

**The Ethics of Exclusion:  
Pedagogical, Curricular, Leadership, and Moral Imperatives for Inclusive Practice  
in Jewish Schools**

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## Introduction

*“The best of leaders recognize . . . [the] dilemmas [they face] as opportunities for doing what is right, not necessarily what is expedient. As school leaders, we have an obligation to set ethical and moral examples for the organization we serve.”*  
(Sorenson & Goldsmith, 2006, p. 169)

*“To teach B’tselem Elokim will require that all of us engaged in the education of our children lose no opportunity to affirm the inestimable worth of every life . . .”*  
(Shapiro, 2006, p. 174)

*“Vision . . . is an invitation to pupils, educators, families, and communities to create, through reflection, a desired and meaningful tomorrow. . . . The contemporary challenge to Jewish education is clear and severe. What is required is fresh and energetic thinking about the Jewish future and its rationale, in view of the desperate circumstances we face.”*  
(Fox, Scheffler, & Marom, 2006, p. 8)

*“Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice.”*  
(Freire, 2004, p.15)

*“And you shall do that which is right and good . . . .”*  
(Devarim, 6:18)

Inclusive practice in education and schooling, public or private, is cutting-edge, not commonly in use. Yet, this monograph posits that such practice is a moral necessity and an ethical imperative incumbent on Jewish educators to articulate, philosophically, and to actualize, in practice. An ideological, social, political, and intellectual commitment to justice, equity, and excellence for *all* students must be continuously affirmed and reaffirmed. This monograph will posit that such ideals are lacking in many schools, public and private. Too many Jewish schools, in particular, exclude the “non-traditional” student possessing different learning needs and requiring special educational services. Many Jewish day schools and yeshivot are not philosophically committed to inclusive pedagogy, nor have they been able to commit sufficient resources, financial and otherwise, to support such initiatives organizationally. Teachers too, for the most part, are not prepared (pre-service and in-service) to teach in diverse, inclusive learning environments that include students with learning and other disabilities.

Exclusionary educational practices do not only refer, however, to students with disabilities taught outside the mainstream of the general education classroom (see, e.g., Ferri & Connor, 2006). Students may also be excluded culturally. Sephardic students’ rich cultural heritage, for instance, may be given short shrift as evidenced in curricular exclusion whereby Sephardic traditions and practices are not actively taught in Ashkenazi schools, even where Sephardi students attend. Anecdotal evidence exists for the reverse situation as well, although the numbers of Ashkenazi students attending Sephardic schools are much lower by comparison. Parenthetically, Sephardic exclusion from

*Haredi* Yeshivot in Israel is an even more acute problem. Educators should commit to constructing inclusive curricula and policies that acknowledge and appreciate cultural diversity.

This monograph, then, moves beyond usual parameters of inclusionism to also consider aspects unique to *limmudei kodesh* related to Sephardi and Ashkenazi traditions. Although other examples of exclusionism related to, for instance, new immigrants from Eastern Europe and their assimilation and acceptance in schools and in society as a whole can be discussed (see, e.g., Schnall, 2006) and, or the *Haredi* and Modern Orthodox Judaism divide, our discussion here, for purposes of space limitations, will focus on the examples stated above related to students with disabilities, and Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The role and responsibility of Jewish schools to address exclusionary educational and cultural practices and behaviors form the main focus of this monograph. Although inclusive practice is also important for programs of informal education, summer camps, youth organizations, etc., the focus here will remain on Jewish schools because of space limitations and the fact that these other educational contexts deserve more complete attention in another monograph or essay.

Educational and cultural exclusionary attitudes and practices have significant pedagogical, curricular, leadership, and moral implications for the work of progressive and idealistic educators as well as concerned community members. The theoretical frame supporting the viewpoints taken in this monograph is based on concepts and issues of social justice, cultural diversity, constructivism, differentiated instruction, and an ethic of caring. Inclusive practice, however, will serve as the moral frame and research perspective of the monograph. The author is cognizant of the possible controversial nature of some of the ideas expressed. Transformational (Northouse, 2003) and moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992), however, compel a serious and forthright discussion of these issues so that concerned, committed educators and others might continue their Herculean efforts to ensure high quality instruction for *all* students in an environment of educational opportunity and cultural sensitivity.

What is inclusion? Inclusion is a belief system (Stainback & Stainback, 2000). It is a process of facilitating an educational environment that provides access to high quality education for all students (Lambert, et al, 2003). Related to the disabilities issue, inclusion is premised on the notion that “all” children learning together in the same school and the same classroom, with services and supports necessary so that they can succeed, is critical. Advocates say that students with disabilities should be educated with students without disabilities (see, e.g., Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 2000b). Special classes or removal of children from the general education environment (note that the term “general” is preferred over “regular” because “regular” implies that students not in the “regular” classroom are “irregular”) should occur only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in the general classroom cannot be achieved satisfactorily with the use of supplementary support services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 33, U.S.C., 1400, 1997; Kochhar, West, & Taymans, 2000; Viachou, 2004; Young, 2000). Inclusion, however, must also address cultural exclusion. In this case, the school curriculum must adequately address the histories, customs, and *halachot* of both Sephardic and Ashkenazic students.

Next, a theoretical frame supporting inclusive practice is presented, followed by some practical suggestions for moving schools closer to an inclusion model. The

monograph ends with a discussion of the moral imperatives and ethical implications of inclusion.

### Theoretical Background

#### Overview

Table 1, below, charts the approach taken in this monograph that questions the moral and ethical foundations of exclusionism in two distinct areas that have serious implications for educational practices in Jewish day schools and yeshivot. After describing the “problem” by presenting sample scenarios drawn from actual school incidents, the research base and practice of inclusion will be highlighted. Then, the following theories or conceptual approaches will be reviewed in brief fashion: social justice, the ethics of caring, differentiated instruction, constructivism, and cultural diversity. The research base for inclusion is then highlighted. While this monograph introduces theoretical, conceptual and some practical approaches to fostering inclusion, it is not meant as a manual or guide to establish an inclusive classroom or school.

Table 1: Theoretical Frame

Classification	Students with Disabilities	Sephardim/Ashkenazim
Problem	Segregated from mainstream	Curricularly excluded
Theory	Social justice (Brown, 2004); ethics of caring (Held, 1995); differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2004); constructivism (Twomey Fosnot, 2005)	Social justice; ethics of caring; cultural diversity (Banks, 2005)
Recommendation	Inclusion through differentiation (Reid, 2005)	Inclusion through curriculum integration (Beane, 1997)
Methodology	Teacher training (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007); professional development (Gordon, 2003); prejudice reduction (Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006)	Teacher training; professional development; prejudice reduction

## **The Ethical Problem and its Parameters**

Scenarios presented below are fictionalized for purposes of reporting, although they are based on actual incidents. They are meant as caricatures, not representative of all situations, but they do have a basis in reality. Exclusionism has not infrequently been reported in the literature, nor is it unique to schools as evidenced by an examination of class organization sheets, courses of study and other curricular approaches, and commonplace pedagogical strategies employed in many classrooms. As a consequence of this monograph, the author is in the process of beginning a formal study to survey educators, current and former students, and parents to document attitudes, experiences, and views of exclusionism as manifested in Jewish day schools and yeshivot. The author hopes to write a follow-up article reporting results of this descriptive study.

Some of the scenarios that follow are rather straightforward while others, like the first one, deal with complex ethical issues. They are of an ethical nature because they deal with issues of individual rights and justice (see, e.g., Mahoney, 2006; 2008). They are issues that reasonable people may differ about because of personal experiences, misinformation, or ideology. Profound differences in point of view are rarely gratuitous. For one person, inclusion may be the road to justice and equity for all students, yet for another, the road to intrusion and miseducation. However, considering its normative, social, educational, and even political dimensions, the issue of inclusion touches the very heart or foundation of what we think about the function of our schools, the way children learn, the best way to teach our children, and our expectations for their academic, social, emotional, and spiritual growth as individuals.

### Scenario 1a:

Students with Disabilities – *“I don’t want that ‘kind’ of child in the same class with my child.”*

*Judith Lazarus served as president of the P.T.A. for several years at the Winston Jewish Elementary School (fictitious) in a mid-west metropolitan city. Despite her busy personal and professional schedule, she remained committed to community service and especially to the Jewish School. A Harvard graduate and child neurologist as well as mother of two precocious children attending the school, Dr. Lazarus was an active spokesperson in the community on a range of social, medical, and educational issues. Respected by many parents and colleagues, she ran unopposed for two consecutive terms as P.T.A. president. She was a strong supporter of the newly appointed elementary school principal who had a reputation as a caring, intelligent, and creative administrator. Shortly after his inauguration as principal, he announced at a P.T.A. meeting his plans to initiate an inclusion philosophy and even inclusion classes at the school. He didn’t believe that students with special needs should be, in his words, “segregated” from the rest of the student population, but rather “students could be offered high instructional programming in the same classroom.” “We can educate our children equally well,” he stated, “in the same classroom with teachers well prepared to address individual learning needs of all the students.” “Our school,” he continued, “should and will provide the proper resources to ensure that this inclusion project benefits all children.” After reviewing research findings on the benefits of inclusion for both students with and without*

disabilities, he asked for parent volunteers to join a steering committee of teachers and others to help implement the inclusion program. Dr. Lazarus, not one to shy from conversation or debate, stood up at the meeting and respectfully but assertively said, "There are without doubt some students with special needs whose needs cannot be adequately addressed by any sort of 'inclusion'. These students often thrive when provided with the correct special-ed setting. An example is the sort of student with a constellation of emotional and learning problems--and I have many of these in the BOCES setting in which I work--that simply cannot be handled in any mainstream setting." She continued, "We have an intensive support program, nationally recognized, that brings together child psychiatrists, a child neurologist (me), child psychologists, psychiatric social workers, and special-ed teachers, in special schools, to help care for these kids and their families (who often need a lot of support, and guidance). The fact remains is that some kids have serious attentional, emotional, or brain-based problems (severe dyslexia comes to mind)--and to subject mainstream students, mainstream teachers, etc, to all the adaptations these children would require will in my experience not work as well as having these kids treated in separate classes." Silence filled the auditorium after her comments. All eyes turned to the principal. "I don't think we totally disagree," retorted the principal. "Certainly, inclusion will not work for some kids with very, very severe disabilities; I feel the same way. The students you speak about are a very, very small minority. What I am advocating, however, is an elimination of the historic way we've excluded so many 'normal' children from the mainstream because they simply learn differently and because we have developed, quote on quote, 'sophisticated' testing procedures to identify presumed intellectual deficiencies. Schools have been reluctant to accommodate them. I want our school to join other cutting-edge schools by saying 'we will not exclude, whenever possible, any child from the mainstream.' Dr. Lazarus, I am discussing the 'basic' student with a different learning style, maybe she has retention issues, mild learning disabilities, etc., . . . we need to 'push in' these children, not 'pull them out.'" He continued, "But I also believe we can include students with significant disabilities if we are committed to really helping all, or most children who deserve better treatment." "Even Down-Syndrome children?" queried the P.T.A. president. "Yes, in some cases they can succeed in the classroom (Wurzburg, 1992; 2001). Dr. Lazarus looked incredulous; she hesitated. Suddenly, one parent stood up near the rear of the auditorium and shouted, "'I don't want that 'kind' of child in the same class with my child.'" Another parent after hearing someone else speak out chimed in by saying, "My child is normal. These other kids have problems. They'll slow down the learning of my child." Still another parent said, "These special children, uh, I mean, the handicapped you know, . . . they ought to be educated alone . . . I mean given services they need to help them. What's wrong with that? That way everybody will be happy."

Inclusion remains an ill-conceived idea for many educators and parents. Unaware or unwilling to accept its benefits for both special and general education students, detractors adhere to traditional conceptions of teaching and learning.

Paradigm paralysis (see, e.g., McBeath, 1994) is all too common in education. Our assumptions are fixed and we utilize a single paradigm or lens in which to perceive our work and world. Whether it is our conception of organizing schools, formulating curricula, teaching, supervising instruction, or views of how students learn best, paradigm paralysis has thwarted alternate ways of conceiving education and schooling. This paradigm effect, as it is called, is natural but becomes problematic when we rigidly follow the prescribed path even when it is no longer functional or when we are confronted by other more efficacious possibilities. Exclusionism has become our paradigm effect. We are paralyzed to the idea of inclusion. It just doesn't fit with our conventional ways of structuring work in classrooms.

