholarly and professional competence.
4. Encourage and underwrite the Educator's attendance at the annual JEA Conference, and where financially possible, additional conferences, summer institutes and courses. (3) Provide payment of professional dues to the JEA and other professional educational organizations.
5. The institution will provide secretarial assistance to the Educator.
6. Sabbatical Leave—Upon completion of a minimum of seven years of continuous service in the same institution, the Educator may be granted a Sabbatical Leave for the purpose of further professional growth and personal renewal. Taking into account the individual circumstances, the rabbi, institution and Educator should work out an arrangement for the length of leave, compensation, and agreed upon term of post-sabbatical institutional service.

D. Termination of Service:

An Educator or institution that desires not to renew the existing relationship should give notice to the other party, in writing, not later than January 31 of the last year of the agreement.

E. Severance and Retirement Arrangements:

Section 4. Evaluation:

The Educator's performance review should be based upon a procedure and a schedule previously agreed upon by the Educator and the institution.

Section 5. Arbitration:

In the event the Educator and the institution dispute any of the aspects of their agreement either party should have the right to submit the dispute to any impartial group upon which both parties should agree. In the event the parties cannot agree, any such dispute should be submitted to the USCJ Standards Committee for mediation and, if necessary, arbitration in accordance with the Committee's rules. Both parties should be bound by such adjudication, which would be enforceable in the appropriate court of law.

Section 6. Appointment:

There are established placement procedures within the Conservative Movement that should be followed:

A. Responsibilities of Institution Seeking Directors:

1. Institutions seeking Educators should apply to the Placement Committee of The JEA.
2. Institutions should not seek applicants to replace an incumbent unless a bona fide vacancy exists through the resignation or retirement of the incumbent or through the termination of employment. Institutions seeking Educators should assume responsibility for:
 - a. Paying travel and lodging expenses incurred by candidates in connection with scheduled interviews;
 - b. Paying costs involved in the re-location of the appointee and family, and moving the household effects; and
3. Assisting in obtaining proper housing and alleviating any undue financial burden resulting from the immediate availability of such housing.

B. Responsibilities of the Educator Seeking Placement:

1. The Educator seeking a position should file in writing an application for placement with the Placement Committee of the JEA and abide by its rules and regulations.
2. Educators should keep the Placement Committee informed of other referral services.
3. An Educator who is privately invited to be a candidate must contact the Placement Committee and apprise the Placement Committee and guide the Institution to do likewise.
4. It is unethical to enter into discussions relative to a position currently occupied by another colleague.

Section 7. Continuing Contract:

A contract providing for continuing relationship without formal re-election by the Institution affords the Educator dignity and security. A review may be requested by either party regarding salary and other benefits which should be negotiated period.