



Renaissance
JEWISH EDUCATION IN EUROPE

Publication No. 1

THE GOOD JEWISH EDUCATOR

A Contemporary European Policy paper

December 2025

The relation in education is one of pure dialogue. I referred to the child, lying with half-closed eyes waiting for his mother to speak to him. But many children do not need to wait, for they knew that they are unceasingly addressed in a dialogue which never breaks off. In face of the lonely night which threatens to invade, they lie preserved and guarded, invulnerable clad in the silver mail of trust.

Trust, trust in the world because this human being exists - that is the most inward achievement of the relation in education. Because this human being exists, meaninglessness, however hard pressed you are by it, cannot be the real truth. Because this human being exists, in the darkness the light lies hidden, in fear salvation, and in the callousness of one's fellow man the great Love.

— Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*,
Trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, (Kegan Paul, London, 1947) p. 125



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The Good Jewish Educator- A Contemporary European Policy paper

December 2025

Based on essays written by the members of the Renaissance Pedagogical Committee, discussions of the committee, AI generator summary and editing.

Members of the committee:

Ms. Barbara Spectre, Dr. Joanne Greenaway, Dr. Szonja Komoroczy, Ms. Sophie Bigot-Goldblum, Dr. Sandra Anusiewicz-Baer, Mr. Noa Hermele, Rav Yehoshua Smukler, Dr. Alex Sinclair, Rabbi David Levin-Kruss, Rabbi Craig Kacev, Mr. Ofer Glanz, Dr. Rani Jaeger

Table of content

1. Introduction:

a. The Renaissance Hub

b. The Renaissance Pedagogical Committee and this Policy Paper

2. Assif- Pedagogical committee personal essays

3. קול צפיק נשאו קול, יחדו ירננו

they lift up the voice, together do they sing (Isiah 52/8)

A combined voice with acknowledged differences.

4. Conclusions

1. Introduction:

A. The Renaissance Hub/ Ofer Glanz

The Renaissance Hub is a collaborative engine for strengthening Jewish education in Europe, bringing philanthropic partners into genuine coordination and shared purpose. Beyond aligning investments, we are building a common baseline of knowledge, language, and clarity about the field itself: what counts as Jewish education, where its boundaries lie, whom it is meant to serve, what goals it should pursue, and what role it plays in community life. To explore these questions rigorously, we created two anchor bodies: a Pedagogic Committee of leading thinkers who frame the big conceptual questions, and a Field Advisory Board of experienced practitioners who ground the work in real-world needs. These two perspectives—top-down and bottom-up—meet by design, producing analysis that is both thoughtful and practical. The document before you reflects more than a year of work by the Pedagogic Committee, led by Dr. Rani Jaeger, focused on one of the most fundamental questions any community must face: what defines an ideal Jewish educator?



B. The Pedagogical Committee of the Renaissance Hub and the Policy Document on the Good Jewish Educator/ Rani Jaeger

The Pedagogical Committee of the Renaissance Hub was established to serve as the professional backbone for the development of the Renaissance program. In order to ensure that our vision is grounded in experience and depth, we convened some of the finest experts in Jewish education across Europe—individuals who are engaged daily in shaping both the vision and the practical work of Jewish education.

The members of the committee bring with them a wealth of diverse educational experience, both personal and institutional, leading programs and training educators throughout the continent. Some of the committee members are based in Europe itself, while others have gained significant expertise through educational work in Europe as well as in Jewish communities worldwide.

Members of the committee are:

1. **Dr. Alex Sinclair**, Israel – Chief Content Officer at Educating for Impact
2. **Ms. Sophie Bigot-Goldblum**, France – Paideia faculty and board
3. **Mr. Ofer Glanz**, Hungary, Israel – Renaissance Hub director
4. **Dr. Joan Greenaway**, UK – Chief Executive of LSJS (London School of Jewish Studies)
5. **Mr. Noa Hermele**, Sweden – CEO of Paideia
6. **Dr. Szonja Komoróczy**, Hungary – Vice Chancellor of Education, Department of Judaic Studies OR-ZSE, Budapest
7. **Rabbi Craig Kacev**, Israel – Director of Education, Pincus Fund
8. **Rabbi David Levin-Krus**, Israel – Freelance educator and consultant with a specialization in Europe
9. **Dr. Sandra Anusiewicz-Baer**, Germany – School of Jewish Theology, University Potsdam
10. **Rav Yehoshua Smukler**, Israel – Former principal of Moriah College, Melbourne, Australia, Yael Foundation
11. **Mrs. Barbara Spectre**, Sweden, Israel – Paideia founding director