In terms of our conceptions of the notion of 'disability,' we operate, according to Hahn (1989) from two perspectives. The one adhered to traditionally and still accepted by many people today is known as the 'functional limitations' perspective. In this paradigm the problem resides with the student of special needs. The role of the school is to remediate, if it can, the disability, or at least, ensure that the student does not interfere with the majority of students without a disability. These students, under this paradigm, are given services but in separate educational environments (e.g., resource rooms or special schools). Under the 'functional limitations' perspective schools do not change or adapt at all to the needs of these special needs students.

An alternate way of meeting the needs of special learners is known as the 'minority group' perspective. Within this paradigm, schools indeed adopt and accommodate to the needs, interests, and abilities of all students. According to Karagiannis, Stainback, and Stainback (2000b), "Segregation and practices such as identification and labeling, which usually absorb a large amount of resources, are seen as social discrimination and a denial of the provision of skills for participatory citizenship" (p. 10).

Resistance to inclusive practice in schools has been formidable (see, e.g., Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). According to Karagiannis, Stainback, and Stainback (2000a), several states have made their teacher certification for special education more rigid and "some organizations and states have proposed the reinstatement of segregated schools for students with disabilities" (p. 22). These authors bring further evidence of exclusionism by pointing out that since 1970 there has been a marked increase in the identification of students with disabilities, yet, the numbers placed in inclusive classrooms are "minimal" (p. 22). They cite further statistical evidence that students with learning disabilities, who constitute the largest category of students with disabilities, have not received adequate remedial assistance "in general education classrooms and resources rooms" (p. 23). Some states, though, they say, have made much progress towards inclusion such as "Idaho, North Dakota, Oregon, and Vermont" (p. 23). They claim that a reason why these states have progressed on a more rapid pace towards inclusion rests on the wide dissemination of "innovative, successful organizational and instructional arrangements for achieving inclusion" (p. 23). The momentum for inclusion is growing according to these authors. Support from local, state, national, and international professional organizations has fueled interest and advocacy for inclusion. Court cases, too, have challenged schools from continuing their segregation of students with disabilities. Lay groups, parent advocates, and educators too have begun a groundswell to 'push' for inclusion on a human rights basis (see, e.g., International League of Societies for Persons

with Mental Handicap, 1994, June). Reviewing the literature in inclusion, Fisher (2006) reports much progress over the past ten years. He explains, “As a profession, we are now asking *how* more often than *why* in regard to inclusive schooling” (p. 206).

As Scenario 1a above indicates, exclusionism manifests itself sometimes in rationalized arguments that, on the surface, seem reasonable. What is unreasonable about placing severely disabled children in separate facilities? Why place strains on the teacher and other general education students by placing a child with autism in a fifth grade classroom? It wasn’t too long ago that similar questions were posed about African-American youngsters attending integrated schools. It also wasn’t too long ago that the notion of integrating students with physical challenges (e.g., in wheelchairs) was criticized with the major reason, at least the articulated one, being that school facilities cannot provide for wheelchair accessibility. We are simply used to one paradigm for educating children and treating differences, and are unable to remain open enough to accept alternate ways of structuring classrooms and schools.

One colleague, upon hearing this thesis of inclusion, stated, “My wife knows more about this than I do, and she actually teaches courses in special ed, etc, and feels even more strongly about it than I do; both of us are clinicians, so we also deal with these issues every day professionally. We both know that there are many children for whom inclusion is much worse than 'special' classes. There is a lot of money at stake in that if governments, etc. can convince parents to go with inclusion, it's much cheaper. I'm not saying every kid needs a special ed class, I'm saying that every special needs kid cannot be accommodated in a mainstream inclusion class, and that it often harms the kid, making him feel even more inferior. Obviously, for kids with relatively minor problems, this is not the case.”

My response was as follows: “I think the distinction centers on what we mean by the term ‘inclusion.’ When schools cannot provide adequate resources, when teachers are not properly prepared, when services of specialists are not readily available, inclusion will indeed not work. It is not really inclusion. Inclusion by definition means availability of adequate resources, evidence of teacher training, ideological commitment, etc. You can’t knock something that is not working effectively because 'other' factors are inhibiting it. Furthermore, regarding the financial side of the matter, if real inclusion is operable it wouldn’t necessarily be cheaper since the same personnel and material resources would be needed *in* the school building. Moreover, according to Karagiannis, Stainback, and Stainback (2000b), ‘Inclusion is not, nor should it become, a convenient way to justify budgetary cuts that may jeopardize the provision of essential services. Genuine inclusion,’ they continue, ‘does not mean dumping students with disabilities into general education classes without support for teachers or students.’ In other words, the authors conclude, ‘the primary goal of inclusive schooling is not to save money: It is to adequately serve all students’ (p. 11). Certainly, students with special needs require additional services and may need specialized instructional technologies and equipment to help them. The idea is to make these services and instructional capacities available for all students as part of the standard operational procedures of running a school. They should not be viewed as supplementary or peripheral, but rather as central, endemic, and natural. This is certainly a new paradigm from which to operate.”

Additional discussion of inclusive schooling, pros and cons, will appear in the section on inclusion research and practice later in the monograph.

### Scenario 1b:

Students with Disabilities – “It’s unfortunate, but we simply can’t accommodate your child’s ‘peculiar’ learning style.”

*Sara spoke at a relatively young age. Born to professional educators, Sara was continually exposed to a rich and varied literate environment. Despite her seemingly precocious development, Sara experienced difficulty in her early grades, one through three, keeping up with her classmates. In grade 5, she had problems with retention of information and could not learn as many psukim as other students. Rashi was out of the question. Sara came home each evening with much homework. The work was frustrating her and she would inevitably cry. As the school year progressed, the workload also increased as did her frustration levels. Sara asked her parents to send her to another school. “I hate my school; the kids tease me and they call me ‘dummy.’” Despite extra help at home with a special tutor, Sara’s educational and social woes continued. At a parent-teacher conference, her parents were told that Sara “tries hard but just can’t keep up.” A meeting with the principal proved memorable. After praising Sara’s sweet demeanor and fine midot, the principal suggested that perhaps finding another school would be in Sara’s best interests. “It’s unfortunate, but we simply can’t accommodate your child’s ‘peculiar’ learning style.” Shocked by the principal’s naivety, if not ignorance of current pedagogic and learning theories, the parents reluctantly registered their precious Sara into the local public school that provided resource room assistance as well as inclusion class options.*

Many schools neither recognize nor appreciate that all children learn differently, or if they do they take little or no action to match pedagogical strategies to varied learning styles. The one-size-fits-all approach to pedagogy and curriculum is ingrained in the minds and actions of many educators. Teachers, until recently, have not been prepared to teach a diverse group of students with varied learning styles. Research consistently demonstrates that most classrooms, especially at the middle and high school levels “use traditional instructional methods such as lecture, assigned readings, drill, and independent practice” (Lauria, 2005, p. 68). Although many students do thrive in traditional classroom settings, many more do not (see, e.g., Dunn, Gianitti, et al., 1990). Extensive research has been conducted that demonstrates that poor academic achievement is often a consequence of a teacher’s inability to match instructional strategies to a child’s learning styles preferences (Dunn & DeBello, 1999). Students whose learning styles do match the teacher’s instructional approaches are often excluded from classroom discourse.

Some people might claim that in today’s Jewish schools, girls like Sara do have options. Programs like P’Tach are available. Aside from exorbitant costs and stigmas associated with such programs, these programs do provide opportunities for some children to succeed. When well-run, such programs can elevate a child’s self-esteem and engender long term academic and social accomplishment. When such programs do not work well, they are a detriment emotionally and otherwise. One program this author is familiar with, not P’Tach, ran their classes in trailers with few options for mainstreaming. In fact, research indicates that once placed in a special education setting, few students are ever fully mainstreamed (see, e.g., Madden & Slavin, 1983; Terman, Lerner, Stevenson,

& Behrman, 1996). P'Tach, while noble and probably still necessary in the Jewish community, is a stop-gap measure needed momentarily.

#### Scenario 2a:

Sephardim and Ashkenazim- “*Why don’t they just do it the ‘normal’ way?*”

*Yossi was invited to hear Sions’ son’s lehning at the local Sephardic school the week prior to the bar mitzvah. It was Yossi’s first time in a ‘real’ Sephardic minyan, and for that matter the first time in a Sephardic school. Yossi thought to himself, “it feels like I’m in another universe.” “What’s this ‘sing songing’ of pesukei dezimra all about?” “Wow, look at that Torah in that strange looking box?” “Now see how hagbah is being done, wow.” And just listen to the bar mitzvah’s grandmother yodeling . . . or something?!” Yossi’s wife, who was sitting obviously in the women’s section, was equally bewildered. She whispers to Yossi afterwards, “Why don’t they just do it the ‘normal’ way?”*

Such attitudes are common when a person is ignorant of others’ cultural traditions. Normalcy is often perceived from one’s perspective. Otherness is perceived as different, alien, or uncommon (Allport, 1987). I am certain if we would interview Yossi and his wife, they would say, “Sure, we heard mention in *halakhah shuirim* in school or elsewhere that Sephardic customs are different, but we never really experienced anything like this.” They might even say, “It’s kind of nice, but . . . .” What is our responsibility as educators to dispel misconceptions, to include more active and concrete learning experiences of other Jewish cultural traditions, and to encourage heightened cultural sensitivity and diversity? Many Jewish schools do not expose their students to different Jewish cultural traditions. The school curriculum that excludes by omission, the cultural traditions of others does a disservice to the student, if not the entire Jewish educational community.

Ashkenazim and Sephardim, developing under different circumstances and conditions, gradually established differing customs, traditions, and norms of behavior (Zohar, 2005; Sperber & Elman, 1999). Despite these differences in *minhagim*, reflected too in *halacha*, they shared a common historical bond. In most countries in which they resided they were excluded or marginalized, at the very least, socially, politically, religiously, and culturally (Stillman, 1995).

Rivalries and discord between both cultural groups were not uncommon as well (see, e.g., Davies, 2004; Gilad, 1990). Where Sephardim were minorities among Ashkenazi communities, social and educational disparities were common. Disparities, for example, in academic achievement were evident (Shavit, 1984; Shmueli, 1977; Willms & Chen, 1989). As differences increased, prejudices too were more common (Schwartz, Link, et al, 1991). Nuances among Sephardi customs became blurred in the eyes of non-Sephardim. The tendency to cluster non-Ashkenazi traditions under the rubric of Sephardi was commonplace (Zohar, 2005). Sephardim have felt the pangs of exclusionism (Matza, 1998; In a study I am currently conducting, Sephardic students, within an Ashkenazic school system, relate some emotional experiences they have felt including, among others, embarrassed by their cultural traditions, e.g., not wanting their Ashkenazi friends to meet their parents or visit their homes especially on holidays, or wishing they too were Ashkenazi. Another Sephardic adult recalled experiences in grade school why he was “made to study the “*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*.” Still another adult

lamented that when a Sephardi marries an Ashkenazi, it is seen as “intermarriage in the eyes of Ashkenazim.”). Expressions of dissatisfaction (Rafael & Sharot, 1991) were expressed in a collection of stories, poems, and plays by American Jews of Sephardic descent. This collection, according to the authors, gives voice to a culture previously unheard in a literary canon with a predominantly Eastern European and Ashkenazic tradition.

Despite exclusion of Sephardic customs in the curriculum of many Ashkenazi day schools and yeshivot, Sephardic holiday customs and traditions reflect a rich and deeply spiritual Jewish culture that flourished for many centuries on the Iberian Peninsula in Spain and Portugal (Paretzky, 1996). Such customs are not unitary, nor uniform. Sephardic Passover customs and traditions, for instance, can vary from region to region, country to country, and even family to family. “Many Sephardic customs and traditions involved assimilating Passover rituals with the culinary, musical, and linguistic traditions of the surrounding peoples in the areas where Sephardim lived” (Sephardic Passover Customs and Traditions, <http://www.angelfire.com/pa2/passover/Sephardicpassovercustoms.html>). Students in school should be actively taught about Sephardic Passover dietary rulings that permit *kitniyot*, as well as special foods that Ashkenazim never saw let alone tasted (including the *Huevos Haminados* dish). The actual conduct of the *seder*, too, is educationally instructive (e.g., the “different” order in which the Four Questions might be posed).

