

FACILITATING PRESENTATIONS

THERE IS PROBABLY no more inspiring element in this entire project than the organization presentations to the Board. There's nothing quite like seeing an adult with a title like Chairperson or Director of Development make a respectful and intelligent presentation requesting the financial support and investment of a roomful of thirteen-year-olds. It turns the traditional child-adult relationship on its head in a profound and wonderful way. Instead of adults telling children what to do and children using petty exercises of power to bewilder adults, the normal power relationship is reversed. The result is a mechanism for positive change instead of a tool of rebellion for the sake of rebellion. The impact of this reversal is remarkable, both for the students and for the adults who stand before them.

The keys to a successful presentation day are good planning and good organization. Make sure students bring their packets (even consider having them leave them at school during the class session before) so they'll be able to take notes directly on each proposal. Fifteen minute presentations, including Q&A, seem to be a good baseline. If you are scheduling several presentations on the same day be sure to schedule time for a break in the middle so students will stay fresh through the whole session.

Make sure that the presenters know where to go and at what time they will present, and ask them to come fifteen minutes early. It's probably not a good idea to have them sit in on each other's presentations – the

temptation to compare/contrast with a previous presenter can be extreme. Also make sure that you have ready any A/V equipment (overhead projector and screen, TV/VCR, etc.), that they've requested.

MAKING THE DECISIONS

THE DECISION-MAKING mechanism you implement will depend greatly on the number of proposals you receive and the number and amount of the grants you are able to fund. First of all, if there are more than ten proposals on the table, it's going to be helpful to do a first-cut vote to narrow the options down to ten at the most. Discussing and voting on more than ten proposals is unwieldy at best. The class should obviously be given an opportunity to consider all of the proposals before any voting takes place, but this initial discussion and vote should happen fairly quickly so more time can be given to in-depth deliberation on the most serious proposals. Reviewing the grant guidelines before this process begins will help students use concrete criteria in these deliberations.

After the list is narrowed down to a more manageable number, significant time should be dedicated to the discussion and evaluation of proposals. You may choose to consider each in turn and allow Board members to advocate or critique proposals one at a time, or you may simply open the floor for general discussion.

Before proceeding to a vote, it's important that you clarify what decision-

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making procedure you'll be using. While there are a number of voting models that may work, the most equitable and realistic option is a proportional, winner-take-all model. Here's how it works: Assuming you've narrowed the list down to ten choices, each student would be allowed to rank the ten proposals on a secret ballot, giving ten votes to his/her top choice, nine to the next, and so on down to one. After all of the ballots are collected, votes are tallied and the proposals receiving the highest number of votes receive their full grant requests until the foundation runs out of money.

(For example, assume your foundation has \$8,000. The proposal receiving the highest number of votes gets its full grant request of \$3,000. The second place proposal gets its full grant request of \$4,000. The third place proposal, which requested \$2,500, receives a partial grant of \$1,000.)

This method insures not only a fair and democratic process, but also has the added benefit of allowing participants to represent the intensity of their feelings about particular proposals. (NOTE: Another variation on this method is to give each student ten votes to allocate among the proposals however he/she wants. This insures that students who have a particular proposal that means a great deal to them can show strong support for that organization while ceding some authority on other decisions.) The most important aspect of this process is that the students know in advance how the voting will take place so they feel fully in control of the decision.

AFTER THE DECISIONS have been made, you'll need to notify both the organizations that received grants and those that did not. You'll find sample letters on pp.92-93. Note that the sample letter for grant recipients asks that the person responsible for administering the grant sign and return a copy of the letter. This is just a good way to maintain accountability before sending off large checks. It's also important to follow through once you receive the organization's summary of its progress on the terms of the grant. This is a good way to stay involved with the organization and also an important form of accountability. Once you receive the signed letters back, have the checks cut and mailed and you're almost done!

Now that the decisions have been made and the checks mailed, be sure to end on a very positive note. Plan a presentation ceremony, preferably associated with an end-of-year service or graduation. Invite the grant recipients to attend and welcome them into the community with which they are entering into this covenantal partnership.

Ask students to prepare speeches about their experiences in *Tzedakah in Action*. This isn't only about good public relations and publicity. It's about honoring and celebrating young people when they commit themselves to making the world a better place. That positive reinforcement is a crucial element of helping them grow up with a deep sense of the role of Jewish values in their lives.