The committee began its work in the autumn of 2024, meeting monthly to discuss various issues related to defining the aims of Jewish education in contemporary Europe. From the outset, it was important that these discussions provide a foundation for informed decision-making by funding bodies and partner institutions and serve as guidance for the initiatives carried out within the Renaissance framework.

As the deliberations progressed, it became clear that beyond summarizing specific topics, there was great value in presenting consolidated documents on fundamental issues related to the Renaissance. Thus, in May 2025, the committee embarked on the drafting of this policy paper.

Committee members were requested to write a short, personal (though not private) essay articulating their vision of the “Good Jewish Educator.” While the task was open-ended, several guiding categories were suggested to help frame their reflections. Once the essays were submitted, they were discussed in the general forum, integrated with the assistance of AI processing, and refined through collective deliberation.

The result presented here reflects our desire to preserve the diverse voices of the committee members—their emphasis, perspectives, and modes of expression—while also articulating a collective voice that highlights both the central agreements and the points of divergence among them.

This synthesis of perspectives is offered as a foundation for continued development of the vision and practice of Jewish education in Europe.

With great respect for the vision of Jewish education in Europe, we present this document. And with hopeful anticipation.



2. Essays written by the Pedagogical Committee members

A. An Ideal Jewish Educator/ Barbara Spectre

To be noted: what follows is the prime example of a Jewish educator that relates to adult education.

Personal statement: What a wonderful opportunity to give tribute to someone for whom gratitude could never be adequate.

The person was Professor Hugo Bergman (1883 - 1973). In 1965 I was an American graduate student in analytic philosophy, heavily immersed in the works of Wittgenstein, whose influence on American philosophy was at its peak. I came to the Hebrew U for a year of graduate studies and registered for a course on Immanuel Kant with Professor Hugo Bergman. Bergman took a profound interest in hearing about Wittgenstein.

It seemed he couldn't learn enough. He invited me to his home for a weekly study group that included other European Jewish intellectuals such as Professor Ernst Simone all of whom had immigrated to Israel just before the war. The study group met weekly for an entire year. The teacher was Professor Rivka Shatz and the subject was Kabbala.

My enduring sense of Jewish identity was formed in that contact with those remarkable scholars who lived their lives in the dialogue between philosophy and text. They left an impression as being 'living texts' - they engaged in the continual reinterpretation of texts resulting in the incorporation of those interpretations into the texture of their lives. (Bergman and Simone were part of the group that formed Brit Shalom).

Professor Hugo Bergman formed for me a paradigm of a 'transformational educator' and his qualities were:

- * His profound impact was based upon students encountering a deeply accomplished person who never stopped studying - His dedication to study was on two levels:
- * Continual engagement with interpretive textual study, forming an inextinguishable fountain of Jewish identity.
- * A ravenous appetite for hitherto unknown subjects and fields. Imagine what it was for Bergman, then in his 80's, an expert in Kant, to query a graduate student and be fascinated by Wittgenstein (who was claiming to 'cure' the need for metaphysics) ...

- * His relentless dedication to study translated into his own personal characteristics: humility and readiness to open himself up to areas in which he had no mastery. * His educational vision: Bergman offered a *case study* in how a traditional religious framework can engage with modern secular philosophy. His approach was integrative

rather than oppositional: he sought cross-fertilization between cultural Jewish identity and universal philosophical questions. He was deeply committed to the belief that both Judaism and modern philosophy would benefit by that sustained conversation based upon the tension between universality and particularity in Jewish thought, and he demonstrated how to preserve that particularity while contributing to universal debates. He courageously explored the ethical implications of political action in a young nation, especially in the context of existential national questions. He insisted on the applicability of Jewish thought to contemporary issues, ever investigating the role of culture, education, and moral philosophy as foundations for a thriving Jewish society.

