



Gift 2, **A Kaplanian  
Report Card**

## A Kaplanian Report Card

In his chapter on Jewish education in Judaism as a Civilization Kaplan lays out his own vision of what a successful Jewish education might look like. In the attached “Kaplanian report card” I have tried to simplify his language and capture the core of each his concerns. I think this broad vision can serve as a useful mirror to where we have come to in 2016/5777 in Jewish education.

Of course I am using “report card” as a kind of hyperbole or metaphor. I am rather sure that the qualities that account for a fully realized dynamic vision of Jewish education cannot be “graded”. Ideas like kedusha/holiness, amiut (peoplehood), tzionut (Zionism), and tikun olam (word transformation) defy easy benchmarking.

Over the years, however, the report card has created much conversation for both Reconstructionist and non-Reconstructionist groups of educators I have taught. So I invite educators to use this educational tool in their own work as they prepare for the school year of 5777.

Mordecai Kaplan was very conversant with the educational philosophies of John Dewey. This linkage suggests two different ways to utilize the resource. Dewey was very aware that educational evaluation was inevitably two processes in creative, dialectic tension with one another. The Latin etymology of to “value” something hints at these two processes. Read one way evaluate means to “prize”. Read a second way it can mean to “measure against some higher standard.”

Your education committee or synagogue board could benefit from either of these processes. “To prize” would mean to follow the lead of the folks at Case Western Reserve University who pioneered the various methodologies of “appreciative inquiry”. It is critically important to appreciate a community’s educational strengths, to value successes. “Naming” these achievements can help any governing body feel more positive about their educational work. It can also provide the building blocks for future growth.

Clearly, “evaluate” also means to hold to a higher standard. In regard to each of the five arenas noted in Kaplan’s chapter on education in Judaism as a Civilization there is room for improvement and creative growth. Noting these arenas of challenge and positive growth can provide a road map for specific initiatives the community might launch during the coming year. The mantra of the Mandel foundation over the last several decades is very helpful in relationship to these imagined possibilities: Think Big and Act Small in the initial stages of the work.

The accompanying power-point allows you to channel your inner Mordecai Kaplan in expressing delight, concern, or rage about the contemporary state of Jewish education

### A Kaplanian Report Card

*Based on the criteria for a successful Jewish education suggested by Kaplan in his chapter on Jewish education in Judaism as a Civilization (1934)*

*Assign grades A to F for each of the following based on your subjective/gut assessment of where we stand today in Jewish education in 2015 and beyond*

	My Shul/School	The Reconstructionist Community or my Local Community	North American Jewish Community
Understand and Appreciate Hebrew Language and Literature			
Practice Jewish Ethical and Religious Values			
Participate in Jewish Life			
Give Artistic Expression to Jewish Values			
Cultivate Jewish Ideals and Role-Models			

The link to the accompanying power point is below:

<https://kaplancenter.org/kaplanian-report-card>