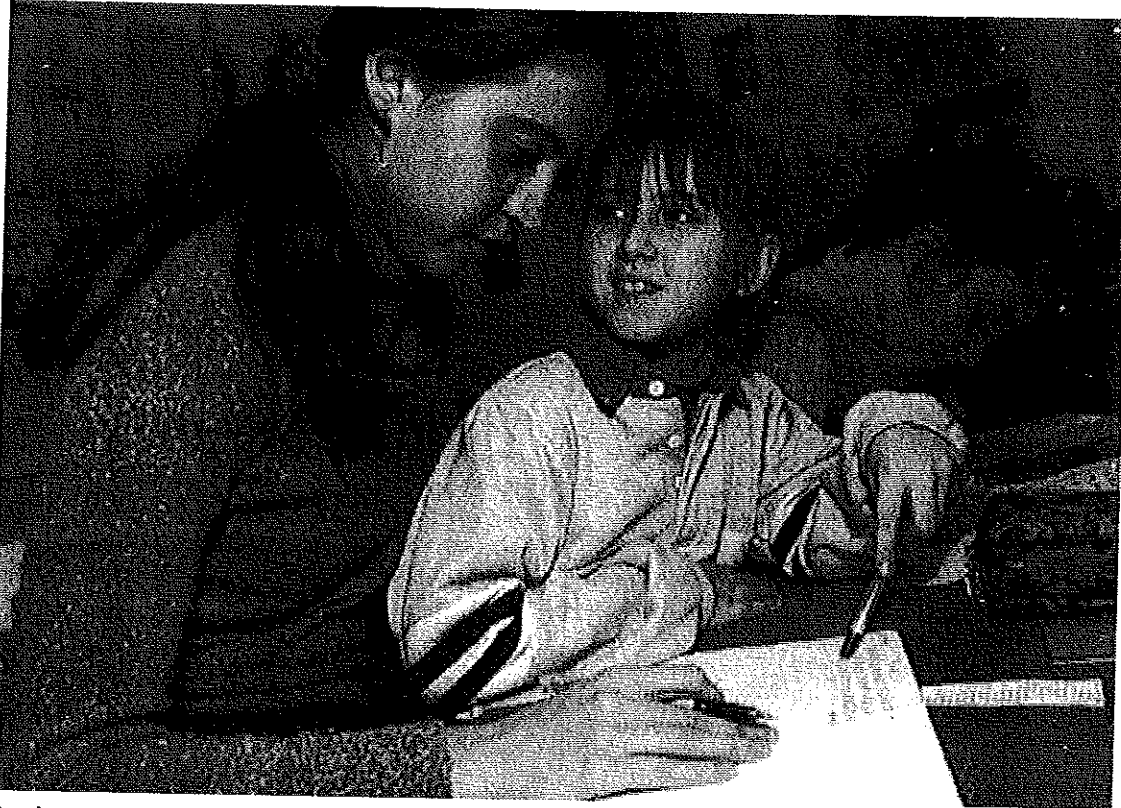


Engaging Young Jews



Students working together in a Jewish day school classroom.

“Our big goal is to create a more reflective and committed community,” says Rabbi David Silber in explaining the mission of Drisha Institute for Jewish Education of which he is the dean and visionary founder. With this statement, Silber not only encapsulates the mission of Drisha, which was founded in 1979 to educate women in classical Jewish texts, but he also captures what is at the heart of the crisis in the American Jewish community today: how to keep Judaism vibrant and how to keep young Jews engaged.

This issue is twofold: making Judaism seem relevant to today’s world and, at the same time, offering

young people a thorough grounding in the Jewish tradition so that they may learn to use their heritage in a dialogue with today’s concerns. In an effort to address these issues, the Jewish community has come up with various approaches. One is reform of the traditional synagogue service to make it more appealing to the unaffiliated. A second major path has been reinvigorating Jewish education, as Drisha is doing.

Today, as never before in America, there is a tremendous growth in Jewish day schools, especially Conservative, Reform and unaffiliated schools. Jewish high schools, in particular, are witnessing a renaissance as parents and stu-

dents seek to extend what they have found to be a very satisfactory experience with Jewish day schools at the lower grade levels.

As the day school community expands the need for more funding and quality teachers grows as well.

In this issue of *Aufbau* we examine the growth in Jewish day schools in the United States and look across the ocean to the only Jewish high school in Germany, where students also find that the school also helps them form a much stronger sense of their own identity as Jews and their commitment to the community.