Complicating the nature of the issue, we must take into account the diversity and variety of experience that generally gets lumped under the title “Sephardi.” “Sephardi” correctly refers to the descendants of the Jews who were exiled from Spain in 1492. Many of them went to Muslim countries where there were already indigenous Jewish populations with no connection to Spain. This includes North Africans, Yemenites, some Syrians (usually Damascus, rather than Aleppo which was largely Sephardi), Iraqis, Iranians, Bukharians, etc. These Jews are more correctly referred to as Mizrahim (Orientals) and do not prefer to be “lumped together” with the Sephardim, for a variety of reasons (see, e.g., Patai, 1971)

The responsibility of the educator, as curricularist, is to create or design an educational environment that facilitates and provides opportunities for students of all Jewish cultural traditions to explore and learn about each others’ customs. No time or place in the curriculum? The matter depends, I think, on the kind of outcomes, social and intellectual, we want for our students. Do we want our children to respect and remain culturally attuned to other Jewish traditions and cultures? Do we want to create an inclusive curriculum that is appreciative of other Jewish cultures? Do we want to encourage intercultural understanding and opportunities for learning? Do we want our own children to feel included and appreciated based on who they are and what they believe? These are some of the fundamental questions schools need to pose in addressing this form of exclusionism.

#### Scenario 2b:

Sephardim and Ashkenazim- “*Their classrooms are not just ‘warm’ places for learning.*” *Etzion Madmoni and her husband Yosef were initially pleased with the local Ashkenazi day school for their 5-year old. Living in a largely Ashkenazi community, the parents felt that sending their child to an Ashkenazi school would*

*assist their child's assimilation; i.e., the making of new friends. Within a short time, however, the parents were unhappy. Their child came home, according to the parents, "forlorn, frustrated, and unhappy." The Madmonis felt they had no other option but to send their child to another school. This time they'd select a Sephardi school, even though it was much farther from where they now lived. "Their (Ashkenazi) classrooms are just not 'warm' places for learning" explained Etzion to her neighbor.*

Etzion and Yosef Madmoni's own personal experiences with Ashkenazi traditions were minimal and episodic. What they perceived as "just not warm enough" may have been affected by their own expectations and prejudices towards Ashkenazi schools. Unless exposed to an inclusive curriculum that encourages intercultural understanding such feelings will fester. Certainly parents have the right to send their child to any school they wish, but they should base their decision on reality and not on erroneous or misinterpreted expectations. Sephardim, not exposed to inclusive curricula, are as likely to hold provincial and prejudicial views as are Ashkenazim. It should be noted, however, that Sephardim, since they are minorities in many communities in the United States, for instance, have learned quite well, out of necessity, to accommodate to and learn about many Ashkenazi customs. The reverse is not always true.

\* \* \* \* \*

Segregation of special education populations from general education and curricular exclusion among both Ashkenazi and Sephardi schools is problematic, and certainly antithetical to inclusive educational theory and practice. The problem, as framed in this monograph, centers on exclusionary practices and the responsibility of schools and their educators to encourage an educational milieu conducive to academic excellence for all students regardless of learning ability and cultural preference or tradition. In the sections that follow several critical theoretical frames are discussed that provide support for inclusive practice in schools. Although secular sources, studies, and authorities are cited to lend support for these theories, Jewish tradition and culture has much to say about them as well, as will be cited. Understanding these concepts and ideas is essential to form a solid foundation for inclusionism in education, while minimizing or eradicating exclusionary practices and attitudes.

### **The Concept of Social Justice in Jewish Schools**

*"... , principle-centered leaders operate in alignment with 'self-evident, self-validating natural laws.' These include such basic principles as fairness, equity, justice, honesty, trust, integrity, and service. These principles point the way for leaders."*

*(Kaser, Mundry, Stiles, & Loucks-Horsley, 2006, p. 26)*

*"You shall relentlessly pursue justice and righteousness."*

*(Devorim, 16:20)*

Jewish tradition is rich in its advocacy for justice. In *Sefer Tehillim* (99:4), it says "Mighty is the King, Who loves justice. You founded fairness." Also, "He has told you; O Man, What is Good, and What does God require of you- but to act justly, to love *hesed* and to walk humbly with your God" (*Micha*, 6:8 from opening quotation of *Sefer Ahavat*

*Hesed*, Hafetz Hayyim). Such views are expressed even more fundamentally in the *Torah*. In *Devarim* (16:20), “Justice, justice,” we are commanded, “you shall pursue.” *Vayikra* (19:15) teaches “You shall judge your fellowman justly” – *b’tzedek tishpot amitekha*.

One of the fundamental principles of Judaism is the attempt to emulate the Creator derived from the mitzvah of *ve-halakhta bi-derakhav* (*imitatio Dei*; *Devarim*, 28:9). Although its application is intricate (see, e.g., Blau, 2000; Korn, 1997), Blau (2000) citing the Rav says that this is “not just another mitzvah” but is the “foundation of Jewish ethics” (p. 21). As such we are enjoined to emulate God’s character traits (see Blau, 2000 for pivotal discussion about advocacy of *imitatio Dei* of “action” and “attributes”). In *Sefer Tehillim* (9:9-10) it says, “And He will judge the world with righteousness, judging the nations in fairness. Hashem will be a fortress of strength for the oppressed, a fortress of strength in times of distress.” Likewise, says the *Rambam* and other commentaries, we are commanded to attend to the oppressed and downtrodden. Seeking social justice, then, is intrinsic to Judaism and, hence, an obligation for Jews. Jewish educators, too, are not immune from such responsibility.

The concept of social justice has received wide attention in secular literature (see, e.g., Bogotch, 2000; Bowers, 2001; Brown, 2004; Connell, 1993; Furman & Shields, 2005; and Rapp, 2002). The subject of promoting social justice in schools is so vast that our attention to it in this section will remain limited. Calls for social justice abound because many critics over the years have pointed to significant social, political, economic, and educational inequities in schools (see, e.g., Apple, 1986; Giroux, 1991; Ogbu, 1978; Spring, 1994). Schooling, for these critics, perpetuates and reinforces social, racial, and gender stratifications. Inequities in allocations of school finances (Kozol, 1991), socially stratified arrangements through which subject matter is delivered known as tracking practices in schools (Oakes, 1985), biased content of the curriculum (Anyon, 1981), patriarchal relations through authority patterns and staffing (Strober & Tyack, 1980), differential distribution of knowledge by gender within classrooms (Sadker & Sadker, 1994), and the influence of teacher expectations (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) are examples of inequities decried by these critics. An example related to teacher expectations makes a point in this context.

### Teacher Expectations

What are teacher expectations, how might they function to stifle individual autonomy and perpetuate stereotypical relationships, and what impact might they have on students are important questions (Good & Brophy, 2007). Coined by Robert Merton and first researched by Rosenthal and Jacobson (cited by Tauber, 1997), the self-fulfilling prophecy is a phenomenon that has relevance in education. Aware of the limitations of this concept, researchers have documented its effects in and outside the classroom (see, e.g., Ogbu, 2003; Seyfried, 1998). Expectations are sometimes communicated directly, more often indirectly or unconsciously. Assumptions are sometimes made based on a student’s family background, religious or cultural environment, or past academic performance. A teacher who tells Chaim he might as well not study for the *behinah* since he’s failed prior exams, may affect the student in marked emotional and academic ways. Social justice advocates point out that educators should remain vigilant and aware of the force of expectations so that students are not treated differentially due to some unfounded

or grossly misinterpreted characteristic. Educators who seek to promote social justice in the classroom might posit the following question: “How might I, as the classroom teacher, promote the ideals of equality, justice, and opportunity in my classroom by communicating positive expectations to students?” (see Yonezawa & Jones, 2006 wherein they report findings of a study in which students, who oppose tracking, call for teachers to teach for equity and to have positive attitudes towards all students). Tauber (1997), proffering advice to teachers about remaining conscious of the power of their expectations, asks:

Do you assign tasks on some gender basis? Does it just seem natural to assign heavier and dirtier tasks (i.e., carry this, move that) to the “stronger sex” and the more domestic activities (i.e., wash this, clean that, serve this) to the “weaker sex”? When leaders are selected, whether for a classroom or a playground activity, are males more often chosen than females? When creative activities (i.e., decorating for an upcoming holiday) are undertaken, are females more likely than males to be called upon?

When you conduct demonstrations, are males more often asked to assist you and females more often asked to be “recording secretaries”? Do you let female students get away with inappropriate behavior that you would discipline male students for? If you are female, do you catch yourself identifying more with the female students than with the male students? And the list goes on and on. (pp. 47-48)

Although Tauber discusses gender issues, which may or may not relate to a day school or yeshiva setting, the inferences are nonetheless pertinent, if not obvious. If a teacher lowers expectations for a student simply because of an academic or intellectual label placed on her (see, e.g., Rist, 1970), or because of some cultural consideration, then social justice activists would point to an injustice.

In *halakhah*, mindful attention is certainly given to the relationship of pre-conceived notions (i.e., expectations) to outcomes. Stringent *halakhot*, for instance, governing the frame of mind that *dayyanim* must possess when confronting some case involving someone’s wealth, appearance, age, background, even religiosity have been codified. A judge must remain impartial (see selected excerpts from the *Rambam* below) not only to serve as a judge but because he is a teacher. When listing the characteristics of *dayyanim* in *Shemot* (18:21), the Torah also makes it clear that a judge is required to be a model citizen so that he is always teaching by example. Professional educators, too, are placed in situations of judging students and situations, and are obligated to assume an even-handed disposition. The commandment in *parashat Ve-zot Ha-berakhah* (33:10) for the *kohanim*: *yoru mishpatekha le-ya`akov vetoratekha le-yisrael* (to be teachers), seems to be very intrinsically related to the charge of *Yoreh Yoreh Ve-yadin Yadin* that our Rabbis/*Dayyanim* are given when they head out into the world.

#### מנין המצוות לרמב"ם

רעד: שלא ליקח שוחד שנ' ושוחד לא תקח.

רעה: שלא לכבד גדול בדין שנ' ולא תהדר פני גדול.

רעו: שלא יירא הדיין בדין מאדם רע שנ' לא תגורו מפני איש.

רעז: שלא לרחם על עני בדין שנ' ודל לא תהדר בריבו.

רעה: שלא להטות משפט אדם חוטא שנ' לא תטה משפט אביונך, למדו מפי השמועה שזה אביון במצוות.

רפ: שלא להטות משפט גרים ויתומים שנ' לא תטה משפט גר יתום.

What is our moral commitment to avoiding negative or low expectations so that we ensure justice in our schools for all students? Research is needed to explore a host of questions related to expectations.

The call for social justice talks to the heart of concepts of respect, equality, and equity. John Dewey (1916) articulated a commitment to these ideals in his monumental *Democracy and Education*. In the ensuing years other progressive and neo-progressive educators made similar pleas. Recently, attention has been drawn to the ethical and moral responsibilities of school leaders to pursue and uphold such concepts (Theoharis, 2007a; 2007b).

John Rawls (1971), moral philosopher and academician, in his groundbreaking work in political philosophy, *Theory of Justice*, provides the conceptual grounding for educational leaders and others committed to respect, equality, and equity. He posits a Kantian interpretation that conceives justice idealistically as fundamentally grounded in human respect. On a more pragmatic level, he sees justice as an accommodation between competing political and philosophical positions in which individuals with differing opinions learn to cooperate without coercion. For Rawls, moral persons are ones who are willing and able to appreciate both the idealistic and pragmatic views of justice. Rawls believes that development of a sense of justice is a high order human characteristic or personality state that includes developing multiple relationships with diverse groups of people and learning to respect and treat each justly. For Rawls, such action is moral affirmation. Education, in general, and schools in particular, play a critical role in fostering such respect and cooperation (Strike, 1991).

