

Shelley T. Alexander <sup>1</sup>

David L. Brody <sup>2</sup>

Meir Muller <sup>3</sup>

Haggith Gor Ziv <sup>4</sup>

Sigal Achituv <sup>5</sup>

Chaya R. Gorsetman <sup>6</sup>

Janet Harris <sup>7</sup>

Clodie Tal <sup>8</sup>

Roberta Goodman <sup>9</sup>

Deborah Schein <sup>10</sup>

Ilene Vogelstein <sup>11</sup>

Lyndall Miller <sup>12</sup>

# Voices of American and Israeli Early Childhood Educators on Inclusion

---

<sup>1</sup> Gratz College, Philadelphia, USA and Center for Jewish Education at the University of Haifa, Haifa, ISRAEL  
e-mail: shelleytalexander@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Efrata College, Jerusalem, ISRAEL.  
e-mail: davidb55@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> University of South Carolina, Columbia, USA.  
e-mail: meirmuller@sc.rr.com

<sup>4</sup> Kibbutzim College of Education Technology and Art, Tel Aviv, ISRAEL.  
e-mail: haggithgor@gmail.com

<sup>5</sup> Oranim Academic College of Education, Kiryat Tiv'on, ISRAEL; Gordon Academic College of Education, Haifa, ISRAEL; Post Doc. Research Associate at Mofet Institute, Tel Aviv, ISRAEL.  
e-mail: sigalah1@gmail.com

<sup>6</sup> Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University, New York, USA.  
e-mail: cgorsetm@yu.edu

<sup>7</sup> Early Childhood Education Initiative, San Francisco Bay Area, USA  
e-mail: JanetH@sfjcf.org

<sup>8</sup> Levinsky College, Tel Aviv, ISRAEL  
e-mail: clodietal@gmail.com

<sup>9</sup> Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh JECEI Initiative, USA  
e-mail: robertag@nsci.org

<sup>10</sup> Champlain College, Burlington, USA  
e-mail: schein.deborah@gmail.com

<sup>11</sup> Beth El Early Childhood Center, Baltimore, USA  
e-mail: ivogelstein@gmail.com

<sup>12</sup> Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute, New York, USA  
e-mail: lymiller@jtsa.edu

### Abstract

*This study examines Israeli and American teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in early childhood and specifically explores the problems and opportunities concerning inclusion in the United States and Israel that arise in Jewish education. Through semi-structured interviews, four Israeli and three American educators participating in communities of practice were asked to look at themselves and the beliefs that inform their attitudes towards inclusion. The researchers created a qualitative rubric suitable to analyze the interviews from participants. Results indicate that a majority of the teachers voiced support for inclusion of children with special needs but felt tension in implementing an inclusive classroom due to multiple variables. The most challenging issues for the teachers involve lack of efficacy, lack of support, balancing needs of all stakeholders, and family cooperation. The article concludes with recommendations to leaders and policy makers about the needs of teachers to more effectively achieve high quality inclusive classrooms.*

*Keywords: Inclusion, early childhood, Israeli and American educators, teacher attitudes, collaborative research.*

### Introduction

Including children with disabilities in a preschool or kindergarten class is a challenge, which some teachers welcome and others avoid. This study addresses the complexity of inclusion in early childhood education by framing the discourse within a socio-cultural perspective (Kelly, 2006) of Jewish education in Israel and the United States. An international research group of Jewish early childhood educators in both countries grappled with the issue of unpacking these complexities by establishing professional learning communities (Maloney & Konza, 2011) for teachers in their respective countries. These professional development endeavors supported teachers to explore dilemmas of practice related to inclusion within their educational context.

The research component of this project involved assessing the attitudes of a sample of teachers who joined a professional learning community. We called these teachers key participants because they represent a range of experiences and illustrative cases in the field. These participants revealed their inner struggle with inclusion of children with special needs and shed light on their own as well as their society's values related to the function of inclusion in religious early childhood education. This paper describes the professional development project, presents findings, and ends with recommendations to leaders and policy makers about the professional development needs of teachers to more effectively achieve inclusion in their classrooms.

### *Models of Inclusion*

Inclusion is a broad term that addresses the goal of all students being fully valued members of the school community, educated together with one another, for all or at least most of the school day. "Inclusion is not a set of strategies or a placement issue. Inclusion is about belonging to a community – a group of friends, school community, or a neighborhood" (Allen & Cowdery, 2005, p.4). Three approaches towards inclusion have been found in the literature: the charity, medical, and social models. Based on these models one can surmise that inclusion can be viewed on a continuum from a deficit perspective of the individual to focusing on an equitable community model. The charity

model posits a giver-recipient paradigm in which the included children are seen as objects of misfortune and are provided with services as an act of loving-kindness. Das and Shah (2014) noted this model in their historical analysis of social services in India in the 1940's, which were given by missionaries to disabled populations, such as the blind and deaf. The medical model views a disability as a defining deficiency, putting the onus on the person with a disability as the lone figure needing to conform to society's reality (Martin, 2013). The social model views a disability as neutral or even as a positive enriching attribute. All people are viewed as part of a community and the community needs to have equity on a societal level (Gill, Kewman & Brannon, 2003). Some scholars state that further refinement of the social model is in order because this model does not fully recognize the personal experience of living with a disability (Reeve, 2004; Lang, 2007).

Judaism's stance on inclusion is multifaceted. While some traditions exempt individuals with disabilities from certain religious obligations, others strongly support inclusion and mirror the social model recognizing the value of each individual's place in society. Jewish sources abound with ideas, guidelines and laws concerning the way to accept the "other" as part of the community. Beginning with the Biblical verse "Veahavta lereacha kamocho" (You should love your neighbor as yourself) (Leviticus 19:18), Judaism teaches that one must take care of the orphan and the widow and love the stranger. The sages extrapolate this to mean that all members of the community who have a disadvantage must be included in the community. The openness toward the "other" is the expression of "engage the other" which Levinas (1972) wrote about, viewing this as the ethical basis of Torah and Judaism. Buber (1970) referred to subjective relations with the other and called these "I-Thou" relations because they entail accepting the other as is, with no objective other than pure encounter.

