



EXPLORE NEW PATHS FORWARD

Images of the Possible

*Summaries of engagement initiatives,
submitted by initiative leadership,
meant to offer images of this work as implemented.*

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#engageJewish

BabyTalk

Julie Wohl (jwohl@cjeb.org), Macks Center for Jewish Education (Baltimore)

A Jewish parenting group that focuses on social, emotional, and Jewish aspects of parenting for families with babies ages 0-6 months old. Small groups of parents (5-6 participants) meet in outlying areas that are generally underserved by Jewish organizations and with families who may have fewer Jewish social connections. Groups offer support; they build social networks and bring a Jewish lens to the conversations around parenting. Sessions are held in popular and secular spots that will draw parents in (e.g. a party room in a new baby/toddler play space).

Impact Goals

- Build community in Jewishly underserved areas around Baltimore: Help participants meet each other, build connections, and develop new friendships and support networks.
- Provide a Jewish lens to the parenting conversation: Empower participants to make Jewish choices in their families, utilize Jewish resources, and create Jewish experiences in their homes.
- Inspire families to make Jewish choices early in their children’s lives; help them continue to make Jewish choices as their family grows and ages.

Design Principles

- Each session has an overarching question or idea based on typical concerns that arise for families with very young babies (engaging/communicating with baby, infant development, processing family dynamics and general life with an infant, sleep, feeding, etc.).
- Jewish content, resources and questions are interwoven with the topic.
- The leader may ask a question or pass something out for the parents to look at and talk about. The leader also takes cues from the participants themselves. If someone comes in with something they want to talk about, or the conversation goes in a different direction, we go with it, taking the lead from the group.
- We have found that even with this very flexible method, just having conversation goals and overarching content ideas in mind, we end up “covering” everything we want to cover, in a way that feels natural, relevant and responsive to the participants in the room.
- We end the four week session by helping the participants make plans for continuing the group going forward.
- All participants share cell phone numbers and create a text group so they can communicate in between sessions, ask questions or connect socially. After the final session they are encouraged to discuss where they would like to meet up the following week on their own.

(babytalk, continued)

- We give out a baby gift box to first new babies born in Baltimore, filled with goodies and information about the Center for Jewish Education and PJ Library. We also created a Jewish Baby memory book called Shalom, Baby! That is a beautiful hardcover fully illustrated book for parents to fill out with memories and baby photos. We give both of these to participants of our Baby Talk group as well as to other families in Baltimore. One of the “gifts” we give with these boxes is a PJ library subscription for the new baby.

Secret Sauce

- We utilize our family connectors to help us find families with new babies in outlying areas.
- We use our facebook pages and PJ Library newsletter to help us find families with new babies.
- A talk-based program works with parents of very young babies—we are specifically looking to talk and support the parents themselves.
- We are meeting in fun spaces that draw people.
- The program is free (sometimes critical for parents on family leave - daily activities for parent stimulation get expensive).

Funding Sources: Organization’s general budget

Base

Faith Leener (fleener@hillel.org), Hillel International Office of Innovation

Base seeks to ignite a growing network of people who express their Jewish identity by coming together to celebrate the Jewish calendar, grapple with Jewish texts and traditions, and serve the communities in which we live.

We create this network by empowering young, pluralistic Rabbis and their partners to create local, grassroots, non-denominational Jewish communities in the heart of where life happens: our homes and neighborhoods. There are currently nine Bases in NYC, Miami, Chicago, Boston, Ithaca, and Berlin, Germany that collectively serve roughly 6,000 people a year.

Our vision is that Jews of all backgrounds and affiliations can proudly answer the questions, “Why be Jewish?”; Jews feel regenerated by Judaism’s opportunities for supportive community, deep inquiry, and social action; and Jews are inspired by their diverse extended family, the Jewish people.

Design Principles

- A relational model where individuals have access to two critical opportunities: a local Rabbi who can offer pastoral care and spiritual mentorship, and a diverse community of people seeking less institutionalized Jewish life in their local community or neighborhood.
- An educational model: Every 'Baser' gets an opportunity to learn formally and informally about the Jewish calendar, Jewish texts, and Jewish ritual.
- Every Base is staffed by a highly trained Rabbi who acts as community organizer, teacher, host, spiritual guide, pastor, and communal leader.
- Base weaves communal partnerships into the fabric of our work and aims to supplement our partners (Moishe House, HMI, RTW) with content and Rabbinic expertise.
- Base does no marketing. Everyone who comes is a part of a naturally occurring extended network, adding to the feeling of trust and closeness that Basers are able to feel.

Secret Sauce

- The meeting of minds and hearts in the most intimate of spaces, a home, all while guided by a professional and educated Rabbi and their partner.
- We are able to connect to people in profoundly personal ways, while building local hubs of Jewish life and 'good-neighborliness'.
- Base is low barrier but high content, which people are desperately seeking.

Funding Sources: Jewish Federations, private foundations, participants

You are invited to our Shabbat table! Join us!

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Images of the Possible



CHIdush: Innovations in Part-Time Jewish Education

Scott Aaron (scottaaron@juf.org), Jewish United Fund (Chicago)

Congregational education is the venue of choice for the clear majority of Chicago's Jewish families, but the community has invested relatively little in its evolution and improvement in the last thirty years compared to other educational formats. CHIdush re-imagines and redesigns congregational education in Chicago to meet the current needs of most of the community, and invests in making part-time education a meaningful venue for giving children Jewish tools that will help them thrive in the future as Jewish adults.

CHIdush helps synagogues create compelling Jewish learning experiences that are life-relevant, learner-centered, relationship-based, and content-rich, that propel learners to thrive in their lives right now.

The initiative meets congregations where they are by recognizing their institutional challenges, moderating the historic stigma of blame that permeates the community culture, and offering significant resources and support for improvement and innovation.

Design Principles

- Opportunities through 4 separate tracks based on the congregation's level of readiness for change and improvement:
 - Create and Launch a New Learning Model
 - Re-envision Hebrew Learning
 - Re-imagine Teen Learning Communities
 - The Jewish Education Innovation Fund
- Team-based: Each congregation must have clergy, lay leadership and educators as members.

Each congregational team accepted in to one of the initiative tracks gets:

- Customized coaching and expert consultation
- Opportunities to learn with and from other congregations in the cohort
- Guiding materials
- Financial support customized to their needs
- Capacity building investment in volunteer leaders

Secret Sauce

- Assumption: Congregational education models are part of congregational cultures and cannot be changed for the better without sufficient planning, resources, buy-in, risk-tolerance and time to do so.