*He was adamant in maintaining the conversation and acknowledging the tension; never succumbing to facile conclusions...

Years later, when given the outstandingly improbable opportunity of writing the founding principles for a European Jewish institute of higher learning, I did little more than follow the script written in Bergman's handwriting, which strove to deepen Jewish identity through engagement in the interpretive process; weave a fabric between study and engagement in the world; and engage Jewish thought in the conversation of being human.

B. A Jewish Education of Relations, Meaning and Conversations/Noa Hermele

I see the main aim of Jewish education to engage the learner in meaningful Jewish conversations which serves the learner in forming their own ideas and perspectives in things Jewish. In order to achieve such an education, I would like to propose a number of principles that I believe would support this aim:

In a changing and uncertain world, people often experience a loss of trust and belonging. We need educators that focus on **building relationships** with the learners.

- Our societies are torn apart by polarization and ideological division that needs to be contained in a group of learners. We need an education that makes us able to **listen to opposing views** and **hold complexity**.
- Many in the younger generation are looking to reconnect to Jewish life, bridging the divide between past and present. We need an education that is **non-normative** and empowers the learners to make **grounded decisions** in their lives.



- Making well grounded and informed decisions requires an intimate knowledge of Jewish civilizations. Jewish education needs to equip the learners with a **deep understanding of Jewish texts, thought and culture** and make the learners into **havrutah** partners for existential questions and conversations.
- Being interdependent one on another, we need to contribute as active members of our societies for it to prosper. We need an education focused on **community development** that helps us learn how to work together, negotiate our differences and contribute to the society we live in.

In order for the educator to be able to work in line with these principles, the educators need to interpret them and apply them to their own context and situation. This educational view is therefore **situational** and needs continuous work.

The educator needs to be grounded philosophically in educational ideas. They need to be equipped with methodologies and strategies to make the ideas concrete. And the educator needs tools to apply the methodologies on a practical level so that it results in activities and practices. In addition to the educational aspects, the educator needs an intimate knowledge of Jewish texts, thought and culture in order to transmit the same to the learners.

C. The Jewish Educator/ Craig Kacev

The Jewish educator, no less than any educator, must rely on a skill set that stems from both science and art in developing their ability to convey knowledge, skills, attitudes and feelings such that their students feel engaged, moved and in a space that makes them curious to know more.

I begin with the disposition of the educator, what some may refer to as professionalism, as this cuts to the core of the person prior to their subject knowledge and other technical skills. The Jewish educator must be a caring individual, have a gracious countenance, be fair and respectful of their students. Having high expectations and yet conveying support and a necessary safety net. They must have good communication skills and be able to convey sophisticated ideas through words and other means. Often students remember the experience far longer than the lessons intent and this is due to the educator's enthusiasm, motivation and joy for learning and so the teacher should be both serious and lighthearted, reflective at all times, even with the sense of humor to laugh at



themselves. I have tried to avoid the overly charismatic educator, often narcissistic and self-interested personality, going rather for someone who is good natured with average skills but willing to develop themselves. I look for someone collaborative, who is abundant and seeks to lift the environment rather than sap it of life and energy.

The educator should have the requisite content knowledge for the subject that they intend teaching and the confidence to convey such knowledge. The key for me is an educator who is continually learning both in their area of teaching as well as beyond, so that they strive to be worldly, curious and interesting. A Jewish educator cannot be an *Am Ha'aretz* and this includes the historical knowledge of the country and context in which they teach.

Then we are able to consider their ability to teach. A good educator prepares for their lessons, thinks deeply about the environment, be this for a formal or informal educator, although all educators should have abilities in both. They consider deeply the methodology or pedagogy they will use in each lesson so as to create an optimal learning experience and be skilled in classroom management. Open to experimentation they try new methods and collaborate with colleagues sharing ideas with one another. They should educate, not indoctrinate nor manipulate, they should investigate and hold debate (not for winning), teasing out ideas and encouraging opinions, listening to others. Where needed, they are able to assess and evaluate student progress effectively.

