

## The challenge of educating for faith in the modern age

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One of the most significant challenges confronting the religious educational system in the modern age concerns the subject of Jewish faith. The complexity of the issue stems in part from the tension between traditional strategies of teaching religious beliefs and central modern principles, such as uncertainty and the need to cast doubt on commonly held concepts. Students not infrequently complain that their questions about faith are left unresolved. Their desire to explore and understand vital issues, in this field as in other disciplines, meets responses such as "there are answers, but not for your age"; resolutions offered often seem to them stifling and inappropriate to their needs.

One particular area in which the conflict between educating faith and broader life issues comes to the fore is teaching art and culture. When art tracks were first established in the national-religious schools, the expectation was that the artistic activity they would nurture would be founded on halachic guidelines. Today, serious criticism is being voiced by supervising bodies within the system, justifiably apprehensive that "'reality culture' not only rules over television but has penetrated to our students' creativity as well." This situation raises basic questions concerning the very legitimacy of engagement with art and modern culture. On the one hand, R. Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook is frequently cited for his call for openness in Jewish education to literature, drawing and plastic arts. On the other, we are reminded of R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik's reservations on the subject, on the grounds that the arts are foreign to halachic Judaism.

This essay suggests a comprehensive plan that can educate toward the integration and cultural creativity of graduates from the national-religious school system within modern cultural life. This plan includes quality traditional Torah learning and personal development, while perceiving the modern world as an essential component of the high-school student's own halachic world of faith.