(CHIdush, continued)

- Significant planning prior to launch: JUF spent a total of three years prior to launch, including a targeted planning year, collecting critical data, doing the pedagogic leg work, creating communal consultations, and designing each track.
- Qualified staff who could lead: JUF hired qualified staff who could expertly process information learned during the planning phase and, based on what was gleaned, produce a change program before attempting any intervention.
- Consistent and competent coaching
- Sufficient resources for risk-taking (at the JUF level and for synagogues)
- Accountability for communal investment

Funding Sources: Local foundations and individual donors

Community Connectors

Julie Wohl (jwohl@cjeb.org), Macks Center for Jewish Education (Baltimore)

A cohort of young parents who work individually to identify, engage, connect, and build relationships with families raising Jewish children. The Connectors work in a variety of geographic areas in and around Baltimore with specific populations to engage and empower families to cultivate Jewish life experiences. The families that Connectors work with are typically less involved with organized Jewish options and institutions in Baltimore. By providing them with experiences, education, opportunities and social interactions we believe that we can move the needle on Jewish life for families in and around Baltimore.

Impact Goals

- Influence and empower parents to make Jewish choices and engage with Jewish organizational life.

Design Principles

- Through our research and initial implementation of this project, we have learned that young families want to meet other families “where they are,” in neighborhood-based settings, led by peer groups or friends. Families are seeking to find others who share similar backgrounds and values and want to learn organically in an authentic way about Jewish life, traditions, local resources, play spaces and happenings in Jewish Baltimore.
- We focus on educating the Connectors and then empowering them to influence their communities. In so doing we have broadened our reach into Baltimore considerably. Our Connectors are also our eyes and ears in the community, and they help us determine what programming we will offer and the times, locations and ideas that will speak to their contemporaries.
- The Connectors plan and program individually, as pairs, and as a cohort.
- Connectors receive a stipend for their work as well as a budget for their programs. Connectors serve a 2-year term.
- Families learn through experiences, programs and relationships with the Connectors about what they want to incorporate into their own family’s Jewish life.
- Connectors themselves complete the program having learned a great deal about Jewish life and leadership in Baltimore and Jewish engagement in the community. They are empowered to enrich their own Jewish lives and often commit time and resources to the community after completion of the program.

Secret Sauce

- There is no one way to be a Connector or to run a Connector project. We currently have 12 Connectors and each runs their program and develops their relationships in ways that are authentic and unique.

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(community connectors, continued)

- The Connectors themselves are highly motivated, engaged, and well networked. They are fun to be around, and they draw others in. In this way, THEY are the secret sauce.

Funding Sources: Support from Jewish Federation and designated gifts



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Jewish Education &
Engagement

Culture of Belonging

Wendy Verba (wendyv@sfjcf.org), Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund (Bay Area)

An ambitious approach to transform the Bay Area Jewish ecosystem so that dramatically more people can find belonging, meaning and shared purpose within a Jewish community.

Belonging can be measured in four levels: I matter, I'm part of this group, I'm committed, and I trust.

Three big areas of work:

- Equipping Jewish leaders and changemakers with new mindsets, tools and support to shift the way they connect people to each other and to Jewish life;
- Re-tooling Jewish organizations to ensure that anyone can find belonging and shared purpose in Jewish spaces;
- Increasing the number and diversity of young people who find their people and their home within the Jewish world.

Partner with about 40 organizations and 7 synagogues (a growing number! Includes synagogues, schools, JCCs, start-ups, and innovators). Working through communities of practice, grant-making, training and coaching. Working within Federation, within Jewish organizations, and across and between Jewish organizations.

Impact Goals

- More people feel seen and heard in Jewish spaces
- More people feel part of and identified with a Jewish group or community
- More people step up to initiate Jewish activity with and for their peers
- Jewish organizations report stronger participation, volunteer involvement, retention etc.

Process Goals (2019-2020)

80 changemakers representing 60 Jewish organizations on our "practice group" roster

40 changemakers actively experimenting with culture of belonging practices

Two-year day school grant cohort with approximately 10 day schools working on deep culture projects

Rationale

The most effective way people access our rich Jewish tradition and wisdom is through relationships and community – by being seen, asked, heard and invited to explore and co-create their own meaningful, relevant Jewish path. They must feel that they belong and are valued, no matter where they come from, what they look like, how rich or poor, how little (or how much) they know about Judaism, how they feel (or don't feel) about Israel. Then we can shift from people being consumers to being partners in and owners of Jewish life.

(culture of belonging, continued)

Our default organizational dynamic is transactional, and so this does not happen by chance. It requires a shift in the way Jewish life is offered, reorienting everything we do around human connection and belonging to help people make meaning of Jewish content together, and feel seen, heard and valued in Jewish spaces. Culture of Belonging is an approach to structuring Jewish life and organizations to generate a sense of belonging, commitment and shared purpose for everyone, through intentional, systematic design.

Working with community leader Varda Rabin and scholar Dr. Sarale Shadmi-Wortman (Israeli Association of Community Centers (IACC)), Federation has been developing Culture of Belonging mindsets and practices for over four years. The work is embedded in Federation's recently adopted strategic plan.

Secret Sauce

- Creating cultures of belonging requires intentionality and systemic change. It can't rely on accidental connection or friendly people. There are too many people left out.
- It's a mindset shift. We actually rarely structure belonging with consistency and intention. But we can, and the results are instant, magical, and transformational.
- If belonging and connection are goals, everything can be designed everything around that, from programs, budgets, and success measures to systems, structures and expected practices.
- People feel belonging when they are seen and valued for their unique gifts. Invite people to contribute based on their assets.
- The secret sauce is not relationships, but the way groups are designed to ensure that everyone is valued for their unique gifts and integrally included over time.
- Relational engagement (meeting people where they are with authentic curiosity and building Jewish connections with them) is essential and complementary, but it is not the same.
- Build on assets: Identify and celebrate people's skills/gifts rather than focusing on what they need and want.
- Integrate culture of belonging practices into every organizational function and opportunity. (We now offer communities of practice, tools and trainings, and coaching expertise. Culture of belonging principles are incorporated into most funding criteria and we convene groups of grantees for learning and support to strengthen their "belonging" impact.)
- If you don't have time for structuring belonging into your organization, then do less of something else. It's the most important thing.
- Relational and belonging work is not one person's job, it has to infuse everyone's job.

