

Abstracts

Friedman:

This project aims to improve student engagement in Jewish text studies by empowering teachers through a research and professional development program to apply design thinking strategies to their practices. This study will take a two-tiered approach to practitioner research, first, with the researcher/practitioner implementing professional development and coaching in specified design thinking, and second, with a group of experienced teachers doing a self-study on their experiences implementing those principles. This research will contribute to the scholarship and advancement of teacher education in Jewish studies by developing best practices for creating and maintaining a model for implementing design thinking into the Jewish text classroom. Results from this study will be shared in scholarly articles and presentations, but also with practitioners, as training materials that will be designed to reach more ground level classroom teachers. This proposal seeks funding to implement and guide a one-year professional development trial and to analyze the data collected from the participants and coach.

Klein:

This first-of-its-kind examination of Orthodox girlhood and the history of Bais Yaakov in America elucidates the multiple roles of education in Jewish society, highlighting the interplay between education and culture. Working at the intersection of histories of Jewish education, girlhood and American Orthodoxy, the research offers a unique look into how Bais Yaakov schooling enabled girls to assume an active role within a religious society that often relegated them to the sidelines. While educators articulated content learning as secondary to the primary goal of socializing girls to embrace Orthodox observances, the research demonstrates ways that girls at times resisted the schools' socialization by criticizing administrations both for being too restrictive and for failing to provide meaningful religious experiences. Enlisting a variety of sources including yearbooks, fundraising materials, alumnae bulletins, Jewish periodicals, oral histories, and blogs and social media posts from former students, this study demonstrates how Bais Yaakov became central to its students' identities and to Orthodox culture as a whole, even as definitions of women's roles and conceptions of Bais Yaakov changed. Through Bais Yaakov, girls created a religiously inspired youth culture that both resembled male religious culture and American youth culture, but was distinctly their own. This culture provided girls and women with the means to have an active role in Orthodox religious life, and also invested schools with legitimacy to impose religious standards. This research suggests a paradox in which Jewish schools that were established to reinforce community standards also provided the framework for social innovation.