#### *Teacher Attitudes towards Inclusion*

Research has shown that in all models of inclusion, teachers' attitudes are key components to the success of inclusive education (Engelbrecht, 2013; Beacham and Rouse, 2012; Hernandez, 2013; Sze, 2009). Studies, such as Cassady (2011), Jordan and Stanovich (2004) and Jordan, Schwartz and McGhie-Richmond (2009), report that teacher attitudes towards inclusion can dramatically affect their performance and the success of children with disabilities in the classroom. Supporting this finding, Soodak, Podell, and Lehman (1998) claim that teachers who favored inclusion were found to exhibit more effective instruction than their peers who disapprove. One might assume that these positive student and teacher outcomes correlate with positive teacher attitudes. However, research shows a more complex picture.

According to Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000), teachers and teacher candidates tend to look favorably on the concept of inclusion. Yet, de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011) report that although teachers often endorse the idea of inclusion, they tend to reject implementation in their own settings. These attitudes were found to vary according to the type of disability.

Factors affecting teacher attitudes towards inclusion include support services, adequate resources, administrator support, type of disability, and appropriate training. Moreover, Frankel, Hutchinson, Burbidge and Minnes (2014) concluded that teacher training must address their lack of efficacy in inclusive settings due to challenges. These tensions include behavior disturbances, curriculum adaptations, and differences of opinion of staff on how to meet children's needs.

Teacher training and experience with inclusion seems to be the most common factor discussed by teachers. Indeed, research by Forlin (2010) and Irwin, Lero and Brophy (2004) found that teacher preparedness was a key determinant in early childhood educators' attitude and success in inclusive settings. Moreover, Forlin, Sharma, and Loreman (2007) report that training in special or inclusive education was an important influence on educators' attitudes. In their study of 1155 Israeli teachers, Romi and Leyser (2006) found that a more positive view towards inclusion and reduced concern about behavioral disturbances were related to direct experience.

Growing out of this confusing portrait of teacher attitudes towards inclusion, a group of Israeli and American early childhood researchers were interested in exploring whether the religious educational setting had distinctive characteristics relating to inclusion as viewed by educators in the field. Were the attitudes and the beliefs of these educators similar to those reported in the literature or were there additional challenges, tensions, prospects, advantages, and disadvantages specific to their context in the United States and Israel? In an endeavor to address this question, the researchers interviewed teachers from four professional learning communities to explore critical issues related to inclusion. This professional development project was accompanied by research that tapped the teacher's attitudes and beliefs about inclusion with the intention of furthering our knowledge about these attitudes.

### Research Methodology

This study seeks to understand the attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion among religious early childhood educators from a variety of contexts in Israel and the United States. Furthermore, we aim to understand how they view the problems and opportunities of inclusion that arise in their educational settings. The methodological approaches were specifically selected to address the international research.

#### *Context for the Study*

Through the context of professional learning communities, early childhood educators were asked to look at their own skills and teaching styles as well as the beliefs that inform their practice. The professional learning communities that were established for exploring issues of inclusion provided the opportunity to focus on the topic of inclusion and delve into various issues relevant to its implementation. In addition, it offered a collegial and supportive environment where fears and concerns about working with children with special needs in the early childhood classroom could be openly explored.

These groups met for a minimum of four sessions using Jewish and universal resource material. One central issue raised in these professional learning communities focused on how ethical and human rights concerns come to play in the implementation of inclusion. Another issue concerned increasing disability awareness among constituents and garnering inclusive educational skills and resources.

Four professional learning communities were involved in this study, one in the United States and three in Israel. The American professional learning community and one of the Israeli secular groups were established solely for the purpose of this study, whereas the two other Israeli communities, one secular and one religious, were independently initiated and run by the Ministry of Education. The American community's content grew organically during the course of the sessions, while the Israeli groups used a curriculum set in advance.

### *Participants and Procedure*

The participants in this qualitative study included three American and four Israeli early childhood educators who engaged in the communities of learning on the topic of inclusion. While recognizing that this study has a small sample size, the seven participants were key informants carefully selected to represent a range of experiences and illustrative cases in the field, thereby justifying the small number of participants. Furthermore, the number of informants aligns with the nature of qualitative research which postulates that an in depth approach yields insights of key informants and this, in turn, helps define issues and questions for further investigation using larger samples or data bases. The cross cultural nature of the project was significant in an attempt to assess how the religious component of the early childhood classroom setting offers commonalities across national cultures with regard to inclusion.

Therefore, key informants were selected to represent different sectorial elements of Jewish society in both countries. The American and Israeli informants worked in preschool classrooms serving children ages three to six in full day programs. The American informants were affiliated with private religious preschools in the state of California, representing various denominational streams prevalent throughout the United States. The schools' goals include meeting the state's early learning standards along with providing experiences for children to construct knowledge and emotional connections to Judaism. The key informants filled either a teacher or administrative role.

The Israeli informants were all teachers from either religious or secular state schools whose goals conformed to national standards as well as the sectorial aims of their particular institutional orientation. Both the religious and secular educational sectors base their programs on fundamental Jewish values, such as biblical heroes, loving kindness, and holidays. The Israeli preschool organization differs from the American context in that Israeli classrooms are located in isolated buildings in neighborhoods and independent of larger educational institutions, whereas the American classrooms are part of a communal institution, such as a synagogue, community center or religious day

school.

Two interviews were conducted with each informant either in person or by telephone in a semi-structured format. Piaget (1952) created the semi-clinical interview as an alternative to standardized methods of assessment. He felt that standardized methods precluded follow-up questions and inhibited exploration. A growing body of literature has reported that telephone conversations are a viable medium for semi-clinical interviews (Drabble, Trocki, Salcedo, Walker & Korcha, 2015; Cachia & Millward, 2011; Stephens, 2007; Lechuga, 2012).

This allowed for two separate occasions in which to gather information from the interviewees at a time when they were focused or actively engaged with the topic at hand in the professional learning communities. The use of a semi-structured interview methodology was deemed preferable to allow for gathering comparable data from key informants, yet permitting them to define the content of the interview in some measure (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The protocol of the first semi-structured interview established prevailing attitudes and beliefs about inclusion of the key informants. The major factors that support and inhibit implementation of inclusion were illuminated through this interview, which focused on the challenges and practical issues in the current educational setting as well as future possibilities. The second interview provided an opportunity to revisit and elaborate on some of the comments made in the first interview as well as to delve further into the subjects' thinking on relevant issues brought up in professional learning communities. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix 1.

