

## **Linking the Silos Between Jewish Formal and Informal Education: Jewish Integrated Experiential Education**

Richard D Solomon, PhD

In December of 2005 Dr. Jack Wertheimer raised an important issue about linking Jewish educational institutions. He wrote: “The current challenge in the field of Jewish education is to link the silos, to build cooperation across institutional lines and thereby enable learners to benefit from mutually reinforcing educational experiences.”<sup>1</sup>

In this paper we will attempt to provide an answer to Dr. Wertheimer’s intriguing challenge by sharing a new construct, Jewish Integrated Experiential Education.

Toward that end, this article will cover the following topics:

- The perceived strengths and challenges of Jewish formal and informal education
- The meaning of Jewish Integrated Experiential Education
- Linking the silos of Jewish formal and informal education through technology
- The application of Jewish Integrated Experiential Education
- David A Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle and Jewish Integrated Experiential Education
- Is Jewish Integrated Experiential Education already here?
- Next steps and conclusion

---

<sup>1</sup> Wertheimer, Jack. Linking the Silos:How to Accelerate the Momentum in Jewish Education Today. New York: *The AVI CHAI Foundation*, 2.  
<http://www.shefanetwork.org/docs/LinkingTheSilos.pdf> (retrieved September 8, 2011)

## Some of the Perceived Strengths and Challenges of Jewish Formal Education

<b>Strengths of Jewish Formal Education</b>	<b>Challenges of Jewish Formal Education</b>
Judaic text-based instruction	How to teach Judaic knowledge from the perspective of the learning needs \and interests of students
Focused on verbal-linguistic, visual and spatial learning	How to engage students in the other types of sensory and multi-modal learning (e.g. kinesthetic, music, intrapersonal and interpersonal and other kinds of active learning experiences)
Teacher centered instruction	How to invite student participation in the instructional and learning process
Planned	How to bring spontaneity or planned spontaneity into the learning activity
Located in a room or formal classroom setting	How to include outdoor experiential education in the learning environment
Similar to what students expect in secular education	How to make the learning experience new, refreshing, different and exciting
Lesson plans, objectives are designed by the teacher or the school to meet institutional standards	How to create lesson plans and objectives that not only meet institutional standards but also the learning needs and interests of students
Based on clearly written and stated Jewish enduring knowledge or understandings	How to help students understand the Judaic enduring knowledge or understanding that speaks to their individual needs
Emphasis on teacher-directed methods of instruction (e.g. lecture and direct instruction)	How to introduce more learner-centered or student-engaged methods of instruction (e.g. active, cooperative and problem-based learning)
Each school has a curriculum that guides instruction	How to include student interests in the creation of the curriculum
School uses standard forms of assessment ( e.g. written and verbal tests,)	How to include alternative forms of assessment to demonstrate learning (i.e. non-written assessments that include art, music, movement, role-play, and the creation of physical (e.g. posters, graphic organizers, etc.) and digital (e.g. power point presentations, movies, cartoons, multi-media presentations, etc.)

## Some of the Perceived Strengths and Challenges of Jewish Informal Education

<b>Strengths of Jewish Informal Education</b>	<b>Challenges of Jewish Informal Education</b>
Learner-centered	How to include Judaic text-based instruction
The milieu, context, location of the classroom setting (e.g. museum, nursing home, Masada) enhances the learning experience	How to infuse Jewish meaning into the experience (e.g. through instruction, reflection, etc.)
Multi-sensory learning experience	How to contextualize the event so that students internalize the enduring Jewish knowledge or understandings that are the foundation of the experience
Appears to be a unique, spontaneous and individualized experience	How to generalize the individualized experience into some project or activity that goes beyond the event

## Four Major Components of Joseph Schwab's Educational Theory<sup>2</sup>

<b>1. Judaic text-based instruction</b>	<b>2. Teacher-centered</b>
<b>3. Learner-centered</b>	<b>4. Milieu (physical and cultural setting)</b>

The strengths of Jewish formal education lie in boxes 1 and 2

The strengths of Jewish informal education lie in boxes 3 and 4.

Jewish integrated experiential education incorporates the strengths contained in all four boxes/dimensions.