The Jewish educator must be more than all of that in my opinion. They must be a refined personality, striving for alignment of the inner and outer while aware of the tension and failings we all have; they are a role model through their personal behavior, not just a conveyor of knowledge. Teaching a people's narrative, conveying a precious tradition and exemplifying a principled life propelled by the Torah, that brings a powerful message to the world both particular and universal in nature; they must believe in Am Yisrael in all of its parts, the connection to its land albeit from a distance at times and the miracle of our existence. The Jewish educator should exude this awe and wonderment while being wise, curious and questioning, even skeptical at times in a healthy way. The magic happens in the teaching and human interaction yet I want an educator who connects students to their community around them, both Jewish and the general society. The ability for them to deeply understand the zeitgeist of the generation and locale is of utmost importance.

Finally, maybe of lesser importance but nonetheless required, an educator must be dependable, must follow through, have good administrative skills, be fully present for students and families and involved in school life beyond the classroom.



D. The Ideal Jewish Educator/ Sandra Anusiewicz-Baer

A. Inspirational Figure

The Jewish educator I have been blessed to learn from is my Hebrew teacher, Yael. She is a native Israeli, who moved with her family to Austria and later to the Netherlands, and she embodies for me the ideal Jewish educator.

For more than three years, Yael and I have been meeting online once a week for one hour. Unfortunately, we have not yet had the opportunity to meet in person. In spite of this, she has become my most influential educator, and our meetings have far exceeded the task of mere language acquisition. She has supported my learning, nurtured my growth and comforted me in difficult situations. She offers advice without being opinionated. She offers praise and comfort in equal measure without being overly complimentary or sympathetic. She asks piercing questions and encourages me to think out of the box. She has introduced me to new writers and different genres of literature. She sets the bar high – just high enough for me to reach, and each time a bit higher – but never sets me up for failure. She forces me to leave my comfort zone. Yael makes me feel understood and respected. Ultimately, I feel loved.

I approached her with the aim of brushing up my academic Hebrew. I hoped she would be able to help me improve my comprehension of different kinds of scholarly texts. A typical lesson usually begins on a personal note with Yael asking about my well-being. In this way she makes me feel that she cares and is interested in me as a person. This has also created a sense of trust between us since I often tell her about my personal life. I tell her about my past week, about encounters, experiences, thoughts and challenges. Our learning started with relationship building. Over the course of the past few years our meetings have become my place of refuge, a place to gain new insights and regain my strength. It is a learning experience and an education that I look forward to. Whenever we have to cancel an appointment, I miss the lessons. Like no one else, Yael has instilled in me the joy of learning.

I usually request to read certain texts or authors. Sometimes Yael makes suggestions as to what we could read, always aware of what I need. Thanks to her vast knowledge and strong analytical skills, we have covered a diverse range of Jewish literature, including the psalms and Megillat Ruth, Maimonides and Yesheyahu Leibovitz, Simon Rawidowicz, Yair Garbus and Amos Oz. We have read poems and prayers, religious treaties and academic articles. During our language lessons, she has done much more than improve my Hebrew skills: she has educated me about Judaism, Jewishness and Jewish values. She taught me the ever-important art of asking questions. The question underlying our quest always eventually leads back to what lies at the heart of Jewish education.

By describing Yael as my inspirational figure, I hope to convey what I value as an ideal Jewish educator: someone who is humble and honest, inspiring and demanding; one who is dedicated to the success of the learner, but who also continues to learn themselves.

E. The Ideal Jewish Educator / Joanne Greenaway

Jewish education is lifelong learning and I believe that it is most effective when we learn from a diverse range of people in different ways. Our most powerful educational experiences are often in the home where we learn from parents as role models and in experiential settings, often learning from madrichim not much older than ourselves.

I am blessed to have had a range of influential teachers - from Rabbi Sacks, to female halachic experts to inspirational figures each of which has shown me different styles of teaching and learning and helped me to form my own Jewish personality and understand the type of learning I relate to and the type of teaching I want to do. By learning from many people we also avoid being siloed within echo chambers of the community and appreciate difference.