#### *Method of Analysis*

A collaborative process among the researchers involved formulating the interview and analysis protocols, collecting and analyzing the data, and writing the report. The particular professional skills, cultural sensitivities, and perspectives of the researchers enhanced this process. The group established systematic procedures for handling the data in order to insure the reliability and validity of the findings. The research took place in the context of a community of practice comprised of early childhood researchers and practitioners from the United States and Israel. The research group had been meeting for two years prior to the formulation of the current study. It brought together for the first time an international group of academics and senior professionals dedicated to promoting research in Jewish early childhood education as a legitimate field of inquiry, thus seeking to raise the quality of education in their domain of practice.

The methodological model for this collaborative research and the processing of data is similar to that which was used by Bellah, Bellah, Tipton, Sullivan, Madsen, Swidler and Tipton (2007). This group created a shared background to the research question by reading about and discussing relevant issues. They then generated a common interpretive framework through intensive review of the early interviews in order to plan the subsequent interview protocol. Furthermore, to facilitate writing up their findings,

Bellah and his colleagues discussed the overall organization of the book and content of chapters. Although each chapter was drafted individually, each was subjected to a rigorous dialogue and rewriting based on these group discussions; one person was responsible for the final rewrite of the book so that unity of style and argument could be achieved.

Our research group went beyond the methodology used by Bellah et al. (2007) by paying careful attention to insuring the reliability and validity of our findings. In order to address reliability issues and reduce inter-subjectivity, each interview protocol was assigned to a pair of researchers from the group, whose task was to identify themes in the data. This was achieved by independent coding by each team member, followed by comparison and alignment in order to achieve agreement between the researchers. This process was shared with the entire group, which collectively reviewed the analyses of each pair of researchers. Thus, overall themes were generated for the entire data base.

The second stage of the analysis involved plotting the data from each interview according to these themes. This was also carried out in pairs, once again with each team member working independently followed by alignment. The third stage involved assigning each theme to a pair of researchers who culled relevant data for their theme from the plotted data base. This pair then wrote a section of the findings focusing on their particular theme. The final stage involved combing the various segments into one coherent piece. The entire findings section was presented to the group as a whole for critique and revision through a group collaborative discourse. This process enhanced the trustworthiness of the final product by taking into account multiple perspectives on the same data base.

## Findings

The interview protocols revealed a rich body of data concerning teacher attitudes, feelings, perceptions, and philosophy towards inclusion. Through this data several themes emerge: tension between ideal and reality, lack of confidence to carry out the task, need for support, limitations/boundaries on inclusion, the conflicting needs of the child with disabilities versus the needs of the group, and the need for cooperation with parents as a requisite for inclusion. Philosophical orientations towards inclusion were inferred from the data, and showed that the teachers framed inclusion using different paradigms, such as a cost-benefit analysis. Jewish values seemed related to inclusion though were not clearly articulated.

### *Teacher Attitudes towards Inclusion*

Two teachers from both Israel and America revealed positive attitudes towards inclusion but these messages were laced with reservations. One indicated that every child should be included while the rest applied criteria for inclusion of children with disabilities. Those who indicated the need to apply such criteria justified their idea by stating that they need to consider “the child’s best interest.” Tension between ideal and reality permeated the interviews. This clash of values is illustrated by the following statement

International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE), 2016, 8(1), 16 – 38.

DOI: 10.20489/intjecse.239574

from an American teacher: “Even if we see God in children that we can't serve, we have to work with that and struggle with that because we can't serve everybody and yet we see the beauty of what that person can bring to the world.” This statement represents ambiguity over wanting to include all children while at the same time taking into account: “Talking theoretically is one thing and doing is another.”

The teachers in both countries noted challenges that emerge from the inclusion experience. They claim that teachers' attitudes are a crucial factor for success of the inclusion enterprise. Fears and feelings of insecurity on the part of the teacher impede progress towards successful inclusion. One Israeli teacher expressed these feeling as: “At the beginning I was so afraid. What am I going to do with this? Is it okay that he is in my class?” In addition, fixations from their own past can negatively influence the teachers' readiness to accept the challenge. For example, another Israeli teacher stated: “Unfinished businesses can get in the way.” However, teachers reported that they believe in any teacher's ability to accept children experiencing difficulties. One offered the following advice: “Not to be afraid of it, (but) to find ways to reach every child.”

Some Israeli educators spoke of the importance of loving the child and realizing that inclusion is most effective when focusing on the child's strengths. Furthermore, the inclusion paradigm provides a role model of how all children should be treated. The idea of modeling found expression in the following teacher's statement:

Autistic children tend to have social issues so if the aide is helping others, it is probably a healthy way to socially model for the autistic child. It is also a way to get the child more included in whatever it is that's going on.

Most teachers referred to children with disabilities as “having difficulties.” One Israeli teacher over-generalized about children who do not fit the mold: “In my class I don't have a child with disabilities but (I do have) a child with some motoric difficulties (and another with) a certain cognitive difficulty.” Another generalization was evident from an American teacher: “Kids with behavior challenges feel like a black hole.” Only one teacher in this study spoke about children with disabilities by relating to the whole child with strengths and weaknesses like all other children; even so, she saw the disability itself as negative, unaware that the disability itself could serve as a positive factor in the child's identity. Evidence for this tacit attitude is found in this teacher stressing how the child needed to overcome the disability rather than use his disability to build new strengths. This Israeli teacher portrayed a human rights point of view, claiming that every child has the privilege to be included in all aspects of society: “These children aren't bad, rather they are different.”

#### *Who Should Be Included?*

Teachers used “fitting in” as a standard for selecting children who should be included. In their view, inclusion benefits classmates who learn tolerance for others as well as serving the child with disabilities. One participant reported that the other children in the class “treat (the included child) in a helpful way like older siblings to a younger sibling.”

Another interviewee added, "Some of (the host children) will take on more of a teacher role." Yet another teacher empowered the included child through his love for animals. She claimed that the other children were able to recognize this disposition and "respected him for what he is not."

When discussing the reaction of other children, Israeli and American educators note that children were generally kind and liked to help a child with special needs. Some Israeli educators attributed this show of kindness to teacher and parent modeling. One American teacher mentioned particular success when the disabled child and her classmates knew each other prior to meeting in the classroom. This discourse maintains the otherness of children with disabilities, viewing inclusion as an act of kindness and charity, drawing a distinction between what they consider the "host group" and the "included child."