According to educational theorist Joseph Schwab<sup>3</sup> there are five essential components in every educational experience; they are:

The *teacher* who facilitates the learning experience

The *learner* who participates in the learning experience

<sup>2</sup> The fifth component of Dr. Schwab's educational theory is the curriculum specialist who designs the learning experience.

<sup>3</sup> Schwab, J. (1969). The practical: A language for the curriculum. *School Review*. 78 (1), 1-23.

The *subject matter* or content that is taught

The *milieu*, context or setting in which the learning takes place

The *curriculum specialist* who designs the learning experience so that the components (i.e. the teacher, learner, subject matter and milieu) are all included in the learning experience.

We have added the role of the *staff developer* or *teacher trainer* as the person who empowers teachers and mentors to incorporate these five elements into their instruction and professional development training.

### **What is Jewish Integrated Experiential Education?**

Jewish Integrated Experiential Education is the general term that describes the incorporation of the strengths of formal and informal Jewish education in any Jewish instructional venue (i.e. day school, complementary school, higher educational institution, camp, youth center, museum excursion, trip to Israel, etc.). For this construct to be implemented it requires three additional components, the curriculum specialist or designer, the staff developer or teacher trainer, and the application of computer hardware (e.g. smart boards, lap tops, tablets and smart phones) and web-based software (i.e. email, Google Docs, Skype, audio files, video applications, mobile apps, etc.)

### **Linking the Silos of Jewish Formal and Informal Education Through Technology**

With the advent of recent instructional technology hardware (i.e. flip video cameras, smart phones, lap tops, tablets and smart boards, etc) and web-based software (i.e. Skype, Google Docs, Flickr, Twitter, Facebook and new apps for mobile phones) the divide between instruction and learning inside and outside of the classroom is narrowing. Accordingly, with this new technology the real and virtual worlds outside of the classroom can now enter the four walls of the schoolroom, and the strengths of Jewish formal education can be integrated within Jewish informal experiential education.

## The Application of Jewish Integrated Experiential Education

Given the conceptual framework, Jewish Integrated Experiential Education, learning can be ignited through text study, a teacher's lesson plan, a student question, or the milieu, context or setting (i.e. the traditional classroom or a visit to a Jewish museum, etc.).

For simplicity<sup>4</sup>, let's assume the spark for inquiry comes from text study in a traditional classroom setting.

In Parshat Shelach-Lecha, (Exodus, 3:8) there is a description of the Land of Israel as a "land flowing with milk and honey."

The role of the teacher:

The teacher can share this text and invite students to generate their own questions such as:

- Is Israel still the land of milk and honey?
- What does Israel produce?
- What doesn't Israel produce?
- How does Israel feed and nurture its people?
- What phrase would you use to describe Israel today? Why?

The teacher with the participation of his or her students can generate ways of finding answers to their questions. These resources may include:

- Finding print material
- Locating pictures
- Researching the internet
- Emailing Israelis and Israeli institutions (e.g. Ministry of Tourism)
- Speaking to Israelis about these questions through Skype, Oovoo, Blackboard Collaborate, etc.
- Texting Israelis
- Asking students in a class in Israel to investigate these questions and report their findings
- Inviting students who will be taking a trip to Israel to answer these questions by transmitting pictures, music, video and audio recordings, power point presentations via email, Skype and apps on their mobile phones

Now let's imagine that students in either a formal classroom in Israel or a group of Israeli youth are planning a trip to the United States; let's also suppose that

---

<sup>4</sup> The spark for inquiry in Jewish Integrated Experiential Education can occur in any educational setting.

they had a set of questions that they wish to pose to American Jewish students. Wouldn't this be a perfect opportunity for students in the United States and Israel to exchange information by using the new instructional technology?

As a culminating project students in any learning environment (i.e. traditional classroom, virtual online classroom, non-school room venue) will individually or in learning teams investigate text-based student-generated questions, analyze the resources discovered, and prepare a report (e.g. paper, poster, song, role-play, video, audio, mime, multi-media presentation, picture album) and share their findings with their on site or virtual classmates.

These collective learning experiences provide a snapshot of what Jewish Integrated Experiential Education might look sound and feel like. You will note that these experiences cannot be reduced to either Jewish formal or informal learning, nor simply be defined as a text-study, teacher-directed or learner-centered unit. It is in fact, an example of Jewish Integrated Experiential Education.