One particular teacher who I have learnt a lot from over the last 4 years as part of a halacha programme I've been part of is Rav David Brofsky.

A. Inspirational Figure

He is able to make what could otherwise be dry material, accessible and fascinating. He presents material in an exceptionally clear, structured way and has absolute mastery of his material. He is a highly knowledgeable expert in his field and he sticks to what he knows, making his content relevant and sharing his enthusiasm and passion for it. In so doing he develops a relationship and rapport with each student and helps them to connect with the material.

B. The Vision that Leads the Educator

His educational philosophy stems from his love of Torah and his appreciation of the halachic process. His way around the halacha allows him to make sense of it, find what is meaningful and avoid stringencies. His authenticity shines through. He is also driven to share halachic learning with women at the highest levels and to ensure that clarity never means dumbing down, even to those without a strong textual background.

C. Key Qualities

He models living a halachic life in the real world. He is able to share what that means in practice and use personal anecdotes to bring that to life for his students.



D. Knowledge

He has written authoritative books on chagim and on aveilut. Compared to some of my other inspirational teachers he does not draw on as much worldly wisdom (history, literature etc) but is steeped in his area. While I generally love to learn from the juxtaposition of Torah and chochma, this has its own charm!

E. Teaching Approach and Teaching Skills

He is an expert with teaching on Zoom, sharing, annotating, magnifying and navigating text so that everyone knows where they are. He is able to be engaging through the screen, relating different examples to relevant students and bringing people in who may not be contributing but without pressuring them beyond their comfort level. He also always relates to what is happening in Israel and where he is personally which enables the international group to bond as a community with a connection to events in Israel. This also serves to strengthen Jewish peoplehood.

F. Relationships & Personal Conduct

His personal conduct is polite and considerate. He focuses on building relationships by knowing what speaks to individuals in the group and finding ways to make the learning relevant to them, eg by bringing local examples and cultural idiosyncrasies from different communities. He invites contributions and he differentiates without being contrived.

G. Community Role

He teaches in some key institutions in Israel. His communal leadership role is as a teacher, which, within his community is held in high esteem as it should be. Aside from being a frontal teacher, his Rabbinic role involves answering students' questions and being involved in their lives.

H. Professional Development

A culture of learning is built into the system that he lives by and promotes amongst his students. This ensures ongoing development but is both personal and professional at once. It also engenders a sense of humility in the face of the magnitude of the infinite amount that there is to learn and the ongoing conversation that continues to shed light on old texts and approaches. Although he is an expert, in a sense he like his students is engaged in an ongoing process of seeking to understand Torah and to direct that towards personal growth and a connection with God and with the Jewish people.

F. What does a Jewish Educator need? / Sophie Bigot-Goldblum

1. Soft skills:

- I. Strong grounding in Torah, Talmud, Jewish history, and philosophy, paired with openness to modern scholarship, understanding of local Jewish histories and local culture.
- II. Having had exposure to or being aware of the values and practices of US and Israel Jewry.
- III. An understanding of the nuances and disagreements between denominations, and some ability to teach in a pluralistic landscape.
- IV. Empathy for those who feel marginal, disconnected, or conflicted about their Judaism.
- V. Some openness to interfaith dialogue and civic engagement.

2. Hard skills:

- I. To be able to read a *passuk* from the *chumash* and translate it without external translation.
- II. Jewish holidays: explain their meaning. Know what text is read then and why.
- III. Know how to create some engaging activity for different age groups on *chagim*.
- IV. Capacity to explain midrashim, how they work. What purpose do they have?
- V. To be able to explain the different historical periods of the Tanach.
- VI. To be fluent in liturgy: can explain the main structure of *tefilla*.
- VII. Name the different periods of *chazal* (zugot, tanaim, until ahronim) and give examples and explain the difference in approaches.
- VIII. Intermediate understanding of halacha, independently of practice or denomination, and being capable of explaining why different denominations understand/interpret/practice differently.
- IX. Music: some basic knowledge of Jewish *zmirot*.