Many were concerned that inclusion may take place at the expense of the classmates' well-being. According to what they say, the teachers seem to have developed a tacit definition of who is appropriate for inclusion: the child who will not disturb the positive learning environment of the class and certainly not harm other children in the group. One American teacher spoke about this indirectly: "I think that it is an adjustment in terms of trying to figure out how they are going to balance his needs and the needs of the rest of the class."

Some teachers negatively labeled the special needs child as violent and displaying behavioral difficulties and they expressed fear that such children would disrupt the group. An Israeli educator expressed her frustration about this situation with the following episode about a child with disabilities: "He really enjoyed music and he had wanted to listen to a CD and he went over to get my attention and he tapped, tapped, tapped on my leg. I simply didn't respond, but thought to myself - 'I don't know what to do with this.'" Such disruptive behavior was seen by many as a criterion for exclusion. Both groups of teachers conflated disabilities with disruptive and harmful behavior, as one American teacher stated, "This child needs to go to a special education class because his interruptions are disruptive."

The teachers addressed in a variety of ways the question of who should be included. A unique approach voiced by one Israeli educator indicated that in almost all cases every child should be included in the school community. She explained her positive view: "Inclusion of people with a disability is taken for granted; it is a way of life that is not questioned." One teacher suggested that children need to be able to express verbally one's needs to be included. Furthermore, they proposed that appropriate limits need to be determined, with some suggesting that inclusion begin at age two and others recommended age four.

In an indirect manner, the teachers indicated that their own professional comfort level plays an important role in determining who should be included. It seems that teachers were aware of their own limitations of their ability to cope with the included child. This

concern seems to result in their defining the “ideal” child for inclusion as one who can express herself (being articulate) and one who does not harm other children.

Because they operate within the private sector, the American educators related to the possibility of moving a child to public school that provides appropriate services for children with disabilities. Israeli preschool and kindergarten teachers work in a public system that has legal obligation to provide education for all children across the spectrum of physical, emotional, and mental abilities. Many children with distinct disabilities are placed in special education programs. Teachers in both countries were found to rely on previous arrangements for deciding how to best deal with children with disabilities. In the United States, they stated that such children were routinely referred to the public schools, while in Israel they reported placements in special education classes.

### *Teachers’ Professional Self-Image in the Context of Inclusion*

Many teachers emphasized their lack of skills and confidence to work with children with disabilities. One American teacher explained: “We are more of an emergent inclusion program. We need to have teachers who are better trained in dealing with (the disabled child’s) needs. I am not trained in dealing with these needs. I don’t know what to do for her sometimes.” This explanation reveals constructing an attitude that such children’s needs are different than those of the children with whom they are familiar. They feel that they do not know enough in order to adequately meet the needs of children with disabilities in their classroom: “We need to learn what to do, need to learn more about special education.” The teachers tended to undervalue their knowledge and skills of how to teach these children and this lack of self-confidence prevented them from feeling comfortable with inclusion in their own classrooms.

This understanding of their own limitations is related to the teachers’ limited formal training as well as their understanding of the actual demands of inclusion as experienced in their classrooms. The training in the professional learning community framework in which the teachers participated for this research included very few sessions, as one teacher noted: “four sessions were not enough.” The overall feeling was that more professional development for the teachers would benefit the children. Some of the American teachers were aware that staff development would require additional financial resources. In some ways the teachers revealed ambiguity as they spoke positively about inclusion, but expressed doubts about their ability to realize this ideal. It must be remembered that these teachers are being asked to meet a challenge for which they are not prepared. As such, their attitudes might be viewed as resulting from societal norms as well as their own genuine struggle to cope with a difficult situation.

### *Teacher’s Need for Support*

The teachers expressed a pressing need for support that includes institutional backing. The placement of a child with a disability in a regular classroom is only one step towards successful inclusion. There is a need for a much wider cooperative effort that must be achieved through joint activities by different professionals in the school and even beyond. While such institutional support needs to appear at the beginning of the

process, the teachers also indicated a need for ongoing support throughout the year:

I mean... I think that each school needs somebody that's specifically trained in those areas: occupational therapists, speech therapists, developmental pediatricians, and special education specialists and (we need) someone who creates relationships with those specialists. These experts give recommendations. Then we need the money and the supplies to implement their recommendations.

One teacher contrasted her school with another that adequately supports the staff for the inclusion project, pointing out the inadequacies of her own program:

There's a school in San Francisco that takes a lot of special needs children. All the teachers are trained and supported, and then there's a place like ours where we take more and more special needs children and nobody knows how to deal with it. Really, we work from our hearts. We do the best we can but I think that everybody can be better served with better understanding and knowledge.

Other kinds of support are also called for:

I think that we need to be supported in a way that a teacher with an ordinary class wouldn't be. We need emotional support. Someone should throw me a massage my way once in a while and I'll be really happy.

This teacher seems to be asking for someone to offer her positive verbal reinforcement from time to time.

#### *Defining Ideal Conditions for Successful Inclusion*

American and Israeli educators had different ideas about setting up ideal conditions for inclusion. For the Americans, this meant additional staff for coping adequately with the challenges of inclusion. For Israeli educators, ideal conditions meant reducing the number of children from the norm of 35. Regarding ongoing support, both groups cited their need for professional guidance with regular meetings throughout the year.

The teachers also saw the value of administrative support through communication with families and devising plans that include voices of all stakeholders. In looking at the big picture, American educators felt that the wider community needs to make more significant efforts to include children with disabilities. This emphasis on seeking wider institutional support can be viewed in two different manners which are not mutually exclusive. The first view is that the teachers are genuinely concerned about the success of the endeavor, and thus seek wider support for inclusion initiatives. The second view is that they are shifting responsibility for inclusion from themselves to institutional authorities.

Both groups of teachers tended to shift responsibility for inclusion in this manner. The shifting responsibility paradigm was found among some American teachers in their

claim that there is inadequate funding for programs and training. Israeli teachers shifted responsibility for deciding who should be included from themselves to authorities, such as the state school system and the supervisors and experts who have authority in matters of providing services for children with disabilities.