Let's explore this framework, Jewish Integrated Experiential Education (JIEE), more deeply by examining the JIEE Learning Activities Chart below.

## **Jewish Integrated Experiential Education Learning Activities Chart**

### **Instructions for using the Jewish Integrated Experiential Education Learning Activities Chart**

1. Select any Jewish text (e.g. word, verse, phrase) given by your teacher, group leader, or from the resources listed in the box on page 7 in this article.
2. Select an experiential activity from the box below on pages 7-9 in this paper.
3. Select a web-based Judaic product you wish to create from the box below on page 10 in this article.

1. Select any Jewish text (e.g. word, verse, phrase) from the Tanach, the Commentaries (e.g. Hillel, Rashi, Rambam, etc) Midrashim, one given by your teacher, or a text from one of these web resources:

- <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0.htm>
- <http://www.aish.com/jl/b/eb/kbc/48969836.html>
- [http://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm)

**Example:** (*Verse describing Israel as a land flowing with milk and honey*) “I have descended to free them from the hand of Egypt, and to bring them up from that land to a good, spacious land, to a land flowing with **milk** and **honey**” Exodus, Chapter 3, Verse 8. Cited from <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0203.htm>

Record your text selection in this box [on this assignment form](#):

2. Select an experiential activity from the ones listed below.

**Note:** This is **not** a complete list of experiential activities from which to choose. We invite you to add to this list of experiential activities.

make a movie ( <a href="#">example</a> )	do a role-play ( <a href="#">role playing program</a> )	write and perform a song ( <a href="#">examples of children singing Chanukah songs</a> )	create a game ( <a href="#">examples</a> )
make up a rap ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	make simulation ( <a href="#">article on simulations</a> )	create a poster ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	draw ( <a href="#">examples</a> ) ( <a href="#">more examples</a> )
write a short story ( <a href="#">example</a> ) ( <a href="#">lesson plan</a> )	participate in a panel discussion ( <a href="#">example</a> )	write and share a poem ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	make a graphic organizer ( <a href="#">free online graphic organizers</a> )

write newspaper article ( <a href="#">example in a blog entry</a> )	participate in a debate ( <a href="#">lesson plan idea</a> )	mime ( <a href="#">explanation and example</a> )	develop a cheer ( <a href="#">article</a> )
create a television program ( <a href="#">example</a> )	create a motto ( <a href="#">example</a> )	make a comic strip ( <a href="#">example</a> )	create a jingle ( <a href="#">example</a> )
do a skit ( <a href="#">sample Purim shpiels</a> )	write and perform a commercial ( <a href="#">example</a> )	create a dance ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	make up a rhyme ( <a href="#">examples</a> )
write a letter to the editor ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	do a mock trial ( <a href="#">example</a> )	create a chart ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	create a graph ( <a href="#">definition</a> ) ( <a href="#">lesson</a> )
create a play ( <a href="#">example</a> )	create a picture story ( <a href="#">example</a> )	cut and paste ( <a href="#">images of Israel on Picasa</a> )	make up a coat of arms ( <a href="#">examples</a> )
do a diorama ( <a href="#">example</a> )	do a musical performance ( <a href="#">example</a> )	make a mural ( <a href="#">example</a> )	create a diary ( <a href="#">examples</a> )
do a demonstration ( <a href="#">example</a> ) ( <a href="#">example</a> )	make a painting ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	make a mobile ( <a href="#">example of a mobile art project</a> )	create a fable ( <a href="#">examples</a> )
create a midrash ( <a href="#">explanation</a> )	create a quiz show ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	make a flow chart ( <a href="#">example</a> )	create a recipe ( <a href="#">example</a> )
make up a test ( <a href="#">example</a> )	make a costume ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	make up and tell a Jewish story ( <a href="#">article on Jewish story telling</a> )	do a cooking demonstration ( <a href="#">example</a> )