G. An Inspirational Educational Figure/David Levin-Kruss

The educators who had the most significant impact on my life are not traditional classroom teachers but charismatic figures involved in outreach. These individuals were warm, insightful, and deeply attentive, and offered me a sense of clarity and direction at moments when I felt uncertain or vulnerable. Their ability to reflect my strengths and potential was profoundly empowering, and this kind of support was transformative for me.

Yet the very qualities that make such educators effective can also raise important questions. Outreach-oriented educators often possess strong convictions about the “right” path for their students. While they may present their guidance gently, the underlying assumption that they understand what is best for another person can border on prescriptive. For individuals like me who were already struggling to make decisions, such confidence can feel like a welcome anchor — but it can also mask dynamics of dependency.

Over time, certain concerns tend to emerge. I heard outreach educators acknowledge in passing that openness and acceptance can be rhetorical tools to bring learners closer to a predetermined outcome. Their primary educational aim is kiruv — moving people toward a specific religious identity or level of observance. This raises questions about whether such a goal should remain central in contemporary Jewish education and how it narrows the definition of “success.” Additionally, these educators may tailor their messages to different audiences, creating a gap between their private flexibility and their public rigidity.

Despite these issues, such figures remain important to study because their impact can indeed be positive, and because they challenge more liberal, facilitative educational models. They demonstrate that guidance, even directive guidance, can sometimes be valuable when used responsibly and transparently. The key question for educators today is how to balance the desire to support students with respect for their autonomy — offering insight and structure without imposing a predetermined path.

When I taught at Pardes and elsewhere there were students who unabashedly wanted to be pushed in a certain way and I felt comfortable doing this with care and aware of the problematics. Outreach models highlighted for me both the potential and the risks of being prescriptive. They serve as a reminder that firm guidance can be constructive

when delivered with attention, self-awareness, and an honest acknowledgment of its limits. The task is not to reject such approaches outright, but to integrate them thoughtfully while remaining vigilant about the ethical complexities inherent in kiruv-oriented relationships.

An additional challenge is whether all Jewish education is kiruv in some way. We may say that we are open-ended and accepting of all outcomes. But if our efforts led to a mass exodus from Judaism and Jewishness, it would give many of us pause.



H. Qualities of a teacher/ Alex Sinclair

Jewish Role Modeling:

Not every teacher needs to be a charismatic, magnetic leader. But every teacher *should* in some way be a compelling Jewish role model. Jewish educators should practice what they preach, and be seeking, thinking Jews who live vibrant, active Jewish lives themselves. They should be able to articulate the Jewish vision(s) that drive their educational work, and be able to translate that vision into multiple aspects of their educational practice. Their lives should embody a deep connection to the Jewish people across the world, and they should have a clear and visible desire to leverage Jewish life and learning in the service of making the Jewish people a light unto the nations and the world a better place.

Jewish Knowledge:

No-one knows everything. But a Jewish educator should be on the “slope of enlightenment” of the [Dunning-Kruger curve](#). In other words, they should know a lot, but be aware of how much more there is to know, and be on a continual journey of learning and growth to increase their knowledge. Each educator will have their own area of expertise, but all Jewish educators should have reasonable familiarity and facility in Tanakh (including both traditional and academic approaches), Mishnah, and Siddur. In addition to their Jewish knowledge, they should be thoughtful, well-rounded learners who role model not just Jewish learning, but a reflective and growth-oriented life in general.

Hebrew:

Every Jewish educator should be able to conduct at least a basic conversation in Hebrew. Period.

Educational Knowledge:

Jewish educators should have at least a “nodding acquaintance” with the core educational ideas and questions that concern all educators. They should not feel out of place at a metaphorical cocktail party of thoughtful educators from other disciplines.



Pedagogical Skills:

Jewish educators should understand that their job is not to fill learners with facts, but to create stimuli that motivate learners to seek knowledge and skills, and then to design pathways to guide learners in that search. They should know how to formulate and use compelling educational questions and big ideas as pedagogical frameworks that spark learners' motivation and meaning-making. They should be effective lesson or activity planners, paying attention to components, structure, pacing, and differentiation. They should be able to build curricular units of longer sets of lessons/activities towards broader, deeper and more complex educational outcomes. They should be able to apply different models of assessment, including formative and summative, for diverse contexts. And they should be able to do all of the above while keeping in mind the italicized first sentence.