Funding Sources: Unrestricted and designated gifts

Family Engagement and Jewish Life (FEJL)

Mark Sokoll (msokoll@jccgb.org), JCC Greater Boston

Over a decade ago the JCC redefined its mission as helping people construct for themselves a meaningful Jewish identity with our support and without our judgement.

We decided that the audience that would miss us most if we were not here were families with children, especially in the 0-8 years old range. Our existing expertise and capacity in regional early learning centers and day camps provided the ideal platform on which to build. The FEJL initiative grew out of the need to execute on this mission and extend the reach of the JCC to all geographies and demographics in Greater Boston.

In vital partnership with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and Combined Jewish Philanthropies, JCC Greater Boston is the primary partner with HGF for PJ Library and with CJP for layering on top of the delivery of the books a network of family connectors and programs.

FEJL has grown from 1 JCC staff member and 75 monthly PJL subscriptions to a team of 23 and on average 200 new families each month. A total of more than 10,000 families each month (and thousands more cycling through the database) get books, invitations to local programming, information, and connection. With this scale our goals have morphed in measuring impact and how we think strategically about the role of JCC in the future of the Jewish community in Boston together with the organizations in this partnership.

We are now focused on how many pathways in the whole Jewish community can be available for these families as they make their choices about the lives they are building for themselves and on how we inspire a rising tide that will raise all boats. We want to begin digging in on data from the database, the choices families make, the pathways available and that are needed, as a basis for decision making on how to evolve to meet evolving needs.

Goals

- Pioneer a new Jewish communal profession of Family Engagement professional.
- Help families of every type and constellation feel supported and listened to by a community that genuinely values them.
- Help first connect with others who are like them in that they are asking the same questions and wrestling with the same issues as a family, and then with a community that has the resources to support their choices.
- Make available a menu of Jewish choices and pathways that grows organically out of great experiences they are having as a family.

(family engagement and Jewish life, continued)

Design Principles

- PJ Library is an onramp for so many.
- Local; built on personal relationships with others and with professionals who "get them" and "are them."
- Programs are designed through listening and responding to needs and are infused with Jewish values, traditions, and celebrations that speak to the experiences parents want for themselves and their kids.
- Professionals with training, a discipline, and a defined methodology and skill set.

Secret Sauce

- Valuable for thousands of people who are creating their family's life; the JCC and Jewish community are invaluable assets in that process.
- Support is given to participants without judgement.
- Focus on what people want for themselves and not what we want for them.
- Create shared goals and clear roles among partners (CJP, HGF, and JCC Greater Boston). Effective execution happens with trust and shared goals among the partner organizations.
- Find the right professionals who live this work.
- Legacy organizations like the JCC can and must change and rethink business models, revenue mix, operating structure, or risk becoming irrelevant to the folks we aspire to engage.
- The realization that our greatest innovations come at the crossroads of our aspirations and desperations.
- Our biggest risk is losing touch with our most important audiences and markets.

Funding Sources: FEJL is funded through the operating budgets of the three partner organizations (JCCGB, CJP, HGF) and in large part through philanthropy. All three organizations contribute to that philanthropic effort led by the JCC. Data has begun to show significant increases in JCC Camp and Early Learning Center revenue from FEJL families as well as the creation of new revenue generating programs within and beyond the walls of the JCC.

GatherDC

Rachel Gildiner (rachelg@gatherdc.org)

GatherDC is the largest and most trusted Jewish organization exclusively dedicated to connecting Jewish 20s and 30s to each other, to DC Jewish life, and to a sustainable Jewish identity. We ensure the success of every local Jewish organization (in DC) and enhance the entire ecosystem of Jewish millennial engagement, leading to a stronger and more vibrant DC Jewish community. We successfully engage thousands of currently uninvolved young adults across the Greater Washington area not simply by creating programs, but by focusing on personal relationships.

Our work demonstrates that creating more programs is not the only nor most effective answer to reaching more uninvolved young adults. We have seen how forming personal relationships and serving as welcoming guides on their Jewish journeys are keys to ensuring 20s/30s find lasting connection to Judaism. We get to know individuals on a one-on-one basis, co-create meaningful experiences that serve their needs, and offer alternative expressions of Jewish identity and culture that opens the tent of Jewish involvement.

Goals

We want to inspire Jewish 20s/30s to:

- Develop an authentic Jewish identity that brings unique value to their life;
- Find community in the Greater Washington area; and
- Engage with Jewish life in whatever way works best for them.

Additionally, we want to evolve Jewish community engagement to be more relationally focused. We believe that putting people first in every aspect of Jewish communal work is the key to a future where everyone who seeks a connection to Jewish life can feel seen, heard, and valued.

Design Principles

- Relationship based engagement prioritizes people over program.
- Hosting immersive, interactive experiences that happen several times rather than one-off programs.
- Creating and co-creating experiences with input from community members that are customized for where they are Jewishly, emotionally, and physically.
- Staying lean and agile as an organization so we can meet the changing needs of our community.
- Not being afraid to take risks and try new things.
- Tracking, analyzing, and using comprehensive data to inform our work.
- Lifting up our Jewish partners, because we believe success happens when all boats rise.

In order to successfully engage Jewish 20s/30s we must have a deep understanding of their starting point with Judaism, and meet them where they are.

(gatherdc, continued)

Secret Sauce

We orient everything we do on personal, human connections. GatherDC's Heartbeat Model of Engagement depicts the variations in engagement that keep Jewish life alive and active for its community members. The relatively flatline represents relational work that happens in between programmatic offerings such as coffee chats, personal outreach emails, run-ins, phone calls, etc. This type of connection lasts longer and connects distinct experiences to one another. The spikes in the heartbeat reflect the more immersive experiences and planned gatherings that are critical moments for people to deepen their relationships, and explore their Jewish identity in a group. Both are equally necessary - and neither should exist without the other.

Funding Sources: Local family foundations, community members, and grants from Jewish nonprofit organizations including Tikkun Olam Women's Foundation and The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington

Israel Now

Scott Aaron (scottaaron@juf.org), Jewish United Fund (Chicago)

An eighth-grade travel education experience in Israel designed to give 8th grade public and independent student participants a meaningful, intense, emotional, and focused taste of the land and their heritage through a week-long "hands-on" trip.