The success of inclusion was seen by the educators in both societies as being highly influenced by the process of decision making which takes into account the needs of the child, the family, and the school. Though a teacher may be committed to the idea of inclusion, often times there is a lack of confidence to make necessary decisions without the backing of "expert" advice. A feeling of satisfaction or relief was expressed by many of the educators that the school makes decisions for them on issues concerning inclusion. An Israeli educator expressed her deference to a higher authority:

Fortunately, I have a supervisor who is the practical decision-making authority, and I trust her knowledge. I have faith that together we find the most suitable solution for all sides. This is not my kindergarten. I am an employee of the Ministry of Education and I am able to state my opinion but I am not able to make decisions and implement them.

#### *Family-Teacher Cooperation*

Relationships and communication with the parents are of great concern to the teachers who believe that cooperation is a necessary condition for inclusion to be effective. According to some, success for all children seems attainable when parents and educators have shared goals built upon open dialogue. One United States educator stated that there needs to be a "willingness . . . on everyone's part . . . including the parents to really figure it out."

These ideals about parental cooperation go hand in hand with a paradigm of the ideal parent of a child with a disability. Such parents would have financial and personal resources to invest in their child and would be unquestionably supportive of the school program. Parents who fall short of this ideal are targets of teacher criticism. Some teachers from both countries expressed a critical attitude towards parents. For example, some American educators thought that many parents are looking for a "quick fix." A few Israeli educators reported that some parents want their children to be strong and capable and, therefore, do not desire "an array of special privileges." The use of the term "privileges" in this statement reveals a stance towards accessibility in inclusion as an extra benefit rather than a right.

Continuing their general critical view of parental attitudes, teachers in both countries suggested that many parents exhibit denial towards their child's disability. One Israeli educator spoke about "working with parents of the child with disabilities and the other parents as well to help them understand that the child with disabilities is a child just like any other." The teachers expressed ambivalence in terms of how they view the child when speaking with parents. On the one hand, they would like to consider the children with disabilities as similar to others; on the other hand, they feel compelled to speak

with the parents about the particular needs of this child.

Some teachers perceived parents of the children with disabilities as not providing adequate support for the inclusion endeavor. This judgmental attitude leads to a lack of empathy on the part of the teachers towards these parents. The negative feeling about lack of parent support and lack of empathy toward parents may undermine the teachers' ability to successfully engage in inclusion. Negative feelings towards the parents might influence how they view the child.

### *Teachers' Worldviews about Inclusion*

The teachers' philosophy behind inclusion is a major factor in how educators perceive the entire endeavor. Three major thematic perceptions emerged from the findings, revealing the teachers' worldview about integrating children with disabilities into their classroom. We call these feelings "foundational perceptions" because they serve as a basis for the constellation of attitudes and judgments that the teachers express throughout the interviews.

The first foundational perception characterizes a positive view of the advantages of inclusion. The Israeli and the American interviewees attributed similar benefits to inclusion. Three benefits emerged from the analysis. Firstly, children with disabilities who participated in inclusion classrooms seemed to develop a sense of self-confidence which was beneficial to them at this age as well as preparing them for integrating into the society as the children get older. Secondly, the children without diagnosed disabilities became more sensitive to and learned to accept children different from themselves as a result of being a part of an inclusive classroom. Thirdly, the teachers indicated they themselves became better people and better teachers by overcoming initial resistance and difficulties raised by dealing with children with disabilities. In addition to the benefits mentioned by the two groups of teachers, there was a sense that inclusion classrooms engender a sense of positive support from the larger community, thus conveying the value of inclusion as part of the communal ethos.

The second foundational perception found among the teachers extends the benefits discourse mentioned above to looking at the deficits as well. Both groups discussed balancing the needs of the one child with those of the class. This discourse presumes that limited resources, be they emotional or otherwise, need to be divided between the child with disabilities and the "host" children. Furthermore, this outlook assumes that the child with disabilities requires more human resources than the other children; therefore, the dichotomy is created in order to weigh these different needs. There is a feeling that if additional resources are not forthcoming, then the well-being of the other children will be compromised. One teacher expressed this notion:

The child with disabilities wreaked havoc on the class because this child was taking away a teacher consistently every day to be with him and the rest of the class really got shorted and then the teachers didn't feel supported.

The third foundational perception views inclusion in terms of benefits and deficits for the individual rather than engaging in a discourse of community responsibility and societal obligation for each member of the community. This focus on the individual finds expression in talk about the needs of the child with disabilities per se as well as the needs of the other children also as individuals. This discourse lacks a view of the collective needs of the society. The narrow focus on the individual reveals an attitude that the ultimate criteria for inclusion rests on weighing costs and benefits for the individual rather than realizing a vision of what is good for society as a whole. Inclusion is viewed as a deficit rather than an opportunity, and responsibility is shifted to authorities who need to classify children regarding their ability to function in a regular classroom. Furthermore, the burden of providing resources both financial and professional is placed in the hands of hierarchies rather than seeing one's own classroom as a critical element in a community network in which lies the ultimate responsibility for the wellbeing of all the children.

#### *Inclusion and Religious Values*

When asked about the connection between inclusion and Judaism, teachers from both countries endorsed the connection without reasoned explanation. One Israeli teacher generalized: "Judaism is inclusion" without further discussion. Another Israeli teacher related to inclusion as charity by expressing the idea that in Judaism inclusion deals with help and consideration of others. She continued by stating that *Torah* (Jewish Bible) stories relate to both inclusion and rejection; however, she did not provide evidence for this conclusion. Like the previous examples, she also generalized that a major religious value is to educate children on inclusion: "The Torah stories we tell the children deal with inclusion and also with rejection. All Judaism is built on inclusion." The charity model was also expressed by an American teacher who distinguished between the host group and the included child.

Another strategy of the teachers to relate inclusion to Judaism was to enlist culturally-loaded phrases expressing positive values, without explaining the connection between these ideas and the essential meaning of inclusion. They used such terms as "*b'tzelem Elohim*," "*derech erez*," and "*chanoch l'naar al pi darco*" [in God's image, proper well-mannered behavior, and educate the child according to his needs]. One more strategy for connecting Judaism to inclusion was to indicate that they are already engaging in inclusion in their classrooms, as all the children regardless of their disabilities perform mitzvot [good deeds] and rituals on a daily basis, thus living out inclusion in a natural way. In a different light, Israeli educators emphasized their understanding of inclusion by connecting it to daily life while American educators connected it to the religious community and its communal values. An Israeli educator summed up this notion: "It's hard for me to separate between religion and inclusion; these are my values. I'm sure it comes from my religious beliefs. I'm sure this is the real attitude of Judaism." An American teacher related to this issue from her own perspective:

I guess it's something that is really rooted in Jewish values, because our community is religious and I feel this is one of the values we live on. There was no lesson or sermon

on this, we simply live by them.