The social justice literature differentiates between issues of equality and equity. Individuals concerned with fostering social justice ensure that each individual or group receives what is needed (Strike & Soltis, 1992). An ethic of justice is affirmed when equality and equity are employed. The authors cite Aristotle who held “that justice consists of treating equals equally and unequals unequally.” Using this premise, “if high-school grades are the basis of admission into a university, then two people with the same grades should receive the same treatment, either both should be admitted or both should be rejected” (p. 46); thus justice is affirmed on the basis of equality. Equity on the other hand, in the Aristotelian sense means if a student is in need of an accommodation to assist learning, I treat him fairly by providing that instructional prompt, for instance; in other words, he gets what he needs. No one else would complain of unfairness for not receiving that particular prompt. So, when people differ in relation to some characteristic or condition, they receive different treatment based on their particular needs. Thus, in the ethics of justice, both are affirmed.

More fundamentally, Rawls (1971) bases his theory of justice on a notion of fairness as well. In a school setting, one fourth grader might need remedial assistance in reading, for instance, while another enrichment. Equity, not equality (i.e., getting the same thing), is achieved given the fact both students’ needs are accurately and unbiasedly assessed. Both individuals are treated even-handedly in pursuit of a good life, liberty, and happiness. On an individual level, social justice advocates ensure that all individuals are treated equally; i.e., given what each needs without preferential treatment or differences in resources expenditures. Expectations here are held in check and dispensed fairly without bias. Equality doesn’t really address group differences though. Let’s say student

one is African-American, and student two Caucasian. If African-American students are placed uniformly in remedial classes without attention to their academic ability and needs, and Caucasian students automatically placed in upper tracks, inequity and thus injustice prevail. An inequitable situation is one in which a group has not historically been treated fairly, justly, or given equal treatment. Members of the group are often viewed as inferior, or at the very least considered less, and consequently oppressed or disadvantaged. Equity goes beyond racial, ethnic and gender inequalities to also include social class, disability, and exceptionalities (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005).

Parenthetically, in regards to the Aristotelian idea of treating equals equally and unequals unequally, and equality versus equity, the *gemara* and halakhic works make it clear that *tzedakah* is not just about giving people the same amount. Charity does not necessarily ensure that all people receive an equal amount. Based on a *pasuk* in *Parashat Re'eh*, (see *Rashi* to *Devarim* 15:7-8) the *hakhamim* define the obligation to provide for a person according to his needs as providing the basic requirements of existence: food, clothing, and the extra phrase "that which he lacks" as referring to a person who was previously wealthy but has now become impoverished. The *Midrash Tannaim*, (on *Devarim* 15) as well as the *gemara* in *Ketubot* (66b) has the story of Hillel Ha-Zakken, that he bought a horse to ride on and a slave to run before a certain poor man who was from a wealthy family and was used to living luxuriously. When, on one occasion, he could not find a slave to run before the man, he himself ran before him. See also the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Yoreh De'ah* 250:1) for codification of charitable equity.

In regards to Rawls seeing justice as an accommodation between competing political and philosophical positions in which individuals with differing opinions learn to cooperate without coercion, the *tosefta* tells us that the highest form of justice in this world is not in fact strict *din* (*Sanhedrin* 1:9) Rather, it is *pesharah*, loosely translated as compromise but encompassing much more. *Pesharah* involves the idea that sometimes the right answer must, in fact, involve multiple practical realities and considerations, instead of taking an ivory-tower, strictly academic approach. Lest we think that this form of justice is "diluted" in some way, the *Tosefta* goes out of its way to point out that it is, indeed, the purest form. One might suggest that *pesharah* is so because it actually allows the system of justice to affect people in a very real and meaningful way.

#### תוספתא מסכת סנהדרין (צוקרמאנדל) פרק א הלכה ט

רבן שמע' בן גמל' אומ' כשם שהדין בשלשה כך פשרה בשלשה יפה כח פשרה מכה הדין כיזה צד שנים שדנו יכולין לחזור בהם ושנים שפישרו אין יכולין לחזור בהם.

Finally, the connection between the call for social justice and inclusion is critical. ". . . [I]nclusive education is needed as a means to achieve social justice for students with disabilities" (Artiles, Harris-Murri, & Rostenberg, 2006, p. 261). Citing Dyson's (1999) work, Artiles, Harris-Murri, and Rostenberg (2006) discuss two discourses of inclusion relevant to social justice. This monograph has relied on both discourses. The first is the "justification" discourse that offers reasons for and advantages of inclusive practice. The second is the "implementation" discourse that addresses the ethical perspective and the "efficacy" position, both of which are amplified throughout the monograph.

### **Building an Ethic of Caring**

*"An abundance of caring is a signal quality found in most educators. This propensity to step outside of oneself, to see, hear, and appreciate another human*

*being, increases insight, aids communication, and promotes excellence in instruction. Learners served by caring educators feel more important, demonstrate higher motivation, learn faster and better, and reveal greater confidence about their future. That is education as its best.” (Draayer, 2003, p. 139)*

*“He who joins in the distress of the community, will be worthy of witnessing the consolation of the community.”  
(Ta’anit 11a)*

Dealing with others justly, with care (compassion) is very much a priority in Judaism. An educator underscoring the importance of care might, for instance, cite *Vayikra* (19:18), *ve-ahavta le-re`akha ka-mokha* - “You shall love your fellow as yourself.” How would we want our child, who might need special education services, treated in a school/classroom? Studies, as will be indicated later, indicate the negative emotional impact of segregation or labeling. Exclusionary educational or cultural behaviors are antagonistic to dealing with others justly or with compassion. Interestingly, the terms *rahamim* and *rahmanut* (“mercy” and “compassion”) are derived from the word *rehem* (“womb”), thus indicating that our feelings and acts of kindness to others, i.e., treating them justly and with compassion, is endemic to our existence from birth; we are to relate to our fellow human being as if he or she was a member of our own flesh and blood family (Borowitz & Weinman Schwartz, 1999). Many other sources within Judaism support an ethic of caring for the “other.”

Within the secular community, the moral commitment to inclusion is informed by the work of Nel Noddings (1984, 1986, 1992) on the ethic of caring. An “ethic of caring” affirms a belief that educators and children alike are to be caring, moral, and productive members of society (Jordan Irvine, 2001). As Noddings (1992) posits, “The traditional organization of schooling is intellectually and morally inadequate for contemporary society” (p. 173). Although appropriate at some point in educational history, the traditional model of bureaucratic school organization in which organizational needs supersede individual interests is no longer appropriate. Dewey (see Mayhew & Edwards, 1965) knew this well when he said, the problem of education was the “harmonizing of individual traits with social ends and values” (p. 465). Nurturing an “ethic of caring,” principals, as do teachers, realize their ultimate motive is to inspire a sense of caring, sensitivity, appreciation, and respect for human dignity of all people despite travails that pervade our society and world. Organizations are not autonomous independent entities but are rather made to conform to and meet the needs of people. Noddings (1992) makes the point related to the purpose of education, “We should educate all our children not only for competence but also for caring. Our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people” (p. xiv).

Feminist organizational theory (Blackmore, 1993; Regan, 1990) informs this “ethic of caring” by avoiding traditional conceptions of teaching and leading. Feminist theory questions legitimacy of the hierarchical, patriarchal, bureaucratic school organization. Challenging traditional leadership models, feminist theory encourages community-building, interpersonal relationships, nurturing, and collaboration as of primary interest (Ferguson, 1984). Supportive of this feminist view of school organization, Henry (1996) explains how feminist theory opposes bureaucracy:

The feminist approach that I have developed in this study places people before mechanical rules or bureaucratic responses. Feminism stems from a concern not just with humankind, but with all living things and their interdependence in the universe, with a view to redefining male-female and other relations away from a notion of dominance and subordination and toward the ideal of equality and interconnectedness. . . . All human beings are seen as enriched by a feminist way of seeing and relating to the world. Instead of autonomy, separation, distance, and a mechanistic view of the world, feminism values nurturing, empathy, and a caring perspective. (pp. 19, 20)

Noddings (1992) has led a feminist critique challenging traditional conceptions of education by advocating an ethic of caring "to enable schools to become caring communities that nurture all children, regardless of their race, class, or gender" (Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, & Steele, 1996, p. 276), and ability or culture. Unlike traditional humanistic models of administration, "caring" is inclusionary, non-manipulative, and empowering. Whereas the main objective of bureaucracy is standardization, caring inspires individual responsibility. Caring "is a situation- and person-specific way of performing in the world that requires being fully and sensitively attuned to the needs of the cared for by the person caring. Caring cannot be transformed into policies mandated from above, but caring can give form and coherence to our schools" (Marshall, et al., 1996, pp. 278-279).

Starratt (1991) also provides support for an ethic of caring in educational administration. According to Starratt, an administrator committed to an ethic of caring will "be grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships should be held sacred and that the school as an organization should hold the good of human beings within it as sacred" (p. 195). Thus, school leaders affirmed by an ethic of caring will ensure notions of social justice in their schools and remain vigilant to safeguard the best interests of all learners.

Although defining "caring" has been difficult (Beck, 1994), scholars who have explored this topic in depth note that caring always involves, to some degree, three activities. They are:

- (1) receiving the other's perspective;
- (2) responding appropriately to the awareness that comes from this reception, and
- (3) remaining committed to others and to the relationship.

What do caring educators do? According to Marshall, et al., (1996), they "frequently develop relationships that are the grounds for motivating, cajoling, and inspiring others to excellence. Generally thoughtful and sensitive, they see nuances in people's efforts at good performance and acknowledge them; they recognize the diverse and individual qualities in people and devise individual standards of expectation, incentives, and rewards" (p. 282). With students, teachers would remain sensitive to their social, emotional, and academic needs.

Caring educators would make certain that students respect each other, and that the values and traditions of each individual, regardless of religious affiliation or cultural background, are affirmed. Caring educators would remain sensitive to the feelings of students with disabilities. They would avoid exclusionism and would support a policy of inclusion as is most feasible under the circumstances (see, e.g., Villa & Thousand, 2000).

The relationship between an ethic of justice and an ethic of caring is instructive (see Katz, Noddings, & Strike, 1999). An educational commitment to seeking justice in terms of promoting equality, equity, and respect in the classroom for all students is fundamentally premised on an ethic of caring. Caring about the worth and needs of the individual student, not necessarily the needs of the school as an organization is of utmost concern to educators who work from an ethic of caring and justice. Parenthetically, one difference between the two ethics should be pointed out as well. Justice generally strives for a sense of impartiality; i.e., right is right, wrong is wrong. An ethic of care, in contrast, avoids impartiality. Moral reasoning is passionate and involved. Gilligan (1993) and Noddings (2003) argue that moral detachment is not feasible. Caring places philosophical laurels on compassion in which equity is placed at the core, not equality.

### **A Rationale for Differentiating Instruction**

*“ . . . Classes should include students of diverse needs, achievement levels, interests, and learning styles, and instruction should be differentiated to take advantage of the diversity, not to ignore it.”*  
(Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 23)

*“On that day they removed the doorkeeper and permission was given to any student to enter (the beit midrash) for Rabban Gamliel announced that no student whose character does not correspond to his exterior may enter the house of study. That day many benches were added. Rav Yohanan said: Abba Yosef ben Dostai argued this point with the sages. One claims that four hundred benches were added and one claims that seven hundred benches were added ... On that day, Tractate Eduyot was written ... and there was not a single law in the study hall that had been left unresolved”*  
(Berakhot 27b-28a)

Fundamental to differentiation of instruction is a belief that a heterogeneous class is a most viable method for grouping students. The debate between ability and heterogeneous grouping can be traced back directly to Talmudic times. The Talmud in *Berakhot 27b*, quoted in part above, tells the story of a dispute that took place between Rabban Gamliel, who at the time was the head of the academy in *Yavneh*, and Rav Yehoshua. As a result of this dispute, Rabban Gamliel was relieved of his duties as the *Nasi*, and was replaced by Rav Elazar ben Azarya. The Talmud dictates that a heterogeneous educational environment affected the quality of learning that took place in the *yeshiva*. An argument can therefore be made, based on this *gemara* that *Hazal* did, in fact, favor a more heterogeneous academic setting. Presumably, the success in learning cited in this *gemara* was attributable not merely to an increase in students in the *yeshiva*, but rather to the teaching methodology that enabled a more diverse body of *talmidim* to succeed. Jewish tradition stresses the importance of addressing each student's needs. In the *Midrash Tanhuma*, cited below, commenting on the inherent diversity of human beings (i.e., just as they look differently, so too they think, and presumably learn, differently), Moshe prays for *Hashem* to provide a leader (read: teacher) who will be able to deal with each one of them according to his needs while still being able to tend to the whole flock (a differentiated approach).

