

MTEI Influences Jewish Education in Milwaukee

by Tzipi Altman-Shafer

Chevruta study, attuned listening, attuned and empowered speaking, attuned questioning for interpretation, design thinking, collaborative inquiry through video investigating, observation and curriculum investigating. These are just some of the strategies I have explored through MTEI, the Mandel Teacher Educator Institute.

In November of 2017, Milwaukee Jewish educator Jennifer Saber and I embarked on a remarkable journey of professional development when we joined MTEI. The program consists of six seminars (four days each) over the course of two years. The seminars are held in Skokie, Illinois, which makes the program easily accessible for Milwaukee educators. The cost of the program is generously and heavily subsidized



Carla Adivi and Jen Saber (on right) working in Chevruta at MTEI.

by the Mandel Foundation. Jennifer and I are now half way through the program.

According to the MTEI website, "The Mandel Teacher Educator

Institute (MTEI) has, for two decades, successfully developed a national cadre of educational leaders. Our graduates are transforming Jewish teaching and learning by engaging their teachers in substantive professional development." (www.mtei-learning.org)

Jen and I are a part of Cohort 8. There are 40 participants from across the U.S. (14 states), plus Canada and Brazil. There are 11 faculty from a diverse set of educational institutions. Not only are the seminars valuable in what they teach us, but we have formed a community of educators that will certainly continue to support one another long after the program has concluded.

Jen, who is the education director at Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid School of Jewish Studies, has the following to say about her experiences at MTEI: "As an educational leader in the Milwaukee Jewish community I have gained from the Mandel Teacher Educator Institute the tools to guide our synagogue school's teachers with an elevated level of professionalism. The knowledge and skills I have acquired transformed the way I lead professional development and nurture individual growth for each of our teachers, which in turn strengthens the Jewish education we offer for our children. For example, MTEI was the impetus for pursuing the Jewish Education Innovation Grant in the area of special education." (See page 3)



MTEI participants experience how working together makes an impact.

So how does MTEI transform its participants? The website describes the program as follows:

"We believe in vitalizing the Jewish community by improving the quality of teaching and learning in Jewish schools and other educating institutions.

Our primary goal is to develop leaders - "teachers of teachers" - who can produce significant change in teaching and learning through planning and implementing improved and creative professional development for teachers in their institutions, in their communities, and at the national level.

Our graduates are making a difference. Founded in 1995 by the Mandel Foundation, MTEI is a pioneering program. To date a cadre of 250 senior educational leaders from over 25 communities have joined our ranks. Graduates include representatives of every denomination, working in a wide variety of settings."

MTEI has already affected my work at the Coalition for Jewish

Learning. I have used MTEI techniques in LOMED classes, in my school observations, and in planning for the future. For example, I used a Group Level Assessment in working with community leaders to think about how to address child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. This technique led to a lively discussion where everyone's voice was heard. My experience in MTEI has transformed the way I look at professional development.

In August, MTEI will start recruiting for its ninth cohort, which will begin in November 2019. The program is geared not only to heads of schools, but also to team leaders within schools. The program is open to educators from preschools, day schools, and supplementary schools. I highly encourage people from Milwaukee to participate in this exceptional program. If you are interested, please contact me at TziporahA@MilwaukeeJewish.org or contact the head of the program, Miriam Raider Roth at raidermm@ucmail.uc.edu.

Book Clubs

For the second year in a row, CJL hosted book clubs for educators and the community. Three of our book club events were partnerships with other programs of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation.

Together with Jewish Museum Milwaukee we discussed "The Sabbath" by Abraham Joshua Heschel while sitting in the exhibit "The Seventh Day: Shabbat Revisited." As we explored our personal understanding of Shabbat, we were surrounded by artifacts related to the holiday.

Together with Women's Philanthropy, we read "My Jewish Year" by Abigail Pogrebin. We explored different ways to bring meaning into our lives through the Jewish holidays. We reflected on how we as women and/or teachers, provide meaningful holiday experiences that influence the lives of those around us.



Above: Book Club with Women's Philanthropy of Milwaukee Jewish Federation

Right: Book Club for "Drive"

We read "Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us" by Daniel Pink. We discussed what works (and what doesn't work) in motivating students. It was a fascinating discussion about how opportunities for creative learning (not rewards) lead people to want to work hard.

Together with the Israel Center, we read "Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn" by Daniel Gordis as we celebrated Israel's



70th birthday by discussing things we didn't know about Israeli history. Participants had a variety of viewpoints about the topics we explored, but it was a respectful and insightful discussion.

See the back page for 2018-19 book club selections.