make a museum display ( <a href="#">example</a> )	make a family tree ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	create a flag ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	start a campaign ( <a href="#">example</a> )
make a statue ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	make a bulletin board ( <a href="#">example</a> )	make a slideshow ( <a href="#">example</a> )	do a mitzvah project ( <a href="#">examples</a> )
welcome the stranger (Hachnasat Orchim) ( <a href="#">Genesis 18: 1-8</a> )	feed the hungry (Maakhil Re'evim) ( <a href="#">Isaiah 65:13</a> )	visit the sick (Bikor Cholim) ( <a href="#">Isaiah 38: 1-22</a> )	tutor (Lilmod) a student ( <a href="#">Exodus 4:10-17</a> )
serve as a madrich/a ( <a href="#">example</a> )	preserve the environment (Bal Taschit) ( <a href="#">Numbers 35: 33-34</a> )	do good deeds (Ma'asim Tovim) (See Rambam's list of 613 mitzvot <a href="#">here</a> )	love all creatures (Ohev et HaBriyot) ( <a href="#">Genesis 1: 20-26</a> )
pursue peace (Shalom) ( <a href="#">Isaiah 2: 4</a> ),	seek justice (Tzedakah) ( <a href="#">Isaiah 1: 17</a> )	study Torah (Talmud) ( <a href="#">Laws of Torah study in the Book of Knowledge of Rambam</a> )	Be your brother's (sister's) keeper (Shomer Achi) ( <a href="#">Genesis 4: 9</a> )
repair the world (Tikkum Olam) ( <a href="#">Mishnah, Pirkei Avot, Hillel, 1:14</a> )	respond to the needs of the community (Shomer Achi) ( <a href="#">Mishnah, Pirkei Avot, Hillel, 2:5</a> )	take care of your body (Shmirat HaGuf) ( <a href="#">Deuteronomy 4:9-10</a> )	honor the elderly ( <a href="#">Leviticus, 19,32</a> )
make a multi-media presentation ( <a href="#">example</a> )	?		
Record the experiential activity that you have chosen to do in this box <a href="#">on this assignment form</a> :			

3. Select a web-based Judaic product you wish to create from the ones listed below.

**Note:** This is **not** a complete list of web-based Judaic products or artifacts. We invite you to add to this list of possible Judaic artifacts and share specific examples.

**Note:** For a listing of web tools, tutorials and ideas on web-based Judaic artifacts, projects or objects click [here](#).

power point presentation ( <a href="#">example</a> )	video ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	document ( <a href="#">example</a> )	web camera recoding ( <a href="#">definition and example</a> )
audio file ( <a href="#">example</a> )	spreadsheet ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	quiz ( <a href="#">example</a> )	screen recording ( <a href="#">definition</a> ) ( <a href="#">examples</a> )
multi-media presentation ( <a href="#">example</a> )	photo presentation ( <a href="#">example</a> )	picture collage ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	animation ( <a href="#">example</a> )
blog ( <a href="#">example</a> )	story book ( <a href="#">example</a> )	wiki ( <a href="#">example</a> )	comic strip ( <a href="#">example</a> )
graphic organizer ( <a href="#">examples</a> )	mind map ( <a href="#">example</a> )	picture album ( <a href="#">example</a> )	time line ( <a href="#">example</a> )
word collage ( <a href="#">example</a> )	picture book ( <a href="#">tutorial with example</a> )	electronic portfolio ( <a href="#">definition</a> ) ( <a href="#">as a component in a rabbinical program</a> )	?

Record the web-based Judaic product that you have chosen to create in this box [on this assignment form:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bJo-P9lqr80p-l-JiU8nUHi\\_32wXahXUB-u\\_9ST7dM/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bJo-P9lqr80p-l-JiU8nUHi_32wXahXUB-u_9ST7dM/edit)

## **Explanation of the JIEE Activities Chart**

Although the chart may appear to be self-evident, there is something that is misleading about this JIEE Activities Chart.

This chart might erroneously suggest to the reader that all JIEE begins with a teacher-directed text study lesson followed by a highly engaging, learner-centered experiential activity, and ends with each student creating a web-based Judaic product or artifact. In fact, JIEE does not operate out of a lineal-sequential order. Indeed, Jewish Integrated Experiential Education comes from a dynamic non-lineal or non-sequential time and place such as a student's imagination, innate curiosity, and the need to create order and make Jewish meaning of his or her life. Accordingly, the spark for Jewish meaning might arise from a personal prayer at a congregational or camp religious service, a relationship between a student and his or her mentor/teacher, a service learning project, a trip to Israel, an adult b'nai mitzvah class, a text study, or from the creation of a web-based Judaic product. It is from these personal Jewish experiences inside or outside of the classroom that we (i.e. teachers, parents, leaders, etc) must build upon to empower our students to deepen their understanding of what it means to be Jewish and to lead a fulfilling Torah-based life.