#### מדרש תנחומא (בובר) פרשת פינחס סימן א

אבל אם ראה אוכלוסין של בני אדם, אומר ברוך חכם הרזים, כשם שאין פרצופותיהן שוין זה לזה, כך אין דעתן שוה, אלא כל אחד ואחד יש לו דעה בפני עצמו, וכן הוא אומר לעשות לרוח משקל (איוב כח כה), משקל של כל אחד ואחד, תדע לך שהוא כן, שכן משה מבקש מן הקב"ה בשעת מיתה, ואומר לפניו רבונו של עולם גלוי לפניך דעתו של כל אחד ואחד מהם, ואין דעתו של זה דומה לדעתו של זה, ובשעה שאני מסתלק מהם בבקשה ממך אם ביקשת למנות עליהם מנהיג, מנה עליהם אדם שיהא סובל כל אחד ואחד לפי דעתו, מנין ממה שקראו בענין יפקוד [ה'] אלהי הרוחות לכל בשר וגו' (במדבר כז טז).

Calls for differentiating instruction have gained strength in secular education literature over the past decade. Conceptually and theoretically grounded in the work of progressive education (Dewey, 1900), child development (Erikson, 1995), social and intellectual development (Vygotsky, 1934/1986; Piaget, 1936), learning styles (Dunn, 1995), and multicultural education (Banks, 2004), differentiated instruction has been most recently articulated and promulgated through the work Carol Tomlinson (2001; 2003). Teaching for a diverse student population is certainly challenging. Then again, teaching well is itself a challenging enterprise requiring knowledge expertise, talents in communication, pedagogical savvy, appreciation of varied student learning styles, etc. (Parkay & Stanford, 2006). The problem of reaching all students academically, however, has become more critical as schools have become more ethnically and linguistically diverse. Teaching, historically, has been plagued by a one-size-fits-all mentality. As Tomlinson (2005) simply yet accurately posits, “[W]e teach as we were taught” (p. 183). Classrooms have always been heterogeneous. Yet, when students, to teachers, appear alike ethnically, linguistically, or culturally educators have made the erroneous assumption that all students learn the same way, hence teaching becomes uni-faceted.

Oakes (1985) has uncovered the fallacies inherent in homogeneous grouping and convincingly debunked explanations for maintaining its use. Certainly, teachers may claim it is “easier” to teach a homogenous class. Such arguments may in fact underlie an inability or unwillingness to address learning needs of all students in a class. For these teachers, teaching becomes teacher-directed wherein a whole-class instructional model is often used.

Recently, George (2005) has articulated a rationale for differentiating instruction. He argues that a heterogeneous classroom is critically important for several reasons that have relevance for Jewish educators. Since students in the future will likely live and work in diverse environments, classrooms should model such diversity. He explains, “[T]he heterogeneous classroom can provide a real-life laboratory for the development of important interpersonal and social knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to success in adult life, while simultaneously providing opportunity for varied types and degrees of academic achievement” (p. 186). Besides goal consistency, George asserts that heterogeneous grouping will aid in accurate placement of students without erroneous labeling. “When students learn together in diverse classrooms, without the need to classify students according to their ability, there is also much less risk of labeling or stigmatizing high or low achievers” (p. 187). Furthermore, George states that such grouping accentuates the awareness of individual differences. If a teacher perceives his class as uniform, she is more likely to teach in a uniform manner. Teachers, he continues, are more sensitive to individual learning needs of students in mixed ability

classrooms. “In an effective heterogeneous classroom (one where curriculum and instruction are properly differentiated), students and teachers, I think, are more likely to view their differences as assets that strengthen the whole school” (p. 187). Moreover, he argues that effort and persistence are enhanced in a differentiated classroom. The classroom is also more equitable in that “there is a much greater chance for equitable distribution of teaching talent and other school resources” (pp. 187-188). “Heterogeneous classrooms help ensure that all students are exposed to a complex, enriched curriculum, and to spirited instruction” (p. 188). The benefits of heterogeneous classrooms extend to both able and disabled learners. Among the benefits to able learners are enhanced self-esteem and personal growth (Also see ben-Ari, R., [http://www.lookstein.org/heterogeneous/hetero\\_edu\\_complex.htm](http://www.lookstein.org/heterogeneous/hetero_edu_complex.htm)).

Differentiation of instruction has recently gained greater attention in Jewish education literature (see, e.g., Focus on: Differentiated instruction, 2006, in the *Jewish Educational Leadership*, entire theme).

### **Constructivism as Pedagogy**

*“An empowered teacher is a reflective decision maker who finds joy in learning and in investigating the teaching/learning process – one who views learning as construction and teaching as a facilitating process to enhance and enrich development.”*

*(Twomey Fosnot, 1989, p. xi)*

*“. . . Form groups upon groups and engage in Torah study, for the Torah is not acquired except [through studying] with companions. This is in accordance with [the words of] R' Yose the son of R' Hanina. For R' Yose the son of R' Hanina said: [Regarding] that which is written: ‘There will be a sword against those who are alone, ve-no`alu.’ [Its meaning is as follows]: There will be a sword against the enemies of [those] Torah scholars who sit each one alone and engage in Torah study. And not only that, but they [i.e., those who study alone] become foolish [as well, i.e., they err in their rulings]. [For] here [i.e., in the verse regarding the Torah scholars] it is written: ve-n`oalu – and there [in a verse regarding Aaron and Miriam’s sin against Moses] it is written: asher no`alnu, [which means: that which we have acted foolishly. And not only that, but they sin [as well], as it is stated [in the verse that which we have acted foolishly: - and that which we have sinned.”*

*(Berakhot 63b)*

How do people learn best? John Dewey (1899) said that people learn best "by doing." Hands-on instructional tasks encourage students to become actively involved in learning. Active learning increases students' interest in the material, makes the material covered more meaningful, allows students to refine their understanding of the material, and provides opportunities to relate the material to broad contexts. Constructivism also supports the social dimensions of learning; i.e., people learn best when actively working with others as partners (e.g., cooperative learning) (see e.g., Johnson, Johnson, & Johnson-Holubec, 1994). Thus, constructivist pedagogy is aligned with the moral commitment to provide all students with developmentally appropriate instruction in an inclusive environment (Nalder, 2007; Udvari-Solner & Kluth, 2007). Although

constructivist practices are viable in non-inclusive settings since good pedagogy is good pedagogy, its incorporation in inclusion classes is more vital given the diverse student learning styles and needs in such placements.

Constructivism is aligned with progressive thinking. Constructivism is not a theory about teaching and learning per se; rather, it is a theory about the nature of knowledge itself. Knowledge is seen as temporary, developmental, socially constructed, culturally mediated, and non-objective. Learning, then, becomes a self-regulated process wherein the individual resolves cognitive conflicts while engaged in concrete experiences, intellectual discourse, and critical reflection (Foote, Vermette, & Battaglia, 2001; Rodgers, 2002). The principles of constructivist paradigms support the view of educators as informed decision-makers. Accordingly, learning is a socially mediated process in which learners construct knowledge in developmentally appropriate ways and that real learning requires that learners use new knowledge and apply what they have learned (Vygotski, 1934/1986; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). These beliefs emphasize “minds-on” learning. This endorses the belief that all learners must be intellectually engaged in the learning process by building on their previous knowledge and experiences, and applying their new learning in meaningful contexts. To become a constructivist (mediator of learning) the teacher preparation candidate must be guided by the development of the child, motivation, and learning. Thus, central to expert instruction is a deep understanding of child development and a broad knowledge of the principles of pedagogy that serve as the blue print for design of instruction that leads to student learning.

More specifically, students who are encouraged to "gather, assemble, observe, construct, compose, manipulate, draw, perform, examine, interview, and collect" are likely to be engaged in meaningful learning opportunities (Davis, 1998, p. 119). Students may, for example, gather facts about Sephardic history by exploring primary and secondary sources, even exploring the Internet, and then compose essays about key Sephardic figures. Students, Ashkenazic and Sephardic, may become involved in cooperative group activities aimed at learning more about each other's traditions and customs. Students may record their observations about reading selections and react to video segments in personal reaction journals. Students may construct posters demonstrating Sephardic artifacts, while teams of students may interview Sephardic rabbis.

Many of us would applaud such efforts because students are actively involved in meaningful and relevant learning activities. However, as O. L. Davis, Jr. (1998) has reminded us, hands-on "activities that do not explicitly require that pupils *think* about their experience" can simply mean "minds-off" (p. 120). Davis explains further:

Raw experiences comprise the grist for thinking. They are necessary, but not sufficient, instructional foci. For the most part, hands-on activities must include *minds-on* aspects. That is, pupils must think about their experience. They must, as Dewey noted, reflect about what they have done. Consciously, they must construct personal meanings from their active experience. . . . Indeed, for hands-on activities to qualify as educationally appropriate tasks, teachers must work with pupils before, during, and after these engagements so that pupils maintain a minds-on awareness of their unfolding experiences. (p. 120)

Constructivist pedagogy's strongest anchor in its alignment with inclusive practice comes from the social constructivism of Lev Vygotsky (1934/1986). He argued that since knowledge is constructed in a sociocultural context, social interaction, cultural tools, and activity shape individual development and learning. Knowledge construction is enhanced in a diverse learning environment wherein multiple perspectives on a particular issue or subject are available. Explaining Vygotsky's approach, Woolfolk and Hoy (2003) posit that "By participating in a broad range of activities with others, learners appropriate (take for themselves) the outcomes produced by working together" (p. 91). Vygotsky's most well-known concept, the zone of proximal development (ZOD), demonstrates the import of inclusive learning. On one hand, the ZOD demonstrates how the learner mediates and negotiates knowing; the learner stretches just enough to construct new knowledge slightly above the current level of knowledge. On the other hand, it is with the support of another that the problem is solved.

Working from a constructivist pedagogic frame is challenging (Windschitl, 2002). Teaching in an inclusive setting is challenging as well. Constructivism can certainly apply in general education classrooms. However, given the nature of an inclusive classroom environment with the more natural diversity of learners, constructivist pedagogy is a more natural fit. Research affirms constructivist pedagogy as instrumental in an inclusive classroom (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; George, 2005; Palincsar, Magnusson, Cutter, & Vincent, 2002; Reid, 2005).

A strong argument made that early Jewish education systems clearly saw the value in inclusionary practice and constructivism. The *gemara*, quoted at the outset of this sub-section (*Berakhot* 63b), explains that we learn *be-havruta* because the different styles of the two participants (note that they are, ideally, actively engaging in learning, as opposed to listening to a lecture; see Brown & Malkus, 2007 for a recent study on this point). The *gemara* goes so far as to call one who learns alone (or, perhaps, it could be argued, in a homogenous environment) both a fool and a sinner, a fool because he will never gain new perspectives in his *own* learning, and a sinner because through his lack of well-roundedness in understanding he will end up propagating false rulings in Israel.

### **Promoting Cultural Diversity**

*"Multicultural education is a concept that incorporates cultural differences and provides equality in schools. For it to become a reality in the formal school situation, the total environment must reflect a commitment to multicultural education. The diverse cultural backgrounds and microcultural memberships of students and families are as important in developing effective instructional strategies as are their physical and mental capabilities. Further, educators must understand the influence of racism, sexism, classism on the lives of their students and ensure that these are not perpetuated in the classroom." [and in the school] (Gollnick & Chinn, 1997, p. 12)*

*"V-eha`amidu talmidim harbeh"*  
Pirkei Avot (1:1)

According to *Avot D'Rabbi Natan* (2:3) in regards to *Pirkei Avot* (1:1) *Ve-ha`amidu talmidim harbeh*, Beit Shammai says, "One should teach only one who is smart, meek, of good ancestry and rich." In contrast, Beit Hillel says, "One should teach

every man, for there were many transgressors in Israel who were brought close to *Torah*, and from them descended righteous, pious, and worthy folk.” So *harbeh* could mean, teach a diverse group of students thus providing educational opportunities to all. Jewish tradition clearly values diversity.