Developing Jewish teenagers who are knowledgeable about Israel and feel a connection to the Jewish homeland is particularly important as anti-Israel movements continue to grow in breadth and strength. While other JUF programs are dedicated to educating high school and college students about Israel for the purpose of Israel advocacy, it is clear that students must have an appreciation for the country and the role it plays for the Jewish people in addition to a basic understanding of Israel's history, geography and politics, before even considering advocating for Israel. By laying this foundation, we are giving students an opportunity to develop tools which enable them to make informed decisions later in life.

The trip is based on social science data that shows that 8th graders are developmentally different than older high school students who have undergone formative high school social and cultural experiences that impact maturation and cognitive thinking. Israel Now trains its trip staff and educators to frame their facilitation and interaction in a developmentally appropriate way for our participants in order to optimize their experience and comprehension.

IsraelNow will soon be a national program under an independent 501c3 that will support and subsidize trips for 8th graders in communities across North America.

Design Principles

The trip is built around an emphasis on the land and people of Israel and is structured on developmentally appropriate pedagogy for 8th graders.

JUF currently offers both a winter and spring trip that follow identical itineraries and the available dates match up with public school vacation days to the extent possible.

The trip consists of eight days of fast-paced introduction to Israel through personal interaction with Israelis, visiting modern and historical sites, engaging in social action projects, and a crafted Shabbat experience. The teens spend 1.5 days with Israeli 8th grade peers from Chicago's partnership region, including a half-day in the region itself. Participants participate in a special track day with their Israeli peers which exposes them to Israel through pre-selected specialty programs at interest-specific sites around Israel. This is designed to engage the participants in areas of personal interest to their current lives in order to help them formulate a more personal narrative about Israel. Additionally, participants are assigned to 6-person "family groups" led by a trip staff person who is trained to lead a daily reflective discussion and record participants' experiences.

(israel now, continued)

In addition to sharing the participant assessments with each participant's "home" synagogue education professionals, JUF is inputting data into a master database shared with the JUF teen division so they can immediately start guiding students into targeted opportunities during their high school years.

Secret Sauce

- Trust between Federation and community institutional partners;
- Trust of Federation by parents to safely and securely entrust their children on a trip to Israel;
- Trust by the community that the trip is developmentally appropriate, educationally sound and pluralistic in its approach.
- The program's emphasis that the involvement of the trip participants in Jewish life and Israel during their high school years is the objective rather than the trip itself. That priority guides the institutional partnerships, allocation of resources and training of staff rather than placing the outcome emphasis on just the trip experience itself.

Funding Sources: Parents are asked to pay half of the cost of the trip with federation subsidizing the other half plus operational costs. (No eligible child is turned away for financial reasons.) Federation funds for the trip come from supplemental giving and departmental allocation.

jBaby Chicago

Julie Brodsky (juliebrodsky@juf.org), Jewish United Fund

jBaby Chicago is a fresh, community-oriented, and personalized approach to high quality and relevant programming geared exclusively to expectant and new parents (children ages 0-2 years) in the Jewish community. While any family seeking Jewish connections and programming is welcome, outreach efforts are designed to specifically target first-time parents, interfaith families, and/or families not currently connected with a Jewish organization.

Within this Jewish context, jBaby Chicago increases opportunities for caregivers to establish strong friendships and social networks using tools such as: trained (and paid) Parent Ambassadors, free welcome baby swag bags, high quality playgroups, classes and holiday events, strengthening capacity of Jewish community partners, and efficiently sharing information via a bi-monthly e-newsletter with a round-up of the top five ways to “do Jewish” with your baby/tot.

jBaby has the power to re-weave the social fabric among new Jewish parents and create a strong community. jBaby continues to help new families find their "village" and provides access to Jewish opportunities such as holiday celebrations, tot Shabbats, and exclusive tours of preschools that they would not have had otherwise.

Since March 2014, 2,500 families have engaged with jBaby, and two-thirds of these families indicate that jBaby is the only Jewish activity with which they are currently involved.

Design Principles

Focus on parents. jBaby Chicago as well as the other programs offered by JUF Young Families (PJ Library and JUF Right Start) center upon our value proposition: the ability to identify families with young children and connect them to Jewish life in ways that meet their needs and support their growth.

Ambassadors

- jBaby Chicago employs 12 parent ambassadors who are trained (and paid) who meet new parents and offer support, connections, and resources. Approximately 80% of families who signed up for jBaby in 2018 participated in a jBaby Chicago activity and we attribute this success to our team of Parent Ambassadors who formed strong personal relationships with jBaby families and helped lower any barriers to participation.
- Our ambassadors live in geographically diverse parts of the Chicagoland area and they are also Jewishly diverse, ranging from Reform and Conservative to “Just Jewish.”
- Additionally, two of our ambassadors are in interfaith partnerships.

Community Partnerships

- jBaby partners with 22 local Jewish organizations to provide families with a variety of opportunities.

(jbaby, continued)

- Programmatic and financial support from jBaby allows our partners to develop new opportunities to welcome families from across the community and become hubs for engagement.
- 91% of our community partners report increased capacity for serving expectant and/or new families, and hundreds of parents are now opting to participate in these newly available Jewish experiences.

Social Media

- Parents are savvy social media users. We use Facebook and Instagram as platforms to share out information.
- We have closed neighborhood groups that are monitored by our parent ambassadors. These closed groups allow parents to share information or ask questions of each other.
- A bi-monthly e-newsletter is sent out to parents with a round-up of the “Top 5” ways to “do Jewish” with their baby/tot.

Secret Sauce

- High standard of excellence that parents expect from family-oriented programming.
- Meet parents’ needs as parents; putting families’ needs and interests first and creating experiences that are convenient and relevant.
- Build authentic relationships between ambassadors and parents.
- The wisdom, connection, and community of Judaism and Jewish life has much to offer families at this unique life stage, but it is only when our offerings intersect with families’ own needs and interests that there is true and long-lasting engagement. Therefore, all of our programs begin with design-centered thinking—taking into account the developmental cycles of families and the key points when decisions are made—and coupling it with what we know about how parents seek information, what decision-making criteria they use, and what they value for themselves and their families. Through this process, we proudly offer programs that intersect with their lives in relevant ways.
- Our department values a culture of feedback, outcome measurement, and reflection, ensuring that our programs are continually refined to meet the evolving needs of our community.
- In both recognizing and valuing the diversity of Chicago’s Jewish community, we are committed to making our programs inclusive and welcoming to all families.

Funding Sources: 100% funded by 2 local, private foundations.