## Discussion

One of the outstanding themes, which the educators expressed in the interviews, was the need for more training and support in order to handle the daily challenges of inclusion in their classrooms. Despite a positive disposition towards the idea of inclusion, the feeling of the lack of adequate skills and knowledge to do the job sets up the situation for the teacher to feel stressed and challenged as well as potentially setting in motion a number of negative dynamics working against the prospect for successful inclusion. Therefore, it is essential to look at how early childhood teachers are being trained and the content of their professional development programs in order to place an emphasis on addressing a number of issues concerning what it means to include children with special needs.

Frankel, Gold and Ajodhia-Andrews (2010) suggest both coursework and practicum experiences which would expose all early childhood pre-service teachers to a spectrum of disabilities. Through these experiences inclusion can become the norm in the classroom. Forlin (2010) claimed that the concept of inclusion must be integrated in all aspects of teacher training. Buysse and Hollingsworth (2009) take this one step further by suggesting that all early childhood training programs adopt inclusion education as a standard in the curriculum. Kozleski and Waitoller (2010), offer an example of a training program dealing with cultural, political and cognitive aspects of inclusion.

One of the topics that arose time and again in the interviews related to the role of the teacher and balancing the needs of children with disabilities against the "host" children. This seems to indicate that the teachers often view their mandate to be caring for the wellbeing of all the children in their class. The reality of caring for the child with disabilities is perceived as potentially demanding beyond the capabilities of the teacher and the staff.

Children with disabilities seem to challenge the teacher, who may fear that this child has requirements over and above the expected routine. This feeling of the teacher's lack of skills might further stigmatize the child with disabilities because it could indicate a disparity between the teacher's skills and the population of children with disabilities. This dynamic compounds the fear factor of not knowing how to deal competently with a specific child. Moreover, the teacher's frustration may be sensed by the other children in the class, further separating the child with disabilities from peers. These feelings of inadequacy lead to calls for help and generate doubts about the appropriateness of inclusion for the particular child. These emotions and resulting reactions mirror closely those described in many of the studies of inclusion literature and so are not unique to a Jewish setting (Berry, 2010; Frankel, et al., 2014).

Our findings indicate that early childhood educators in religious settings are in no way exempt from the call for adding these components to in-service professional development within their community. This training can be carried out both at the

individual school level as well as in the wider religious community through local and national support networks. Such efforts have begun to take place in American national organizations such as the Union for Reform Judaism (Disabilities Inclusion Learning Center, n.d), United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (Inclusion of People with Disabilities, n.d.), and the Orthodox Union (Yachad NJCD See how many ways Inclusion can happen! n.d.). In addition, a number of agencies and organizations in the American Jewish community have been active in addressing the need for providing teaching materials on inclusion, such as Gateways, Matan, PJ Library, CJE Baltimore and MetroWest ABLE, and Jewish Learning Venture.

Another important issue that could be addressed through professional training concerns parent/teacher cooperation. As Odom, Buysse and Soukakou (2011) claim, the role of parents in the inclusion process highly influences its success. The buy-in on the part of all stakeholders impacts the process; however, cooperation with the family is crucial. The educators' critical need to learn how to work with parents strengthens the argument for enrichment or refocusing of professional training to include this aspect. Our findings reinforce the claim made by previous researchers (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Dunlap & Fox, 2011; Frankel et al., 2010) about the importance of early childhood educators to collaborate with families of children with disabilities. We suggest extending this work about the significance of inclusion to all school families as a means of achieving buy-in for the entire school community.

It is interesting to note that most of the challenges mentioned by the interviewees apply to the teachers' current coping with the inclusion, whereas the benefits of such a practice reveal both a short term and long term perspective. In our entire data set, we found only one instance of a long term perspective, expressed by the teacher who exhibited a human rights point of view in her claim that every child has the privilege to be included in all aspects of society. Another indication of a long term perspective is found in teachers' appraisal of inclusion as benefitting other children in their class. This dichotomy between the two perspectives suggests that in order to cope with the present challenges teachers need to acquire a vision of the benefits of inclusion for all the stakeholders: the child with disabilities, his/her family, peers, teachers, and community. Such a vision, which could be nurtured during professional training, is likely to be fueled by positive experiences with inclusion in the practical field (Hawkins, 2014).

Fostering this enriching orientation towards inclusiveness can lead to a discourse about financial concerns in implementation. In their interviews, our American key participants voiced strong criticism of inadequate funding for staff, resources, and training. The cost benefit discourse reflects a capitalistic economic paradigm for evaluating the feasibility of inclusion. While on the larger scale, it might be argued that inclusion costs less than separate education in actual expense (Odom, Hanson, Lieber, Marquart, Sandall, Wolery & Chambers, 2001), the teachers' and school administration's disposition to weigh the costs and benefits precludes a human rights approach. Such an orientation would set aside these considerations in favor of the overriding values and visions of a just society.

The context of religious education was seen as lending itself to a vision of inclusiveness with the numerous examples of how religious values reinforce such an approach. The expressions of viewing inclusion as a human right are embedded in Jewish values, thus reflecting the social model of inclusion which sees society as being responsible for all of its members (Novick & Glanz, 2011). Another tradition in Judaism is the emphasis on *tzedakah* which literally means *justice* but is often translated as charity. This view denotes the religious obligation to help those in need. While *tzedakah* represents a different value set than charity because of the imperative, it still stresses the difference between the status of the giver and the recipient.

Our data indicates that some of the teachers expressed a charity model of inclusion (Das & Shah, 2014), indicating their understanding of the obligation to include while at the same time marginalizing the children with disabilities by casting them into a stance of recipient of good deeds. The charity model is one of two approaches of the societal model of inclusion. Jewish tradition provides a grounding for two variant interpretations of the societal model, one being a treatment of marginalization through the lens of the charity model and the second being an equal treatment of disabled class members in an inclusive community that recognizes their value as contributing members.