### **Multi-cultural Education**

The arena of cultural diversity and multicultural education is vast. In order to provide theoretical grounding for the positions taken in this monograph, I have decided to focus on one aspect of the topic; i.e., the relevance of culturally relevant teaching. Multicultural education, though, serves as the moral underpinning for this discussion. According to Boyer and Baptiste (1996), multicultural education transforms "education so that its reality for students includes equity for all, a true spirit of democracy, freedom from prejudice and stereotypes of discrimination, and appreciation for cultural diversity" (p. 2). Multicultural education consists of five dimensions (Banks, 1997): Content integration (the degree to which, for example, teachers use examples from a variety of cultures), equity pedagogy (teaching, for example, that facilitates achievement for all students), empowering school culture and structure (practices, for example, that avoid labeling), prejudice reduction (activities, for example, that promote positive interactions with those different from oneself), and knowledge construction (examining, for example, who determines what gets taught).

Appreciating and capitalizing upon cultural diversity to enhance learning is very much an extension of the work of those educators committed to multicultural education. Support for deep learning based on sound psychological learning theory was reported by Lambert and McCombs (2000) in a comprehensive review of latest research on learning theory amplified upon a fundamental psychological principle relating to the learning process and the learner. They explain that social and cultural diversity are important factors in enhancing the learning experience. Learning, they explain is “facilitated by social interactions and communication with others in a flexible, diverse (in age, culture, family background, etc.) and adaptive instructional setting” (p. 509). Learning is enhanced by interacting with diverse abilities, cultures, values, and interests. Learning environments should allow for the appreciation of and interaction with diverse learning styles. The principle states that “Learning settings that allow for and respect diversity encourage flexible thinking as well as social competence and, moral development” (p. 509). Multicultural communities, according to Strike (2007) are characterized “by a sense that we are all in this together while also respecting differences and individual rights” (p. 146).

Educators who teach from a culturally relevant frame understand that all students can learn, albeit at different paces and in different ways. Although not the first to articulate a culturally relevant stance in regards to teaching, Ladson-Billings (1994) compares culturally relevant teaching with what she terms assimilationist teaching. An assimilationist believes that ethnic groups should conform to the norms, values, expectations, and behaviors of the dominant social and cultural group. Culturally relevant teachers, by contrast, believe that all students can learn, albeit differently. Assimilationist teachers believe that failure is inevitable for some students.

Culturally responsive teachers (Jordan Irvine & Armento, 2003) are responsive to their students by incorporating elements of the students’ culture in their teaching. They

make special efforts to get to know their students well. They might ask their students to share stories about their family and cultural heritage. Students are encouraged to express themselves openly about their culture. Students obtain a tremendous sense of pride and a feeling of being appreciated. A teacher, for instance, might assign her students a homework assignment to write a story about their family. Culturally responsive pedagogy is integrated into the curriculum and lessons on almost a daily basis, not just around holidays or special commemorations.

According to Lindsey, Roberts, and CampbellJones (2005), culturally relevant educators affirm justice and opportunity for all students in their school and work to create an inclusive learning environment that supports and encourages all students to succeed, academically and socially.

### **Inclusion Research and Practice**

*“I would prefer my children to be in a school in which differences are looked for, attended to, and celebrated as good news, as opportunities for learning. The question with which so many school people re preoccupied is, “What are the limits of diversity beyond which behavior is unacceptable?” . . . But the question I would like to see asked more often is, “How can we make conscious deliberate use of differences in social class, gender, age, ability, race and interest as resources for learning?” . . . Differences hold great opportunities for learning. Differences offer a free, abundant, and renewable resource. I would like to see our compulsion for eliminating differences replaced by an equally compelling focus on making use of these differences to improve schools. What is important about people – and about schools – is what is different, not what is the same.”*  
(Barth, 1990, pp. 514-515)

Inclusion, as stated at the outset of this monograph, is cutting-edge practice (Alton-Lee, Rietveld, Klenner, Dalton, Diggins, & Town, 2000). What is inclusion? What are some of its antecedents? What does research inform us about such practice? Later in the essay, suggestions for implementing inclusion are presented.

“An inclusive school is one that educates all students in the mainstream,” according to Stainback and Stainback (2000). They continue, “Educating students in the mainstream means that every student is in general education and general classes.” Moreover, they explain, “It also means that all students are provided with appropriate educational opportunities within the mainstream that are challenging yet geared to their capabilities and needs; they are likewise provided with any support and assistance they or the teachers may need to be successful in the mainstream.” Fisher (2006) amplifies with more specificity. “Related services, such as speech or physical therapy, are provided within the context of the general education class, rather than being offered in the more traditional pull-out model” (p. 205). Yet, inclusion is more than this according to leading researchers in inclusion (Clough, & Corbet, 2000). “An inclusive school is place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met” (p. xi).

The history of inclusion begins with exclusion. Historically, the “deformed,” “feebleminded,” “insane,” “socially maladjusted,” “stupid,” “incapables,” “unteachable,” and “handicapped” have been labeled as uneducable and isolated from the mainstream

educational system (Winzer, 1993). From time immemorial, many societies practiced infanticide for children considered physically deformed or mentally incapable. Greek civilization, for instance, lauded for its inspiring literature, culture, and seminal philosophers and artisans, practiced infanticide on a regular basis. Parenthetically and curiously, the Jews living under Greek rule, in contrast, were far more advanced in their treatment of these children. Jewish communities took these children in and, although they were often shunned from communal view, their physical needs were cared for. Margaret Winzer's noteworthy history of special education, titled *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration*, documents the horrendous treatment of these children prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, she explains, exclusion was common place, although the beginnings of "charity" towards them, if not education emerged. She cites the pioneering work of people like Denis Diderot for the blind, G. M. A. Ferrus for the mentally retarded, and William Tuke for the deaf, among prominent others, whose work formed the basis for caring and educating what was termed "handicapped" students. Her history ends with the emergence of special education classes in schools.

Winzer's (1993) observations about a society's awareness of its obligations for treating and educating its disabled is historically revealing but also instructive in terms of the obligations of educators today in dealing with "difference." She observes:

A society's treatment of those who are weak and dependent is one critical indicator of its social progress. Social attitudes concerning the education and care of exceptional individuals reflect general cultural attitudes concerning the obligations of a society to its individual citizens. Every society recognizes certain extreme forms of human difference as abnormality. Along the range of human behavior from normal to abnormal there is some point at which a social judgment is made and an individual comes to be regarded as exceptional, disabled, different, or deviant. To what extent a society can accept such differences and how to deal with them are perennial problems. (p. 3)

We will again underscore this essential observation in the moral implications section.

For the past several decades increased attention has been given to the educational and social needs of students with disabilities. Language about special education students too has evolved. No longer in vogue is the term "handicapped students" because of negative connotations. We avoid labeling a human being in a unitary way as "handicapped" because that designation certainly does not define the person wholly. Rather, they are whole, normal people who have certain physical, emotional, or learning needs. Hence the term "students with disabilities" has become more popular. The phrase "students with exceptionalities" or "exceptional students" is also in vogue. Some educators including this author, however, have issues with these latter designations as well. The term "disabilities" is not sufficiently descriptive and it offers a condescending or at least negative image. Calling these students "students with possibilities" not "disabilities" affirms our collective commitment and belief that all students are capable to some degree and our obligation as educators is to address each student's "possibilities." Some might argue that we can go only so far with language before we find it difficult to define or label anything. Remaining sensitive about another's personhood and educational future is not a light matter. Much of the literature on inclusion reinforces

such understandings of the power and use of language to address the needs of these and all students.

Legal rulings in significant court decisions have reinforced awareness of students with disabilities. In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act). Wiebe Berry (2006) reviews the more recent legal mandate to provide equitable educational opportunities to students with disabilities (No Child Left Behind, 2001, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 1997, 2004). “In order to receive federal funds, states must develop and implement policies that assure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities. The state plans must be consistent with the federal statute, Title 20 United States Code Section 1400 et.seq. (20 USC 1400)” (<http://www.scn.org/~bk269/94-142.html>). Since the passing of IDEA, inclusion has been discussed much more than in the past. Although not on the forefront of educational practice, inclusive schooling and practices have been advocated in the literature and established in schools (Ainscow, 1997). In many New York City schools, for example, Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) classes have been established with two teachers (one special education certified and one general education certified) teaching a heterogeneous class. According to Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, and Christensen (2006), “From a historical perspective, special education was created as a parallel system for serving students with specific identifiable needs and disabilities.” They continue, “This created ongoing dilemmas related to allocation of resources, divisions or professional labor, professional identity issues in personnel preparation, and barriers for the education of disabled populations to access mainstream practices and contexts. The educational project of inclusion aims to change this historical separation” (p. 66).

Parents, educators, and others concerned citizens have highlighted the historic inequitable treatment of students with disabilities and have advocated for inclusive practices as a means to ameliorate past injustices (Reid & Valle, 2004). Evidence demonstrates that services to students with disabilities have been inferior in segregated situations (Blackorby, Wagner, Cameto, Davies, Levine, Newman, et al, 2005). Educators today “now recognize that instructional practices effective for most learners are also effective for students with disabilities if they are delivered in an explicit and systematic manner” (Wiebe Berry, 2006, pp 489-490). Although teachers need to be prepared to teach in inclusive heterogeneous settings (Cook, 2002), research indicates that inclusion, when properly in place, provides all students increased access, encourages acceptance of all students, maximizes student participation, increases academic achievement of both the abled and disabled (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006).

What does additional research have to say about inclusion? In a review of the literature in 1999, Salend and Garrick (1999) found “increases in academic achievement, increased peer acceptance and richer friendship networks, higher self-esteem, avoidance of stigma attached to pull-out programs, and possible lifetime benefits (e.g., higher salaries, independent living) after leaving school” (as cited in Wiebe Berry, 2006, p, 490). Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm, and Hughes (1998) have cited positive social outcomes for students with and without disabilities (also, see Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Staub & Peck, 1994-1995). Studies indicate that inclusive classrooms do not contribute to academic decline of non-disabled students (Peltier, 1997; Power-deFur & Orelove, 2003; Sharpe & York, 1994). Research also indicates that acceptance of inclusive practices is based on

the amount of administrative support, resources, and training teachers receive (Ainscow, Howes, Farrell, & Frankham, 2003; Bishop & Jones, 2002). Effective inclusion also “depends on classroom climate factors as well as effective instructional strategies” (Erwin & Guintini, 2000; Myklebust, 2006; Wiebe Berry, 2006, p. 520).

Limits of or cautions about inclusion have also been noted in the literature (see, e.g., Zigmond, 2003). Some studies indicate that parents in favor of inclusion tended to be more satisfied compared to parents of mainstreamed children. Feiler and Gibson (1999) explain that advocacy of inclusion does not minimize or ignore a number of important issues that must be addressed about the inclusion movement. The authors point to four concerns that need more attention. One, inclusion may mean one thing in one school, yet quite another thing in another. Precise definitions are necessary, and a consensus about practice. Such consensus does not exist. A second concern is a call for additional research on inclusion in terms of its long-term social and academic benefits or dangers (Armstrong, 2004). Third, just having an inclusive classroom doesn’t by itself mean no exclusion is occurring. Wiebe Berry (2006) makes the point that “inclusive” settings can themselves “exclude.” Good pedagogy is good pedagogy regardless of the educational setting. If teachers are not philosophically committed to inclusion and if their espoused theories for inclusion do not match their theories-in-action (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004), then inclusion will not work. Parenthetically, I witnessed such exclusion in one CTT class I observed a few years ago. After the end of a mathematics lesson, one teacher announced to the class, “Okay, now let’s get ready for language arts. Those in special ed move to the back of the room.” A fourth caution proffered by Feiler and Gibson is that best practice inclusion may exist in one or several classrooms, but not appreciated or reinforced by the larger school culture (also see, Lindsay, 2003; Wedell, 2005).