## **The Unique Role of the Jewish Day and Complementary School in Jewish Integrated Experiential Education**

If the motivation for Jewish inquiry can begin in any venue, what is the role of the day or complementary school?

The role of the day and complementary school in Jewish Integrated Experiential education is critical for these reasons:

1. It is the traditional venue in which teacher-directed lessons and learner-centered experiential activities can take place.
2. It provides the time and place for students to learn how to transform enduring Jewish knowledge (i.e. also referred to as enduring Jewish understandings) into (a) authentic experiential learning activities (i.e. write and perform a song, create and perform a role-play, do a mitzvah project, etc.) and (b) web-based Judaic products or artifacts (i.e. audio files, blogs, wikis, multi-media presentations, etc) that can be shared with others outside of the physical classroom.

3. It is the most convenient educational setting to demonstrate how to implement Jewish Integrated Experiential Education. The traditional classroom can be transformed into a new learning environment for the 21<sup>st</sup> century where the teacher and his/her students in the physical classroom can create enduring Jewish knowledge with other students, teachers and experts living in distant locations around the globe.

### **David A Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and Jewish Integrated Experiential Education**

In 1984 David A Kolb <sup>5</sup> contributed an important construct in our understanding of how experiential learning facilitates the creation of new knowledge and meaning. According to his theory, there are four stages in the experiential learning cycle. They are:

- *Stage One: Concrete Experience.* The learner experiences the original event.
- *Stage Two: Reflective Observation:* The learner cogitates on the meaning of the original experience.
- *Stage Three: Active Experimentation:* Given the time to reflect on the meaning of the experience, the learner tries different ways to re-create or actively experiment with the original learning experience.
- *Stage Four: Abstract Experimentation:* The learner gains a more sophisticated understanding of the meaning of the original experience which in turn, informs the next concrete experience (i.e. a new stage one).

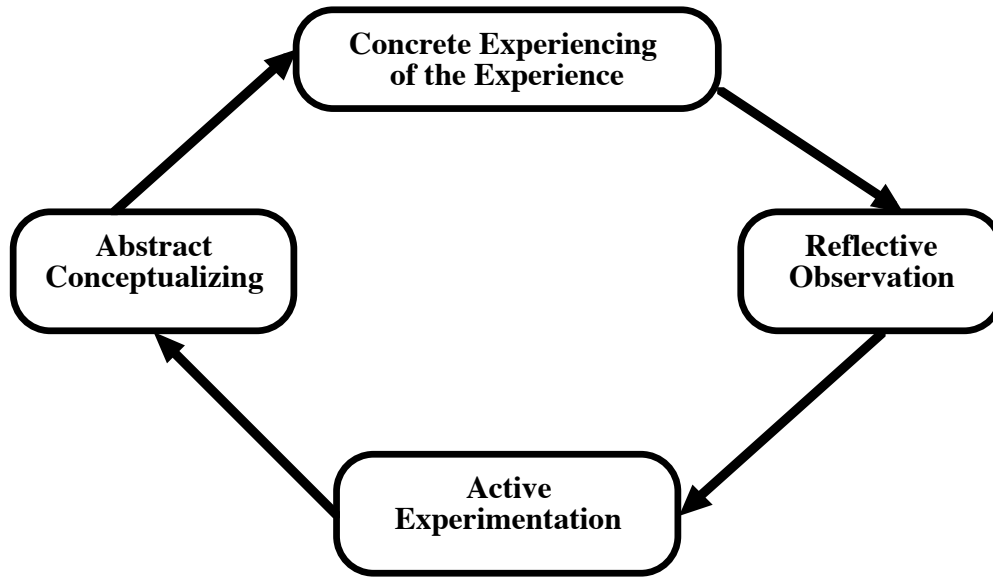
Hence, we have a continuous four-stage cycle for experiential learning.