The medical model views the included child as deficient and in need of rehabilitation or healing. This model aligns with the charity model in that both models distinguish between the status of the giver and the recipient, while the societal model puts both on equal status. The societal model presumes that resources should be allocated equitably between the child with disabilities and the children in the class without disabilities, while the medical and charity models require decision making based on priorities of who should benefit from those resources, assuming that the people without disabilities are in control. Both of these approaches were indicated in our findings.

The educators' generally positive orientation, however, was offset by the practical implications in the classroom. The prevailing challenge of balancing the needs of all children is especially acute in the American private Jewish setting where schools strive to attract families for which high academic standards are key, and teachers and schools are often evaluated on this basis. Inclusion, then, may be thought to compromise enrollment and allocation of school resources, and therefore, may be seen as problematic to the institution's survival. This perspective supports a charitable view of inclusion.

Although the religious early childhood classroom can be seen as embracing the values inherent in a positive view of inclusion and the larger community can be seen as supportive and responsible for such an approach, Jewish early childhood educators may feel caught between the medical and social models of inclusion. In the United States, these classrooms are situated in the context of the wider religious community and in Israel, it is part of a general society, thus, both serving to reflect and encourage a just worldview with responsibility for all. The social model of inclusion is relevant to this discourse as it suggests that society defines disabilities according to its values, thus marginalizing or including individuals with physical or mental limitation (Holler, 2014).

However, the medical model's emphasis on the individual onus to integrate also seemingly influences the culture and workings of the contemporary religious classroom.

Although our research is embedded in religious education, it focuses on issues beyond this setting. It would be profitable in the future to research the boundaries of teacher definitions regarding children with disabilities. In Israel these children are formally defined by a "placement committee," which decides whether a child will be integrated into a regular class or in a school for children with special needs. The teachers have an important role in this process, as they recommend which children will undergo this selection process. Our findings are a beginning to sketching out teachers' conceptual frameworks related to salient issues on inclusion of children with disabilities in the preschool classroom.

Likewise in the United States, teachers also weigh into the decision process of whom can be accommodated in their individual school in the private setting and under what conditions. The decision to accept a specific child is made in private interviews by teachers and directors and is not bound by state regulations as in the case of the Israeli educators. In America, the decision is made on the basis of what is best for the individual school and the children, and does not have the advantage of the backup of an entire system and its resources as in the Israeli context.

A second valuable line of further research could be an investigation of teacher's views that they become a better teacher when they engage in inclusion. An examination of this and other components of the teacher involvement and experience in regards to inclusion could contribute to the literature on inclusion. Such understanding is critical both for training and ongoing professional development and support for the teachers.

The present study was conducted by a community of researchers within a particular socio-cultural context, Jewish early childhood education in the United States and Israel. Underlying this endeavor was a deep commitment to learn about teacher attitudes towards inclusion within their communities by developing a conceptual framework for understanding these attitudes and their underlying values. This project also explored the possibilities of collaborative research across two countries by researchers and practitioners from a broad range of perspectives and united by their identification with Jewish early childhood education.

While our study relates to a particular international religious context, our findings may be relevant to other religious settings within the world of early childhood education. Thus, our research brings into focus the question of inclusion in early childhood classrooms from a religious perspective. By revealing the various approaches among the teachers and directors, the researchers have taken a first step towards improving conditions for children with disabilities. As such, this study suggests a model for research practitioners to address the critical issues of inclusion as they affect their own communities, using the tools of collaborative research to improve education for all children within their own socio-cultural contexts.

## References

- Allen, E. K., & Cowdery, G. E. (2005). *The exceptional child: inclusion in early childhood education* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Avramidis, E., Bayliss, P., & Burden, R. (2000). A survey into mainstream teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the ordinary school in one local education authority. *Educational Psychology*, 20(2), 191-211.
- Beacham, N., & Rouse, M. (2012). Student teachers' attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and inclusive practice. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 12(1), 3-11.
- Bellah, E. R. N., Bellah, R. N., Tipton, S. M., Sullivan, W. M., Madsen, R., Swidler, A., ... & Tipton, S. M. (2007). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. Univ of California Press.
- Berry, R. A. (2010). Preservice and early career teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, instructional accommodations, and fairness: Three profiles. *The Teacher Educator*, 45(2), 75-95.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Research for education. An introduction to theories and methods*. New York: Pearson.
- Buber, M. (1970). *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Buyse, V. & Hollingsworth, H. L. (2009). Program quality and early childhood inclusion recommendations for professional development. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 29(2), 119-128.
- Cachia, M. & Millward, L. (2011). The telephone medium and semi-structured interviews: A complementary fit. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 6(3), 265-277.
- Cassady, J. M. (2011). Teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with autism and emotional behavioral disorder. *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, 2(7), 5.
- Drabble, L., Trocki, K., Salcedo, B., Walker, P., & Korcha, R. (2015). Conducting qualitative interviews by telephone: Lessons learned from a study of alcohol use among sexual minority and heterosexual women. *Qualitative Social Work*.
- Das, A., & Shah, R. (2014). Special Education Today in India. *Special Education International Perspectives: Practices Across the Globe (Advances in Special Education, Volume 28)* Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 28, 561-581.
- de Boer, A., Pijl, S. J., & Minnaert, A. (2011). Regular primary schoolteachers' attitudes towards inclusive education: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(3), 331-353.
- Disabilities Inclusion Learning Center. (n.d.). Retrieved February 23, 2015, from <http://disabilitiesinclusion.org>.
- Dunlap, G. & Fox, L. (2011). Function-based interventions for children with challenging behavior. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 33(4), 333-343.