Most recently, Volonino and Zigmond (2007) call into question co-teaching practices where general and special educators work together to teach a diverse group of students. Relaying early in their review of the literature the pros and cons of inclusion, they conclude that co-taught classrooms, a common occurrence in full inclusion placements, “is complicated by the theory-practice divide.” “Although, theoretically, co-teaching could enhance instruction . . . , in practice, co-teaching is not often implemented as proposed.” They continue, “co-teaching may hold future educational promise for some students, in some classrooms, at present, the research base does not provide sufficient support . . .” (p. 298).

In conclusion, notwithstanding the views expressed in the preceding paragraph, sufficient research, overall, indicates that inclusive practice is warranted, at least as an alternative model. Problems have occurred, research indicates, in its proper implementation. Further research, including carefully designed experimental and additional qualitative studies, are encouraged. But as Wolfe and Hall (2003) suggest, “Let’s end the debate about *whether* to include students with severe disabilities in the general education classroom. Let’s focus on *how* and *when* and *where*” (p. 56; italics in original).

### **Recommendations**

Thus far, the monograph has alluded to several areas in which inclusive practice is needed in Jewish education and schooling. It has laid a theoretical framework for

inclusive practice. In this section, based on Table 1 excerpted in part below, two groups of practical recommendations are offered, each relating to one of the two areas of classification identified as problematic:

Classification	Students with Disabilities	Sephardim/Ashkenazim
Recommendation	Inclusion through differentiation (Reid, 2005)	Inclusion through curriculum integration (Beane, 1997)

A separate monograph can be written for each area of recommendation. Suggestions are therefore brief and presented, in many cases, in outline or bullet form. Recommended readings are offered. Please note, again, that the monograph is not intended to discuss creating an inclusive classroom or school.

### **Differentiating Instruction for Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms**

One of the common arguments by teachers, themselves, against working in an inclusive classroom is the perceived inability to “handle so many students with different learning needs.” Teachers prepared to teach in inclusive classrooms, however, have essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions to deal with students’ learning differences. The literature on differentiated instruction, which provides practical teaching tools and methodologies to teach an inclusive class, is extant and growing.

Some Guidelines for Differentiated Instruction include:

- Differentiated instruction can occur when teachers are aware and able to consider and deal with different learning needs and abilities of their students.
- Differentiated instruction is possible when teachers find opportunities for every student to succeed.
- Differentiated instruction occurs when teachers can multi-task.
- Differentiated instruction occurs when teachers can manage a classroom well to allow for “structured chaos” but knows how to minimize excessive noise and disruptions.
- Differentiated instruction occurs when a range of activities is provided: whole-class instruction, small-group activities (pairs, triads, quads), individualized activities (e.g., learning centers, independent study), and student-teacher conferences (e.g., working on contracts for learning).
- Differentiated instruction occurs when teachers allow students to express themselves in diverse ways (e.g., artistically, musically, technologically, scientifically, athletically, etc.)
- Differentiated instruction allows students to express themselves in different ways (e.g., traditional compositions/essays, speeches, drama, music, building models, etc.)
- Differentiated instruction occurs when students discuss ideas freely and openly, giving all students a chance to participate in the discussion.
- Differentiated instruction occurs when the whole class listens to each other as individuals or as small groups about how they plan to learn or study a particular topic.
- Differentiated instruction occurs when the teacher works with selected students while providing meaningful activities for others

- Differentiated instruction occurs when teachers allow students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Differentiated instruction occurs when teachers use peer tutoring (i.e., advanced learners on particular topics work with students not as advanced).
- Differentiated instruction occurs when teachers realize students will complete work at different paces and that the teacher must plan for and provide learning activities for students who complete work before others.
- Differentiated instruction occurs when students can form their own interest groups to explore a topic of interest.
- Differentiated instruction incorporates cooperative learning, multiple intelligences and learning styles.

Teachers attuned to differentiation keep in mind these affirmations:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I call on students equitably.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I care for all students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. All students, regardless of ability, can learn from one another.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I am attuned to the different learning needs and abilities of my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I display the work of all students, regardless of ability or achievement
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I help students appreciate, tolerate, and accommodate their similarities and differences in learning, culture, and interest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I celebrate the successes of all students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I consciously incorporate multiple intelligences whenever feasible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I consciously incorporate learning styles whenever feasible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I pre-assess students' knowledge prior to instruction so that I can develop appropriate lessons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I use a variety of assessment strategies throughout the unit of instruction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I am flexible in allowing students to demonstrate different ways that they have learned the material (in other words, I give students choices about how to express their learning).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I offer different homework options.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I give different kinds of tests.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I grade holistically, not relying on one sole test or measure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. In questioning all students, I prompt and probe equitably.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I give the same wait time to slow learners as I do to advanced learners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I use a variety of grouping procedures, including whole-class instruction and small grouping.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I use peer tutoring as necessary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I find ways for all students to excel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I use a variety of teaching strategies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I take into consideration students' interests and needs in planning instruction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I give students texts that are at varied levels and readability.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I incorporate technology into instruction wherever feasible and useful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I differentiate instruction when appropriate.

Recommended resources and readings include Bowe (2005), Carolan and Guinn (2007), Choate (2004), Dodge (2006), Drapeau (2004), National Professional Resources, Inc. (2003), Sapon-Shevin (2007), Tomlinson (2001, 2004), and Villa and Thousand

(1995). Also, consult [www.corwinpress.com](http://www.corwinpress.com) for an extensive list of excellent resources on the subject.

### **Curriculum Integration in the Inclusive Classroom**

Efforts to integrate curriculum in secular education abound (see, e.g., Beane, 1997; Etim, 2005; Glatthorn, 2000). Integrating curriculum is important because it addresses the learning needs of all students. In Jewish education, calls for integrating curriculum have been made. For instance, Blau (2003) makes the point for greater attention to *aggadah* in the teaching of *gemara* because it provides opportunities for students who are not inclined to the kind of analytical thinking required in *halachic* sections. Also, Rothstein (2003) emphasizes the need to devise a curriculum that “meets the needs of all its constituents” (p. 325). He states that it is certainly challenging but imperative nonetheless.

Considering discussion in the theoretical framework that emphasized the importance of cultural diversity as well as issues of justice and caring, an inclusive, integrated curriculum is warranted. An inclusive classroom and school will ensure that attention is given to the historic, religious, social, and *halachic* traditions of different Jewish cultural groups. The extent and nature of curriculum attention will vary from school to school depending on demographic and other considerations. Still, each school should examine its curriculum to ensure proper attention is given to this subject.

### **Guidelines for Integrating Curriculum:**

- Structure the curriculum to allow for greater depth and less superficial coverage. Discussion of any cultural tradition should be undertaken seriously.
- Meet with curriculum school leaders to design appropriate curricula and learning experiences/activities designed to meet pre-specified goals.
- Structure and deliver the curriculum so that it addresses the rich and deep cultural heritage of the group under study.
- Structure the curriculum so that it is closely coordinated. Coordinating content within lessons and among units over the course of the school year is imperative so that curriculum is sequential and well organized (Glatthorn, 2000).
- Emphasize both the *halachic* theory or law and the practical. Relating content to the lived experiences of students is important to increase student learning. Hands-on activities, when feasible, are very much warranted (Glatthorn, 2000).
- Organize curriculum discussion groups at faculty and grade conferences with teachers, and assess the impact of the new curriculum on students from all cultural groups
- Review all instructional materials and resources to ensure inclusivity and coverage
- Make recommendations to revise the curriculum based on some evidence
- Solicit input from others in the curriculum process (e.g., curriculum specialists, rabbis, parents, and students)
- Examine the relationship between teaching and curriculum
- Explore the impact of the hidden curriculum on the formal curriculum (e.g., What is happening outside the classroom as a result of discussing Sephardic and/or Ashkenazic traditions?)

**Other curricular suggestions may include, in brief:**

- Opportunities to include comparisons between Sephardic and Ashkenazic traditions and customs in *parashat ha-shavu`a*, *humash*, and *halakhah*.
- Opportunities to incorporate model lessons from Dobrinsky's (1988) *Teacher's Guide* that highlights teaching suggestions with practical and detailed information derived from Sephardic laws and customs (Dobrinsky, 2001).
- Opportunities for schools and educators to collaborate to develop standards in *limmudei kodesh* including benchmarks (see, e.g., Sokolow, 2007). For instance, a standard could include "Knowledge of Early Sephardic History." A benchmark at the high school level might state "Students will be able to cite Jewish Sephardic connections with the Iberian Peninsula." Students, instructionally, might engage in reading excerpts from the books of *Yesha`yahu*, *Yirmiyahu*, *Melakhim Alef*, and *Yonah*. They might examine archeological artifacts of the era, family histories, and a biography of the Abrabanel. Again, much curricular work is needed, not in the purview of this essay.

**Conclusion**

This essay has focused on a controversial topic. Pointing out exclusionary educational practices may put some people on the defensive. Yet, it has been stressed that educators committed to social justice and an ethic of caring, so integral in Jewish tradition, are morally obligated to point out ways of improving Jewish education.

Exclusion, as described in this monograph, is morally unconscionable. Although attending to the needs of all students can occur in various ways, this monograph has described inclusion as one model worthy of consideration. Parenthetically, many public schools are not wholly inclusive. Many are traditional schools that have several inclusive classrooms. The movement towards inclusion can be made gradually and carefully. Not all teachers are properly trained to teach differentially, nor are they all committed to an inclusive philosophy. Teacher training in schools of education and professional development in schools are required to prepare teachers to work in inclusive settings. The fact that inclusion also takes additional resources, financial and otherwise, is another reason to proceed with caution. Although roadblocks towards inclusion exist, educators and others morally committed to such educational practices can do much to ensure the best education for all students.

Besides attention to the inclusion of students with disabilities, this monograph has also emphasized cultural curricular exclusion. Cultural exclusion can occur when a given group's customs and traditions are ignored or marginalized in the school curriculum. Schools, it has been argued, can play a critical role in terms of addressing these forms of exclusion by creating a more just, caring, and inclusive curriculum.

An inclusion model has been explicated with some recommendations to include students with disabilities via differentiated instruction and to create a more integrated or inclusive curriculum (Nind, Rix, Sheey, & Simmons, 2005). We conclude with a word about the ethics and morality of inclusion.

**Moral Imperatives: The Ethics of Inclusion**

This essay has presented a non-consequentialist ethical approach towards inclusive practice, in contrast to consequentialist theories that espouse the principle of benefit maximization in which when faced with a choice, the best decision is one that

results in the most good for the greatest number. As Strike, Haller, and Soltis (2005) explain, this principle “judges the morality of our actions by their consequences. It says that the best action is the one with the best overall results” (p. 17). What is considered a “benefit,” or a “good result” is often left to conjecture, at worst, or to further analysis, at best. In contrast, the principle of equal respect, as a non-consequentialist ethical stance, according to the aforementioned authorities, “requires that we act in ways that respect the equal worth of moral agents. It requires,” they continue, “that we regard human beings as having intrinsic worth and treat them accordingly” (p. 17). Thus, according to this line of thought, the rightness or wrongness of an action or position is based on the intrinsic needs of people often marginalized by community, not on its consequences. As has been demonstrated, a review of the literature on inclusion indicates the efficacy of inclusive practice in many areas for all children, although admittedly additional research is needed, particularly in regards to Jewish school settings. My read of extant research in the field reveals that inclusive practice is often not adopted, not based solely on research findings of its effectiveness or lack thereof for children’s academic, emotional, and social development, but on factors such as, among others, adherence to educational tradition, lack of professional preparation, misguided leadership initiatives, and not least of which is an insensitivity to or ignorance of the ethical and moral dimensions of work in schools. On this latter point, the position taken here is that educators who do not consider the benefits of inclusion or its implementation are not necessarily acting immorally or unethically. Educators might, in fact, fall into one of four categories regarding these issues. The first group and probably the least in number are those educators and others concerned with supporting education in schools who do act immorally in the sense that their actions are concerned more with personal self-interest or politicalization of the educational enterprise, and not establishing policies and practices in the best interests of promoting student learning. The second, more numerous, category includes those people who simply have not considered the moral and ethical implications of their work or actions. These include educators of good-will, but they do not possess the requisite “ethical knowledge” (Campbell, 2003) to fully assess and appreciate the moral consequences of their behaviors in the classroom or school. Teacher training programs, for instance, often focus on the technical aspects of teaching (e.g., lesson planning, curriculum development, and classroom management) without sufficient attention to moral and ethical principles embedded in the act of teaching or leading. A third group includes educators and others who share the views and positions espoused here and wish to continue research in the area, which is very much needed, and who might be willing to form an inclusive network of some sort to further discussion of inclusive practice. A final group is comprised of those individuals who after considering the existing research and experiences of practice legitimately take a different position on what is best for students. They are not morally absent or corrupt. They struggle with difficult and challenging ethical dilemmas and come up with alternative strategies or approaches to educational practice.