Jewish Matryoshka Project

Zina Segal (zsegal@cjebaltimore.org), Macks Center for Jewish Education

<https://www.facebook.com/JewishMatryoshka/>

A program for Russian-speaking (or interested) Jewish families to connect, access resources in the Jewish community and connect with Israel. We're creating a space where families can share in Jewish and Russian tradition, enjoy books and events catered to a unique Russian-speaking Jewish culture and make new friends (that don't require an explanation about your New Year's Tree or your love of gefilte fish!).

A matryoshka is the perfect representation of complex family identities of Russian Speaking Jews who feel themselves Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Kazakhstani, while also Jewish, American, Israeli. Like the matryoshka of many layers, our identities run far richer and more meaningful than who we appear to be on the surface. And those identities play a tremendous role in the children we raise and the families we nurture.

Jewish Matryoshka Project is an engagement initiative of the Center for Jewish Education and PJ Library. The project is run by two family connectors (volunteers who are receiving budgets to implement programs and events) and a coordinator.

Goals

- Create a network of Russian-speaking Jewish families
- Connect participants to local Jewish community and to each other

Design Principles

- Run by volunteers, who are personally interested in developing this network.
- People are interested in keeping Russian-Jewish traditions at home, so they are seeking for Russian-speaking friends for their kids and themselves.
- Be as inclusive as possible and accommodate needs of Russian-speaking families of any kind (religious, atheistic, more Russian-speaking, less Russian-speaking, more Jewish, less Jewish, interfaith and multicultural)
- Use PJ Library books and materials as inspiration for our programs.
- Kindness, openness, and high-quality programming.
- Programs are created and run by members of the Russian-speaking Jewish community who are not employees of a Jewish organization. They are paid volunteers who live in this community, and whose passion for Jewish life is as varied and layered as the matryoshka doll.

Funding Sources: Genesis Philanthropy Group, Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Federation allocation and organizational budget, participants' fees

jHUB

Rabbi Melinda Mersack (mmersack@jecc.org), Jewish Federation of Cleveland

jHUB was founded to provide a new way for interfaith couples and families to comfortably explore, discover and personalize the meaning of Jewish culture and values in the modern world. jHUB offers a variety of resources and programming to help interfaith couples navigate life's challenges in a comfortable place — at their own pace. A number of participants see jHUB as an entryway to Jewish life, a connector to other Jewish programs and institutions in the area, while others are satisfied by their participation with jHUB's offerings for Jewish connection. In an evaluation performed by Rosov Consulting, participants expressed that because of their involvement with jHUB they now feel welcomed and valued both by jHUB and the Jewish community in Greater Cleveland. Participants also expressed that, due to their involvement with jHUB, they feel empowered to make Judaism their own and celebrate Jewishly in ways that are meaningful to them and their families.

Design Principles

- Jewish holiday programs
- Holiday boxes to empower people to celebrate in their own homes
- Interfaith couples workshops and grandparenting interfaith grandchildren groups to support families as they navigate issues unique to being part of an interfaith family
- Jewish clergy referral for officiation needs
- Resource to local Jewish clergy and institutions for best practices in welcoming and including interfaith families in Jewish life and community

Secret Sauce

jHUB is non-prescriptive.

- Staff offer resources and Jewish experiences to support people on their personal journeys, without any other agenda.
- jHUB does not judge or make a decision about what any couple or family should or should not do or should or should not believe.
- jHUB empowers couples and families to explore Judaism and embrace it in ways that are meaningful to them and help them thrive as human beings.
- jHUB staff embody and live jHUB's core values: non-judgmental, understanding and responsive.
- Interacting with jHUB participants, staff members maintain open hearts and communicate with open minds. They listen without bias. They are cognizant of the vulnerability of those seeking their services. They strive to personalize each encounter, delivering the best possible answer for each individual and their family. jHUB is welcoming and accepting and values people for who they are, as they are.

(jhub, continued)

Funding Sources: jHUB is funded by the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland and various donors, foundations and grants.

jHUB is an initiative of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland (JFC) and the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JEC). When JFC conceived of jHUB, it determined that jHUB should be housed at the JEC. This was to protect jHUB's mission and ensure jHUB participants would not mistakenly think that jHUB's goal was to recruit new campaign donors for JFC. Additionally, housing jHUB at the JEC allows freedom to plan its activities and events, unrestricted by JFC's calendar and programs. JFC's deliberate planning for how to best structure jHUB illustrates its commitment to the jHUB mission.

JLIFE

Ted Cohen (tcohen@jfmd.org)

Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit and Federation CJA of Montreal

JLIFE will be a digital platform & app to connect individuals to Jewish experiences, offering its users access to a wide range of Jewish events, programs, classes and other opportunities. Powered by Federation on behalf of the entire community, JLIFE will provide an organized and cohesive structure that supports our institutions and organizations using contemporary modes of connection, engagement and interaction.

Our ultimate impact is to increase the participation of Jewish individuals in Jewish life by making it orders of magnitude easier for them to learn about, register, and share community-wide programs and events. If individuals go to just one or two more programs a year because of this improvement in communication technology, the effect across the community will be enormous. We see this as a driver for not only more overall participation but also increased exposure to other types of Jewish opportunities that will help guide the "Jewish Journey" of an individual. For instance, a young single person, who uses JLIFE to learn about Jewish NextGen events, will be able to easily access Jewish family activities when they reach that stage of life.

There are three beneficiaries to this product:

1. The user, who will find it much easier to access and share Jewish programs that are specific to their interests
2. The organizations, who will have a far more effective means of reaching their customers and maintaining ongoing connection than current outdated modes.
3. The community overall, who will see greater cohesion and collaboration by offering a shared platform, and who will benefit from anonymized data that reflects community-member behavior on a global scale.

We are in the early stage of product development, and anticipate a beta launch in Montreal and Detroit in mid-2020, followed by roll-out to other communities across North America.

Design Principles

- User Centric: The product is 100% built around the end-user and organizational customers. It is designed to solve their problems and developed based on their needs and preferences.
- Collaborative: JLIFE will only work if a 'critical mass' of organizations are committed together to using the platform. JLIFE harnesses the power of the collective communal landscape.

(jlife, continued)

- The greatest barrier to Jewish participation and engagement is not a lack of great programming and content—or interest—but rather the relative difficulty and friction in the process. Individuals from every demographic now expect a seamless and customized experience when accessing products. Like Amazon, Uber, MindBody and Open Table, JLIFE will change behaviors by making the user experience ‘orders-of-magnitude’ easier than the existing modes used by Jewish organizations.