- Engelbrecht, P. (2013). Teacher education for inclusion, international perspectives. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 28(2), 115-118.
- Forlin, C. (2010). Teacher education reform for enhancing teachers' preparedness for inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(7), 649-653.
- Forlin, C., Sharma, U., & Loreman, T. (2007). An international comparison of pre-service teacher attitudes towards inclusive education. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 27(4).
- Frankel, E. B., Gold, S., & Ajodhia-Andrews, A. (2010). International preschool inclusion: Bridging the gap between vision and practices. *Young Exceptional Children*, 13(5), 2-16.
- Frankel, E. B., Hutchinson, N. L., Burbidge, J., & Minnes, P. (2014). Preservice early childhood educators' and elementary teachers' perspectives on including young children with developmental disabilities: A mixed methods analysis. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 35(4), 373-391.
- Gill, C. J., Kewman, D. G. & Brannon, R. W. (2003) Transforming psychological practice and society: Policies that reflect the new paradigm. *American Psychologist*, 58, 305-312.
- Hawkins, K. (2014). Teaching for social justice, social responsibility and social inclusion: a respectful pedagogy for twenty-first century early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22(5), 723-738.
- Hernandez, S. J. (2013). Collaboration in Special Education: Its History, Evolution, and Critical Factors Necessary for Successful Implementation. *Online Submission*, 3(6), 480-498.
- Holler, R. (2014) Disability and employment policy in the Israeli welfare state: Between exclusion and inclusion, *Disability & Society*, 29:9, 1369-1382.
- Inclusion of People with Disabilities. (n.d.). Retrieved February 23, 2015, from <http://www.uscj.org/JewishLivingandLearning/SocialAction/Accessibility/default.aspx>.
- Irwin, S.H., Lero, D.S., & Brophy, K. (2004). *Inclusion: The next generation in child care in Canada*. Wreck Cove, NS: Breton Books.
- Jordan, A., Schwartz, E., & McGhie-Richmond, D. (2009). Preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(4), 535-542.
- Jordan, A., & Stanovich, P. (2004). The beliefs and practices of Canadian teachers about including students with special needs in their regular elementary classrooms. *Exceptionality Education Canada*, 14, 25-46.
- Kelly, P. (2006). What is teacher learning? A socio-cultural perspective. *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(4), 505-519.
- Kozleski, E. B., & Waitoller, F. R. (2010). Teacher learning for inclusive education: Understanding teaching as a cultural and political practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(7), 655-666.
- Lang, R. (2007). The development and critique of the social model of disability. *London: Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre*.
- Lechuga, V. M. (2012). Exploring culture from a distance: The utility of telephone interviews in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies*

- in Education*, 25(3), 251-268.
- Levinas, E. (1972). *Humanism of the Other*, trans. Nidra Poller (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 26.
- Maloney, C., & Konza, D. (2011). A case study of teachers' professional learning: Becoming a community of professional learning or not?. *Issues in Educational Research*, 21(1), 75-87.
- Martin, J. J. (2013). Benefits and barriers to physical activity for individuals with disabilities: a social-relational model of disability perspective. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 35(24), 2030-2037.
- Novick, R. M., & Glanz, J. (2011). *Special Education: "And You Shall Do That Which Is Right and Good..." Jewish Special Education in North America: From Exclusion to Inclusion* (pp. 1021-1040). Springer Netherlands.
- Odom, S. L., Buysse, V., & Soukakou, E. (2011). Inclusion for young children with disabilities a quarter century of research perspectives. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 33(4), 344-356.
- Odom, S. L., Hanson, M. J., Lieber, J., Marquart, J., Sandall, S., Wolery, R., ... & Chambers, J. (2001). The costs of preschool inclusion. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 21(1), 46-55.
- Piaget, J. (1952). Autobiography. In E. G. Boring, H. Werner, H. S. Langfeld & R. M. Yerkes (Eds.). *A history of psychology in autobiography* (Vol. IV, pp. 237-256). Worcester, MA: Clark University Press.
- Reeve, D. (2004). Psycho-emotional dimensions of disability and the social model. *Implementing the social model of disability: Theory and research*, 83-100.
- Romi, S. and Leyser, Y. 2006. Exploring inclusion pre-service training needs: A study of variable associated with attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 21(1): 86–105.
- Soodak, L., Podell, D., & Lehman, L. (1998). Teacher, student, and school attributes as predictors of teachers' responses to inclusion. *The Journal of Special Education*, 31(4), 480-497.
- Stephens, N. (2007). Collecting data from elites and ultra elites: Telephone and face-to-face interviews with macroeconomists. *Qualitative Research* 7(2), 203-216.
- Sze, S. (2009). A literature review: Pre-service teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities. *Education*, 130(1), 53-56.
- Yachad NJCD (n.d.). Retrieved February 23, 2015, from <https://www.njcd.org/>.

## Appendix 1

### Interview Question Protocol

We are conducting a research project concerning early childhood educators and inclusion in Israel and the United States. We would like to ask you about your views about inclusion as a practitioner.

1. What does inclusion mean to you and how would you define it?
2. Please think of a situation you witnessed or experienced of a child whom you identify as having a disability (physical, social/emotional, cognitive) and was successfully included in an educational program or classroom. Describe what disability you think the child has. Describe what happened. What did the child or other children do? What did you do? How did you feel after this event? How did the child respond? What other factors contributed to making this work?
3. Please think of a situation you witnessed or experienced that represents in your opinion a lack of inclusion—a missed opportunity to include a child whom you identify as having a disability (physical, social/emotional, cognitive). Describe what disability you think the child has. Describe what happened. What did the child or other children do? What did you do? How did you feel after this event? How did the child respond? What other factors contributed to this NOT working? What learning or help could be provided so that you could navigate this situation more effectively next time?
4. What do you think are the most important goals of inclusion?
5. How do you think inclusion should be done? Who should be included? All children with all disability? Some? What would be the criteria in your opinion?
6. What do you think about the possibility of implementing inclusion in your class?
7. Do you see any connection between Jewish education and inclusion? What are the opportunities concerning inclusion or problems that might be distinctive to Jewish education?
8. What do you think is the educational philosophy behind inclusion?
9. Please give me your thoughts on the following three situations:
  - a. Dan has a cognitive disability. His parents don't want to send him to a special education class and insist that he will attend the neighborhood kindergarten. The teachers and aide are open to the idea and the municipality is supportive as well. A group of parents of children in the kindergarten objects as they say it will harm their children. They lobby the mayor and threaten to pull out their children from the kindergarten.

b. A deaf child with a cochlear implant is included in a kindergarten where he has a sign language interpreter who translates language interaction into sign language. The teacher finds it difficult to conduct gathering/circle times with an interpreter sitting next to her. She claims that all the children are looking at the interpreter rather than concentrating on her. She demands that at circle time the child will make the effort of lip reading and use her hearing. If she can't, then she needs to go to special education class.

c. The aide of an autistic child who is included in a regular classroom is helping other children in the class. The parent of the autistic child is demanding that the aide stop assisting other children as her designated role is to help only his child.