We might depict Kolb's Four Stage Cycle for Experiential Learning in the following way:

---

<sup>5</sup> Kolb, D.A (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

## David Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning\*



\* Taken from Kolb, David A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J

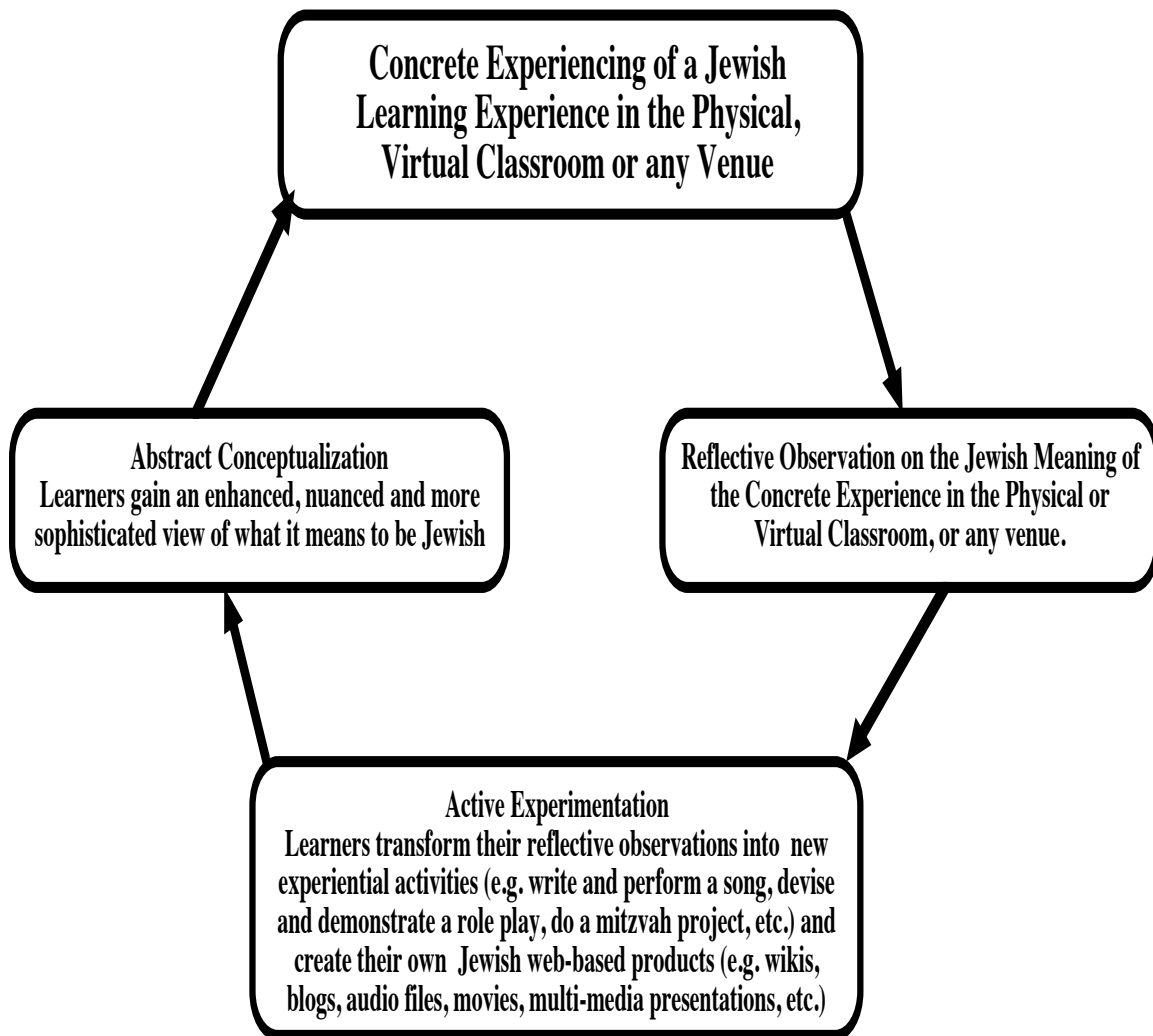
## **The Interface of Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning and Jewish Integrated Experiential Education**

Let's see how Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning might be applied to our construct, Jewish Integrated Experiential Education. Accordingly, let's revisit and make some modifications of Kolb's Four Stage Cycle of Experiential Learning.