Ethics, fundamentally, deals with actions that are commonly seen as right or wrong. Showing favoritism to a colleague who is Ashkenazic, for instance, over someone who is not in terms of hiring as a Jewish day school principal, in a case in which one’s cultural background is irrelevant to job performance, is prejudicial and discriminatory. An ethical educator strives to do the right things as well as do things

right. Morality deals with a system of values that undergirds ethical behavior. A moral leader might value social justice and equity for all people. If one's behavior is consistent then one will act "morally" when called to do so. Because a leader values social justice, she or he will consciously remain on guard for possible prejudicial behavior in selecting a new hire (Glanz, 2006).

Exclusionary educational practice, we have argued, is unethical. Jewish educators committed to justice, caring, cultural sensitivity, constructivist practice, differentiation within an inclusive learning environment are aware of the pedagogical and curricular implications of their work. They, thus, try to create an ethical school and classroom environment (Starratt, 1994; Zubay & Soltis, 2005). This final section of the essay will further deepen our understanding of the moral imperatives necessary for inclusive schooling.

Inclusive practice, to its fullest extent, cannot occur without moral commitment. Some Jewish educators have written and shared their beliefs and values that favor inclusive practice. Zweiter's (2006) incisive critique raises serious questions for Jewish educators about fundamental assumptions of Jewish education itself. Challenging Jewish educators to critically examine their own practices on many levels, Zweiter questions the practice of grouping students homogeneously. Zweiter evidently questions the efficacy of non-inclusive educational settings: He says of homogeneous grouping, ". . . while it may be easier for the teacher to teach students who are at a similar ability level, it is far from clear that bright children learn less when they are with a mixed group of students than when they are with other bright children" (p. 15). As for pedagogy and student involvement he is even more precise, "Active student involvement, independence, critical thinking and questioning need to replace passive learning" (p. 16). Most of our classrooms are homogeneously grouped because, according to Oakes (1985), traditional conceptions of learning remain with us even though they no longer make sense. Although not discussing inclusion, Zweiter refers to such educational traditions:

*So much of what we do is the product of inertia, it's the way we've always done it or the way it has always been done. Even worse is when those unquestioned practices become dogma – we must do it this way because that's the way it has always been done. That dogma stifles and inhibits any possibility for change and growth, and we are left with practices whose rationale has long been forgotten. Remember Rav Hanokh of Alexander's comment that the real slavery of Israel in Egypt was that they learned to endure it. (p. 25)*

Advocacy of inclusion is also grounded in the critique of classroom life (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993). Alfie Kohn (1999) says our schools and classrooms are joyless. Mel Levine (2004) charges that "instructional practices and curricular choices fail to provide educational opportunities for diverse learners" (p. 8). He asks, why do "children like Michael, with his impressive mechanical aptitude" have to "be sentenced to wait until adulthood to experience success"? (p. 10). According to Svi Shapiro (2006) students learn in the competitive, test-driven, and grade-obsessed school environment that what counts has little to do with the pleasure of learning, or the intrinsic value of greater understanding" (p. 9). Shapiro says "It is a process that starts from the moment one steps into a typical classroom and kids are placed in differential groups for reading, or treated by teachers with quite different amounts of respect and value depending on how they look, speak, or perform on assigned tasks" (p. 40). "School," he continues, is a place that

“conveys, and endlessly reinforces, the idea that people are necessarily and inevitably to be ranked in ability and worth, and that those who are deemed of most worth are recognized and celebrated. . . .” (p. 40).

Continuing this line of thinking, Elliott Eisner (2004) observes, “Part of our press toward standardization has to do with what is inherent in our age-graded school system. Age-graded systems work on the assumption that children remain more alike than different over time and that we should be teaching within the general expectations for many particular grade.” Eisner debunks such an assumption of unvariableness in student aptitude and achievement. He continues, “yet, if you examine reading performance, for example, the average range of reading ability in an ordinary classroom approximates the grade level. Thus at the second grade, there is a two-year spread; at the third grade, a three-year range; at the fourth, a four-year range. Consider how various the picture would be if performance in four or five different fields of study were examined. Children become more different as they get older, and we ought to be promoting those differences and at the same time working to escalate the mean” (p 304). He concludes, “We need a fresh and humane vision of what schools might become because what our schools become has everything to do with what our children and culture will become” (p. 305). The vision Eisner is debunking is morally corrupt. Dwayne Huebner (1996), one of my doctoral mentors, astutely commented that education and teaching is “moral activity.” “It is never amoral,” he says. “It can be, and sometimes is, immoral” (p, 267). Schools and classrooms that do not “enable” and consequently “ennoble” all students (an idea generated by Yeshiva University President Richard Joel, albeit said in another context) are morally bankrupt. A moral vision is one founded on a deep commitment to inclusion by remaining steadfast in the belief that all children can learn at some developmentally appropriate level and that Ashkenazic and Sephardic customs and laws are of equal value.

Inclusion has been a historic goal in Jewish education, although not always actualized. As Seymour Fox, Israel Scheffler, and Daniel Marom (2006) in their volume titled *Visions of Jewish Education* state “Jews in the Western world have aspired to civic and social equality.” Jews, they continue, “have argued and worked for full political rights, for admission to universities, for access to the professions, and for the right to participate in all branches of commerce” (p. 5). In other words, they have called for and demanded inclusion, socially, politically, economically, and intellectually. Such societal and constitutional inclusion has been achieved by Jews as they have “become full and active participants in the civic and political life of their communities (p. 5). Jewish schools should aspire to no less. We need a vision.

The moral vision needed goes beyond the ordinary, mundane, or established ways of conceiving teaching and learning (Brown & Duguid, 1991). From a Deweyian (1916) perspective, this vision “entails a constant expansion of horizons and a consequent formulation of new purposes and new responses” (p. 206). We need new responses to deal with a plethora of challenges we face in Jewish education, many not articulated in this essay. This new vision cannot be framed in isolation of a community of concerned individuals seeking to improve education and curriculum, more specifically, in Jewish schools. Discussions of vision have begun (see, e.g., Fox, Scheffler, & Marom, 2006). Educators and others must meet to discuss the kind of vision needed to address inclusive practices as highlighted here.

Finally, such a vision is only possible with moral and transformative leadership (Riehl, 2000). Transformational leadership has received much attention in the educational leadership literature (see, e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Although transformational leadership has been examined by other theorists (e.g., Bass, 1997), Kenneth Leithwood and Doris Jantzi have most recently addressed implications of transformational leadership for schools. Their ideas find relevance for our work in fostering inclusive practice. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), “three broad categories of leadership practices” can be identified: setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization. The authors explain that setting directions is a “critical aspect of transformational leadership . . . [by] . . . helping staff to develop shared understandings about the school and its activities as well as the goals that undergird a sense of purpose or vision” (pp. 38-39). They explain that people are more likely to participate when they have had a say in developing ideas and practices. Transformational leaders realize that anyone can set a direction for an organization, but it is the effective leader who considers and solicits the participation of other key school personnel to share in the development and actualization of the institutional vision and purpose

Summarizing how transformational leadership works, Northouse (2003) explains: “Transformational leaders set out to empower followers and nurture them in change. They attempt to raise the consciousness in individuals and to get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others” (p. 142). Northouse highlights the following characteristics of transformational leaders: serve as strong role models, have a highly developed sense of moral values; a self-determined sense of identity; visionary, confident, articulate; willingness to listen to followers; engender trust in followers, and act as change agents within and for the organization. Both Fullan (2003) and Starratt (1995) concur that change, without addressing a change in core beliefs and values, is doomed to remain temporary and superficial. “Transformational leadership,” says Starratt (1995), “is concerned with large, collective values . . .” (p. 110). Leadership is predicated on the foundation of changing core beliefs and values. Fullan (1991, cited by Fullan 2003) has identified “five crucial mind and action sets that leaders in the 21st century must cultivate: a deep sense of moral purpose, knowledge of the change process, capacity to develop relationships across diverse individuals and groups, skills in fostering knowledge creation and sharing, and the ability to engage with others in coherence making amidst multiple innovations” (p. 35).

What is our moral commitment to such ideals in regards to inclusive practice? Ryan (1996) makes a strong case for the role of leaders to promote inclusive practice. He states: “Leadership practices need to be organized to promote inclusion because we live in a world that increasingly embraces values, views, and practices that are not consistent with inclusion” (p. 105). The moral imperative of inclusion involves much work as we strive to enhance an ethic of caring, justice, and constructivist work within an inclusive differentiated instructional environment. To accomplish this imperative requires moral commitment to an “ethics of inclusion.”

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**Questions for Reflection**

1. From your experience, in what ways have schools/classrooms excluded students?
2. In what ways have schools/classrooms successfully included students?
3. Can you provide personal examples how you or someone you know has been excluded or included in a school?
4. What specific examples can you provide to demonstrate that students with disabilities have been included or excluded?
5. What specific examples can you provide to demonstrate that Sephardic customs and traditions have/have not received curricular or pedagogical attention?
6. Can you describe situations in which Sephardic customs and traditions have received curricular and pedagogical attention?
7. To what extent have Ashkenazim experienced exclusion?
8. How might the school curriculum address the Ashkenazic/Sephardic issue discussed in this monograph?
9. How might you remain more culturally sensitive as an educator?
10. What would you do to encourage or ensure that a child's culture is appreciated and respected school-wide?
11. How might you counter someone who would say that classroom management issues would be too cumbersome in an inclusive class?
12. How would you address a parent's concern that she doesn't want her "normal" child in the same classroom as a "learning disabled one?" "a physically disabled one?"
13. What strategies may educational leaders employ to ease apprehensions of parents who make similar complaints as in the previous question?
14. Do you think placing students who are working well above their capacities in the same classes as students with mild learning disabilities may impede the educational progress of students with disabilities? Explain.
15. Given the premise of the previous question, would the progress of these above average students be impeded in any way? Explain.
16. How might someone who favors inclusion using the examples in the previous two questions respond to a claim that progress of each group would indeed be impeded?
17. Isn't inclusion, diversity, and multiculturalism a leftist, socialist agenda that tries to treat everyone the same? Explain why or why not.
18. Do you see inclusionary practice as blurring differences in ability among students? Explain.
19. To what extent do you see inclusion an issue in Jewish schools?
20. What factor or factors would inhibit implementation of inclusion in your school?
21. What strategies might you utilize to overcome the roadblocks alluded to in the previous question?
22. What kind of additional professional development would teachers need to work in an inclusive class?
23. What can a principal or any other school building leader do to support inclusionary work?
24. Can you think of an instance wherein some educator espouses a philosophy that calls for "achievement for all students" but does not advocate inclusion? Explain.
25. What other inclusionary/exclusionary issues need further analysis?
26. What else would you like or need to know about inclusion?
27. Have you experienced an inclusive classroom? Explain.
28. Would you be willing to discuss these and other related issues further by joining an Inclusion Task Force for Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivot? If so, contact the author at [glanz@yu.edu](mailto:glanz@yu.edu). Regardless, please share responses to the questions above with the author. No names will be used when reporting data; anonymity will be assured.

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