We have secured financial commitments from a number of Jewish funders and foundations, in Montreal, Detroit and nationally—all of who are committed to strengthening Jewish life locally and on a global scale.

Makom Community

Beverly Socher-Lerner (beverly@makomcommunity.org)

Makom Community is a Jewish enrichment center in Philadelphia, PA that serves urban, working-parent families who are looking for a deep and engaging model of Jewish education that meets the logistical needs of their lives.

Makom Community families feel connected to Judaism as they are, know that Jewish wisdom offers grounding and resources to allow us to thrive, and they expect interactions with Jewish community to be compelling, attainable, and work for their whole family.

Makom Community is part of a larger conversation about new and exciting models for Jewish afterschool learning. Families all over the country are looking to expand their options beyond Hebrew School and Jewish Day School. Jewish after school has huge potential to reach families who are currently opting out of Jewish education for most of their children's school years.

Design Principles

Makom Community marries the need for after school childcare with the need for compelling models for Jewish education. Our informal, joyful, and deep Jewish education reaches people where they are and invites them to bring their whole selves and families into our community. Parents frequently participate in our programming with their children, giving them quality time together and insight into each other's lives through being part of Makom Community.

Makom Community is user-centered and begins with understanding the needs of our community members. We frequently make ourselves available to listen and continue to understand our community members, their needs, pain spots, and bright spots better.

Secret Sauce

What makes this initiative work is meeting more than one need at a time in a way that brings a surprising amount of joy, support, and connection to families in ways and times they may not have expected it. We prioritize joyful relationships at every level-- with children, parents, siblings, and grandparents. That underlies our work and access to Jewish wisdom at every stage.

Funding Sources: Tuition, grant funding, individual donors. Overwhelmingly tuition funded after year 3 in a location. Years 1-2 in a new site rely more on grant and individual funders.

Moishe House Without Walls (MHWOW)

Josh Neirman (jneirman@gmail.com), Moishe House

I have used MHWOW to bring Jews together from around the Washington, DC area in their 20s and early 30s.

The goals have been to connect people to Jewish community who might not otherwise have been involved. Over three years I've engaged hundreds of Jews in programs that have ranged from 4 to 40 attendees.

I do not work for Moishe House. I have been a community member since 2009 and a Moishe House Without Walls host from October 2016 through October 2019 while hosting over 60 programs. Moishe House has helped engage me and provided so many resources that helped continue to develop me as a community leader and get even more involved Jewishly.

Design Principles & Secret Sauce

- MHWOW is peer led, low barrier and there are plenty of resources available to create whatever Jewish program you want.
- People will want to engage more in the Jewish community with their peers. They will realize that if one of their peers is creating Jewish programs and community then they can do it too.
- MHWOW can easily be replicated around the world as long as you know or find a few Jews. It is on the front lines of Jewish program design because it is being created by the Jews that we are trying to engage.
- The resources, support, staff enthusiasm and the enthusiasm of the MHWOW hosts.

NuRoots

Jason Leivenberg (jleivenberg@jewishla.org), The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles

NuRoots mobilizes and inspires people in their 20s and 30s to create meaningful Jewish community across Los Angeles. We seek to upend traditional engagement models by sparking relationships and co-creating grassroots experiences that activate young adults driven by reimagined Jewish life and creative Jewish expression. We strive to expand, diversify, and network compelling Jewish experiences and spaces for young Jewish Angelenos so they may find, own and engineer fulfilling lives and sustainable, enriching communities.

Our Hope: Young adults live vibrant and purposeful Jewish lives, possess Jewish self-confidence and are fueled by self-discovery to feel part of something bigger than themselves.

Our Vision: We envision inspired and fulfilled young adults who are empowered to 'do Jewish' on their own terms. We also envision an inclusive Jewish community based in people-to-people connection and creativity that provides grounding, belonging and meaning for young adults at this critical juncture in their lives.

We are driven by this question: How can we reimagine what it means to be Jewish today by finding relevant, purposeful, and fun ways to connect without compromising the integrity of our Jewish tradition and wisdom?

Goals

- Jewish Expression: Increased awareness and knowledge of different ways to be Jewish and to how to express being Jewish.
- Jewish Pathways: Increase connections to Jewish opportunities.
- Jewish Ownership: Increase the personal integration of Jewish values and activities into their lives
- Jewish Community: Gaining a stronger sense of connection to a Jewish community
- Jewish Exploration: Creation of local community networks of Jewish young adults designed around their needs and interests to support exploration of Jewish life and learning

Design Principles & Secret Sauce

- The One-on-One Is Our Greatest Gift: Relationship building is our greatest asset to community building and ensure young adults want to opt into Jewish life. The "one-on-one" continues to be as much a Jewish experience (and often times more) than other traditional experiences and rhythms of Jewish life. These are the laboratories of personal connection and help give our community members permission to ask, share, and be in the ways they need to take their next step on their journey.

(nuroots, continued)

- The Power of "With": We partner with young adults to co-create diverse scales of experiences that cannot be found in existing Jewish institutions. The "Co-Creation" process puts community members in the driver's seat of their own Jewish journey, empowering them to create remixed gatherings infused with accessible and deep Jewish content.
- Branding and Packaging Matter: We provide honest, culturally relevant, and creative language and packaging to help complement our content. We leverage the power of tone, aesthetic, and graphic architecture to shape how young adults make choices. We are pushing the boundaries of what it means to unbundling Jewish tradition without compromising it's beauty and wisdom in our brand and visual offerings.

Our values serve as the road map for how we operate in and with our community:

- Modern Interpretation: We believe there are endless possibilities to connect creatively with what it means to be Jewish through a modern day lens.
- Hyper-Local Roots: We believe that to be relevant to our community, we must be in constant conversation with the diversity of people, places and ideas across Los Angeles.
- Warm Invitation: We believe meaningful community develops through personal relationship, intimate moments, and purposeful inclusivity.
- Creative Integrity: We believe that reimagination of Jewish wisdom requires exploration of our ancient traditions.
- Experimentation + Exploration: We believe that learning and experience exist for their own sake on the path to human flourishing.
- Communal Table: We believe people and organizations must collaborate and build trust to have the greatest community impact.

