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News Release

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FEDERATION'S JEWISH LIFE AND LEARNING SUBSIDIZES ONLINE TEACHER TRAINING FROM GRATZ COLLEGE

The Jewish Life and Learning Department of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh has partnered with Gratz College to offer an online teacher-training program, NEXT, to teachers in Pittsburgh-area Jewish part-time religious schools serving students in the elementary and high school years. Gratz's NEXT (New Excellent Teacher Training) program is an intensive program that consists of a series of four-week courses designed to build the skills and knowledge that part-time Jewish educators need.

The Jewish Life and Learning Department will subsidize the cost of tuition for one course as well as provide a stipend for part-time Jewish educators in Pittsburgh who have preapproval from their principals. The arrangements may apply to the NEXT session that begins Feb. 27, 2017. Gratz College will offer three more four-week sessions in 2017.

The NEXT program is designed to provide individualized professional development for teachers. Rabbi Amy Bardack, director of Jewish Life and Learning of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, believes the program will fill a gap in teaching.

"Teachers who have Jewish knowledge but lack formal education training can learn basic pedagogy through the Boot Camp for New Teachers course. Those ready to expand their tools can learn about incorporating the arts or project-based learning," Bardack explained.

Course participants come from all areas of the United States, and course instructors have expertise in Jewish supplemental schools. The program is offered four times per year, with each course involving about two hours of study per week for four weeks. NEXT courses are asynchronous — that is, weekly study may occur at each student's convenience.

Course topics cover a range of subjects, including the arts, project-based learning, addressing special needs, Jews and politics, and Hebrew through movement. All courses are taught by experts who have experience in Jewish supplemental school settings.

"Strengthening the skills of part-time Jewish educators is essential to engaging and retaining the more than 1,000 Pittsburgh-area students in our part-time religious education programs, including congregation-based K-7 programs and community-wide high school programs," Bardack continued.

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Gratz College of Melrose Park, Pa., has been a pioneer in higher education and Jewish education since it opened, in 1895. Gratz is the oldest pluralistic college for Jewish studies in North America and the oldest independent college offering Jewish studies. In addition, Gratz holds the distinction of being the first institution of advanced Jewish learning to accept women on par with men.

Other Jewish Federations partnering with Gratz College to provide NEXT teacher training are the Federations of Baltimore, Broward County (Florida), Cleveland, Detroit, Palm Beach County (Florida), Hartford, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia.

For more information, please contact Rabbi Amy Bardack, director of Jewish Life and Learning at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, at abardack@jfedpgh.org.

To register, visit www.gratz.edu/NEXT or email NEXT@gratz.edu or call 215.635.7300 ext. 135.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, one of 151 independent Federations associated with The Jewish Federations of North America, raises and allocates funds to build community locally, in Israel and around the world. With the vision of a thriving, vibrant and engaged Jewish community, the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh aims to carry out its work in the context of cooperation and inclusiveness. For more information, visit www.jfedpgh.org.

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