The Good Jewish Educator – Common themes across personal essays

1. Lifelong Learning & Intellectual Curiosity

All essays emphasize that Jewish educators must **constantly learn** and **model a growth mindset**:

- Words: *“relentless dedication to study”, “on the slope of enlightenment”, “strive to be worldly, curious, and interesting”*
- Names: Hugo Bergman

Takeaway: Continuous study, intellectual humility, and curiosity are central to all visions.

2. Jewish Knowledge + Broader Worldview

Most authors stress the need for deep **Jewish literacy** balanced with exposure to **universal knowledge**:

- Words: Torah, Talmud, Jewish history, liturgy, and halacha

Takeaway: Jewish educators must combine deep textual knowledge with the ability to contextualize Judaism within broader intellectual and cultural frameworks.

3. Personal Connection & Relationship-Building

All essays place significant value on **strong educator–student relationships**:

- Words *“a place of refuge”, “relate personally to students”, “relevance”, “personal guidance during a vulnerable time”, “graciousness” and “fairness” before subject mastery”*

Takeaway: The emotional dimension of education — trust, empathy, personal connection — is consistently highlighted as transformative and dialogical.

4. Role Modeling & Embodied Values

Several essays stress that educators must **“live what they teach”**:

- Words: *“practice what they preach”, “authenticity”, “refined personalities” who integrate inner and outer lives and exemplify Torah-driven ethics”*



Takeaway: Beyond transmitting knowledge, Jewish educators must embody Jewish values and inspire by personal example.

5. Pedagogical Flexibility & Student-Centered Learning

The ideal educator adapts to learners' needs:

- Words: *"stimulating curiosity rather than filling students with facts", " to **differentiate instruction**, making material accessible without diluting depth", "setting the bar just high enough to reach", "dialogue in pedagogy"*

Takeaway: Great educators foster curiosity, critical thinking, and engagement rather than relying on frontal teaching alone.

6. Jewish Peoplehood & Identity Formation

Many essays link Jewish education to strengthening identity and community:

- Words: *"Jewish thought's role in shaping society and engaging with universal ethics", "connecting international learners with Israel to strengthen Jewish peoplehood, "a people's narrative" and connecting students to Am Yisrael and Jewish history", "pluralism and empathy for Jews on the margins, advocating inclusivity"*

Takeaway: Jewish education is framed not only as intellectual but as deeply connected to collective memory, values, and belonging.

I. Insights and Synthesis

Shared Vision

- The **ideal Jewish educator** blends **deep Jewish literacy, personal authenticity, and relational empathy.**
- They foster **curiosity** and **critical thinking**, while connecting students to Jewish peoplehood and values.
- Teaching is seen as a **lifelong partnership** between teacher and learner.



Themes of Debate

1. **Knowledge vs. Relationships**
2. **Halachic vs. Pluralistic Orientation**
3. **Directive (charisma) vs. Facilitative Pedagogy**
4. **The place and level of Hebrew proficiency in Jewish education**
5. **Israel education- definition, goal, how?**
6. **The meaning of the educator as a "Role Model" and its implications**

5. Conclusions:

The thoughtful essays written by the committee members are to be valued each with their unique insights, while the collective conclusions and divergences are greatly informative. It is important to note that some of these differences did not come out in the essay as strongly as they did in the conversation the committee had after the essays were sent to all the members for reflection.

The challenge that lies ahead of us is how to weave these conclusions/divergencies into operatives for training educators.

The commonalities (and there are many!) mandate a carefully architected curriculum optimally experienced in a shared space and time, orchestrating a common European Jewish identity. No less important are the differences: here too what is necessary is to orchestrate a consortium of institutions that can provide for divergent ideological and regional orientations.

A resounding refrain sounding throughout the essays is the overwhelming need for inspirational educators. Ever conscious of that, how crucial the challenge that lies ahead and how reassuring that the educators who comprise this committee will be working together for excellent, inspiring European Jewish education.





Renaissance
JEWISH EDUCATION IN EUROPE