FIVE PRONG ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

FIELD ENGAGEMENT: We fuel self-exploration, one relationship at a time: Powered by Neighborhood-based (Eastside, Westside, Valley, Mid-City) and demographic-focused (Iranian-American, Russian-Speaking, Couples) Community Engagement Fellows, NuRoots employs dynamic community organizers and creative educators who find and connect with unengaged young adults throughout the entirety of Los Angeles, creating and nurturing authentic personal relationships through face to face interactions and moments. Fellows shape conversations with individuals through deep questions about community and identity; they challenge and provoke community members; and ultimately help young adults envision and define what being Jewish means to them personally – on their terms. As Fellows help expand people's perceptions and definition of what it means to be Jewish, they help chart Jewish engagement paths of connection for individuals.

(nuroots, continued)

EXPERIENTIAL ENGAGEMENT: We foster approachable community by reimagining and customizing tradition through diverse scales of gatherings and experiences, co-created by our community. We help our young adult co-creators produce innovative and remixed Jewish gatherings, by empowering them to take ownership over their own visions of Judaism, Jewishness and community. We help them host public and private experiences across the city for other young adults to participate in creative and interesting offerings exploring diverse facets of Jewish life. Experiences are multisensory and participatory; and uncovering ideas and topics ranging from different interpretation of Jewish ritual to Jewish community across the globe. Our four signature city-wide festivals for Sukkot, Chanukah Passover, and Tu B'Av are entry points to engage thousands of young adults each year in holiday celebration that are relevant and diverse.

IMMERSIVE ENGAGEMENT: From Birthright Israel and Honyemoon Israel to partnerships with JDC Entwine and Trybal Gatherings, we offer young adults in their 20s and 30s opportunities to create a community away from home to then bring back to their life in LA

PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT: NuRoots partners and collaborates with diverse Jewish organizations across LA. These partnerships ensure that deep and innovative Jewish programs are available through a mosaic of experiences across Los Angeles. Workshops, meet-ups and convenings enable us to think together about the most pressing opportunities and challenges.

Funding Sources: Internal Federation budget and individual/ private foundations and donors.

Want to grab coffee?

OLAM: Building a Networked Field

Amy Weiss, (amy@olamtogether.org)

OLAM is a network of Jewish individuals and organizations committed to engaging the Jewish world in global service, international development, and humanitarian aid as an expression of Jewish values. OLAM's 53 partner organizations self-identify as Jewish and/or Israeli and work with vulnerable communities in developing countries. They include nonprofits, social impact businesses, networks, academic programs, and governmental institutions. Collectively, OLAM's partner organizations work in 90 countries, employ almost 2,000 salaried staff, and engage close to 2,500 volunteers in meaningful work overseas. Recently, OLAM has expanded its network to include Jews working in the fields of global service, international development, and humanitarian aid outside of a Jewish framework, such as Peace Corps, USAID or the World Bank. OLAM and its partners have together nurtured a community of learning, shared practices, collaboration and trust.

Network Building Components

- Focal Point - an annual gathering that offers the opportunity for Jews engaged in global service, international development, and humanitarian aid to network, exchange ideas and best practices.
- Impact Fellowship - A year long immersive experience aimed at educating, inspiring, and empowering Jewish communal professionals to become champions for global Jewish service and international development in their organizations and among their constituents.
- OLAM in Motion Travel Subsidies - subsidized travel program that enables OLAM partner organizations and individual members to build bridges to the Jewish world and to each other.
- Webinars and Skills Building - monthly webinars strengthen skills, further connections amongst OLAM partners and nurture professional growth.
- Study Trips - annual, immersive, field-based experiences for key leaders in Jewish life to experience the power of global work and service.
- Ally Organizations - connect with key Jewish organizations and communities to increase Jewish engagement with global service; raise awareness of global issues and appreciate global service and international development as an expression of Jewish values.

Impact Goals

- Unite a diverse set of 53 Jewish and Israeli global service and international development organizations under a shared platform.
- Communicating the value of global Jewish service to the Jewish community.
- Foster an environment of trust and openness among partners that catalyzes concrete collaborations.
- Equip partner organizations with tools, skills and resources to deepen their impact in global communities.

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(olam, continued)

- Amplify the work of OLAM partner organizations in the global Jewish community.
- Act as a signpost for young Jews to global Jewish service opportunities in the developing world.

Design Principles

- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The challenges of the world are large, complex and multidimensional. No one funder, organization or person can tackle them alone. Only by combining resources, wisdom and expertise can we make a real difference.
- Acknowledge and celebrate differences and similarities between partner organizations.
- Provide a balance of planned gatherings and organic, grassroots points of connection to foster relationships between our partners.
- A 'big tent' approach. People act for different reasons. We bring together individuals and institutions with different motivations around a shared commitment to improve the quality and integrity of our work with vulnerable communities.
- Diverse ways to act. There are many ways to serve the world's most vulnerable communities and all approaches have a role in improving the world.
- Meet regularly with partners, show up to partners events, offer consultations and connections and always ask for feedback.
- Listen and respond. OLAM doesn't just collect data and opinions, OLAM puts it into action by providing research reports to the field.
- Utilize the expertise of the community to provide opportunities for peer led learning and peer driven initiatives and ideas.
- Large gatherings and programs are equally as important as one on one relationships.

Secret Sauce

- Relationship building between OLAM and its partners and amongst its partners.
- Intentionality - doing less is doing more. OLAM only takes on programs that deepen our impact on the work of our partners. We don't gather for the sake of gathering nor program for the sake of programming.
- High level of delivery which results in big impact and buy-in.
- Voices of partners are encouraged, heard and responded to through various mediums.
- Deep level of shared values and vision for the world and Jewish community.
- Humility and selflessness on the part of our partners and OLAM.
- OLAM is here to build up the work of our partner organizations, not just to build up OLAM.

Funding Sources: OLAM is supported by Adnim Foundation, Anne Heyman and Seth Merrin Family Fund, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, Pears Foundation, and Toleo Foundation.

Onward Israel

Ilan Wagner (ilanw@onwardisrael.org)

Onward Israel offers resume building opportunities – internships, academic study and fellowships – providing a global, cross-cultural experience in Israel and direct contact with Israeli peers. Onward Israel meets participants where they are- giving them a professional internship opportunity in Israel and an authentic living experience (usually after Birthright). The program has grown from 265 participants in 2012 to a projected 3000 in 2020. Our vision is to reach 5000 participants a year.

