

The Board of Deputies of British Jews

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5th June 2006

Jewish SACRE conference

The annual Jewish SACRE conference was held at the Board of Deputies on 14th May 2006. The conference was hosted by the Community Issues Division, and chaired by Gabriel Lancaster, who has devoted many years to supporting the work of Jewish representatives on SACRE. Gabriel was ably assisted by Robin Kanarek, recently re-elected to the NASACRE Executive. Please find enclosed Robin Kanarek's report on the day. Robin is committed to continuing the work that Gabriel initiated and provides an important voice for the Jewish community at a National level. I would like to thank them both for all they did to make the day a success, and for their ongoing dedication.

This year's Jewish SACRE conference raised issues of youth representation, provision of resources, and how to get the Jewish voice heard. Speakers Sofia Ashraf and Joanna Ish-Horowicz gave interesting presentations and there was an opportunity for representatives to share examples of good practice, identify needs for further development and compare the locally agreed RE syllabi produced by different Local Authorities.

If you would like more information about the work of SACRE and/or NASACRE, or are interested in further involvement in this work, please contact Robin (her details are provided at the bottom of her report).

With best wishes,

Aviva Dautch
Education Dept.

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Report on Jewish SACRE Conference on the 14 May 2006

Robin Kanarek

The annual SACRE meeting this year was thought-provoking and stimulating. The day's programme was full but provided considerable time for an exchange of ideas from its SACRE members. We enjoyed representation from Newcastle to Cornwall and points in-between. Gabriel Lancaster chaired the meeting and managed to keep us to time. Aviva Dautch organised the day in Sandra Teacher's absence. Those of us who had travelled distances were grateful for a tasty kosher spread of food.

Gabriel has been involved with SACRE and NASACRE since its inception and introduced the valuable work of SACRE in education and inter-faith. We followed with an excellent presentation by Sofia Ashraf and Joanna Ish-Horowicz who described their personal experiences and reflections on the experiences of studying RE in state schools from a Muslim and Jewish perspective. Joanna's critical but humorous observations on her RE experiences in her schools offered a personal account of being the only Jew in RE lessons. The fact that Joanna is reading Religious Studies at university suggests that her early experiences in her small South London Jewish community encouraged and supported her interest in RE. Sofia described her experience of sitting on the Youth SACRE in Bradford and commended this model to other SACREs as a bridge between adult SACRE and students, and an invaluable means of generating inter-faith dialogue between young people. Her Youth SACRE had received support from the RE Adviser. A lively round of Q&A ensued with suggestions to take up this idea in our own SACREs even if an Adviser was lacking.

We continued with a facilitated discussion on 'good practice' in RE teaching and learning. Discussion was substantial and lively with many concerns and issues being raised. Everyone concurred that we need to ensure Jewish representation on as many of the 131 SACREs as possible. Some members felt more supported than others but this often reflects the individual SACRE and its management. There were many examples of good practice, which was encouraging, as well as critical appraisal. We were largely concerned with lack of quality educational resources especially at KS3-4. Jewish SACRE members can support teachers in learning about Judaism in visits, talks and being an 'authentic' voice. The group discussed possible future developments in Jewish educational materials in state schools so Judaism is accurately presented in today's society. Members shared their syllabi and examples for interesting work and training for SACRE and teachers in their Local Authority.

After tea Robin Kanarek spoke on the work of NASACRE as well as underlining the need for an active and vocal presence on all SACREs. In addition, we need to be mindful of maintaining the teaching of Judaism at each KS and revisiting Judaism at KS3. Choosing Judaism at KS 1&2 is essential. How do we make a case for Judaism as the bed-rock and cornerstone of any teaching of other religions?

Aviva Dautch presented us with an informative and instructive talk on available materials and her personal experience of teaching Jewish Studies; assessing the specifications of differing exam boards. This was hands-on stuff and very useful. She concluded by sharing a sample of the new CD on Judaism being prepared by the Board and hopefully for distribution in schools. This is a much needed and welcome development for promoting consistent and current ICT materials in schools.

At the end of this packed day Aviva thanked Gabriel Lancaster for his pioneering work and commitment to SACRE and NASACRE. He was presented with Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' book, *'To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility'* which is most apposite for Gabe. Senior Vice President Jerry Lewis (who also ends his term with the Community Issues Division this summer) paid a personal tribute to Gabriel as a wise, caring and always active person in Jewish education and an exemplar in life.

The conference illuminated many of the issues which engage Jewish SACRE members and hopefully will remain an annual event. If anyone has an issue or idea to share do keep in touch with me. I will try to keep all representatives up-to-date with important news.

Robin Kanarek

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