- *Stage One: Concrete Experience.* The learner experiences the original Jewish event in a physical, virtual classroom or in any venue (e.g. camp, nature walk, synagogue service, Birthright trip, youth activity, etc.).
- *Stage Two: Reflective Observation:* The learner cogitates on the Jewish meaning of the original experience.
- *Stage Three: Active Experimentation:* Given the time to reflect on the meaning of the Jewish experience, the learner transforms the original experience into new experiential activities (e.g. writes about it, creates a song or rap, draws a picture or painting, etc), and even creates a web-based authentic learning Judaic product or artifact (e.g. blog, wiki, an audio file, a video, multi-media presentation, etc.).
- *Stage Four: Abstract Experimentation:* The learner gains a more sophisticated understanding of the meaning of what it means to be Jewish, which in turn, informs the next concrete experience (i.e. a new stage one).

We might depict the interface of Kolb's Four Stage Cycle for Experiential Learning with Jewish Integrated Experiential Education in the following way:

## David A Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle as it Relates to Jewish Integrated Experiential Education



Richard D Solomon, PhD, ©2011

## **Is Jewish Integrated Experiential Education Already Here?**

There is no question that Jewish Integrated Experiential Education is presently being implemented in many different Jewish formal and informal programs around the globe. However, the name of the construct, Jewish Integrated Experiential Education, is not commonly used at this time. Let's explore this further.

In formal Jewish educational settings Jewish experiential education is referred to as active learning, cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, authentic learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and student-centered learning.

Moreover, in formal Jewish educational settings teachers are increasingly using smart boards, and in some day and complementary schools students are using tablets, and smart phones inside and outside of the classroom to facilitate instruction and enhance learning.

Jewish informal education programs (i.e. day and sleep-away camps, youth activities, congregational trips, museum visits, etc.) have always been sterling examples of the efficacy of Jewish experiential learning.

On the chart below you will find institutions that have already begun to implement Jewish Integrated Experiential Education.



<b>Institution</b>	<b>Website Address</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>	<b>Contact Person's Email Address</b>
Jewish Foundation School of Staten Island	<a href="http://www.jewishfoundationschool.org/">http://www.jewishfoundationschool.org/</a>	Rabbi Tzvi Daum	<a href="mailto:tzvidaum@gmail.com">tzvidaum@gmail.com</a>
Bi-Cultural Day School	<a href="http://bcds.org/">http://bcds.org/</a>	Mrs. Yocheved Singer	<a href="mailto:ysinger@bcds.org">ysinger@bcds.org</a>
United Synagogue Youth	<a href="http://www.usy.org/">http://www.usy.org/</a>	Amy Dorsch	<a href="mailto:dorsch@uscj.org">dorsch@uscj.org</a>
Beth El Congregation	<a href="http://bethelphoenix.com/">http://bethelphoenix.com/</a>	Ms. Janette Silverman	<a href="mailto:jsilverman@bethelphoenix.com">jsilverman@bethelphoenix.com</a>
Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education	<a href="http://www.ajajep.org">www.ajajep.org</a>	Dr. Gloria Becker	<a href="mailto:Gbecker@ajajep.org">Gbecker@ajajep.org</a>
Temple Beth Shalom	<a href="http://www.tbsholom.org/">http://www.tbsholom.org/</a>	Rabbi James Greene	<a href="mailto:rabbijames@tbsholom.org">rabbijames@tbsholom.org</a>
Temple Israel	<a href="http://www.timemphis.org/">http://www.timemphis.org/</a>	Rabbi Adam Grossman	<a href="mailto:RabbiAdam@timemphis.org">RabbiAdam@timemphis.org</a>

### **Next Steps and Conclusion**

Now is the time for our Jewish formal and informal educational programs to link the silos and work together so that what happens outside of the four walls of the classroom is intentionally and seamlessly integrated within the curriculum of our day and complementary schools. With the advent of the new technological hardware (i.e. smart boards, laptops, tablets and smart phones) and new software for communication and collaboration, and the creation of Judaic web-based products, we can fulfill the promise of teaching our children what it means to live a meaningful Torah-based life.

## References

- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Schwab, J. (1969). The practical: A language for the curriculum. *School Review*. 78 (1), 1-23.
- Wertheimer, J. (December, 2005). Liking the silos: How to accelerate the momentum in Jewish education today. New York: *The AVI CHAI Foundation*, 2. <http://www.shefanetwork.org/docs/LinkingTheSilos.pdf> (Retrieved September 8, 2011)