In a participant's words: The opportunity that Onward provided was an invaluable experience of cultural immersion that allowed for deep understanding and integration into another society. It furthered the pursuit of education in every respect; from culture, to history, politics, and religion. I was able to satiate my desire to explore and learn through experience with ... independence I was able to leave with an appreciation and understanding of Israeli life and in turn, work experience in my projected field.

Goals

Provide participants with an immersive resume-building experience in Israel, featuring opportunities such as internships, academic courses, and fellowships.

Design Principles

Participants experience day-to-day life in Israel, with all of its complexities and challenges. They interact with regular Israelis. They emerge with a much better appreciation and understanding of Israel, a more realistic and sophisticated understanding of both Israel and Jewish life. Even those who started the program with generally positive feelings about Israel return home with noticeably increased confidence in explaining the current situation in Israel and their appreciation of Jewish diversity.

Onward Israel offers a competitive and attractive venue for young people seeking such experiences at affordable prices, for time periods ranging from six to ten weeks. While meeting the individual needs of the participants, Onward Israel speaks directly to the interests and concerns of young adults entering the labor force in a globalized world. Our programs maximize opportunities for cross-cultural immersion, a feature that is highly prized by employers and academic institutions.

Secret Sauce

Partner collaboration, being participant-centric, creating authentic experiences, allowing local ownership

Funding Sources: Major foundations, Government of Israel through Masa, local Federations and institutions, participants

PJ Plus

Sam Bacher (sbacher@ujafed.org), UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

Building on the success of PJ Library, PJ Plus is a 10-week curriculum-based parent-child program for young children aged 18 months to three years. Similar to Gymboree or other similar programs, the 90-minute sessions include circle times, an arts and crafts activity, stories and songs. Each session is focused on a Jewish value brought into focus by a PJ Library book and guided activities.

PJ Plus brings parents (and grandparents) together with their children in an intentionally Jewish multi-meeting program. In addition to being fun, parents get to know one another, share the stories and experiences of parenting, and organize play dates and get together for their kids (and themselves).

The program builds on parents' love of PJ Library and brings parents into a high-quality program similar to other options they might purchase in the public market or go to at a public library.

Design Principles

- Parents/grandparents bring kids - not nannies.
- There is consistency to the program - ie it's not once off.
- We run it in a variety of spaces- in collaboration with JCCs, synagogues and day schools, in public libraries, and in private homes.
- Parents are looking for things to do with their kids and opportunities to meet other parents.

Funding Sources: internal Federation budget and participant fees

PJ Our Way Design Team

Brenda Footer (bfooter@cjebaltimore.org), Macks Center for Jewish Education (Baltimore)

A leadership group made up of eight to ten children, ages eight to twelve years old, open to all Jewish "tweens" in Baltimore City and County and Carroll County, Maryland. Intended for children on the team to act as "community connectors" by helping the program facilitator design programs for their peers and by encouraging their peers to participate in these programs.

Design Principles

- Low-barrier, free initiative. All Jewish tweens are encouraged to participate, regardless of their observance level or school. Children can interact with peers across the community.
- Parents are invited to stay for the meeting if they wish, but many choose to drop off. This makes it easy for families to fit it into their schedules.
- Monthly meetings are short and feature a variety of activities appropriate for the children's developmental stage, and include dinner. Activities include fun team-building activities and focus on the children's development and leadership.

Goals

Children participating in the Design Team will:

- Develop leadership skills.
- View themselves as creators of community.
- Continue to be leaders in Jewish life after their participation in the Design Team through various opportunities from the JCC, BBYO, young philanthropy, and synagogue youth groups.

Secret Sauce

- Letting kids take the lead. We listen to their ideas and value their input. We expect them to be responsible, contributing members of the team. We place our trust in them.
- Children are excited by extending the experience of choosing books to taking the lead in their own experiences. "Tweens" are entering a time in their life when they are starting to make more decisions for themselves. Children on the Design Team are excited to be viewed as experts. Families are excited to develop their children's leadership skills and for them to have unique experiences like trips to visit other Jewish communities and special events within Baltimore.
- The Design Team facilitator is a master Jewish educator with an understanding of child development, so this initiative is appropriate and fun for the participating team members.
- But, she is a facilitator, helping to make their ideas a reality
- The team members' ideas are turned into real programming they feel proud to share with their friends. This in turn involves more children and families in Jewish life.

Funding Sources: Support from Jewish Federation

SketchPad: Chicago's Jewish Innovation Space

Irene Lehrer Sandalow (irene@sketchPadchicago.org)

SketchPad is Chicago's only designated coworking space for Jewish nonprofit organizations and mission-driven professionals. We seek to maximize the impact of our member organizations by fostering collaboration, innovation, and resource-sharing in a supportive and joyful environment while promoting Jewish values such as *hachnasat orchim*, or radical hospitality and environmental sustainability. With shared overhead costs and savings in staff time on administrative tasks, members have more time to focus on innovation and mission-related activities. SketchPad provides a supportive community of colleagues that serve as a sounding board, providing input, fostering new ideas, and, when possible, introducing each other to new resources and networks. SketchPad has 17 organizational members and over a dozen community members. These organizations' missions include a broad range of topics and initiatives including social and environmental justice, Jewish education, community building, community advocacy, and more.

Design Principles

SketchPad serves the essential needs of Chicago's Jewish social innovation sector, including developing Jewish organizations and Jewish communal professionals. To address the needs of the sector, SketchPad:

Promotes, nurtures, and accelerates innovation through a collaborative work environment:

- Chicago is host to a growing number of emerging and established innovative Jewish organizations that are designing new ways to engage Chicago's changing Jewish community. Though these organizations have outsized impacts, most are quite small—made up of fewer than 10 staff members. SketchPad's welcoming environment and intentional collaborative spirit address many challenges facing the “lonely entrepreneur,” including staff retention, motivation, and efficiency. As Chicago's emerging Jewish communal professionals stretch the limits of Jewish innovation, SketchPad provides a support network —ensuring these trailblazers are not alone along their journey. With a profound commitment to radical hospitality, the combined programmatic impact of the member organizations forms an enriching ecosystem that fosters lifelong Jewish involvement and engagement.

Supports our professionals by offering regular professional development opportunities:

- SketchPad hosts ongoing professional development opportunities designed around the unique needs of its member organizations.

Supports our professionals in grounding work in Jewish wisdom:

- At SketchPad, we offer regular Jewish learning opportunities for our members and the broader community. The Jewish community in Chicago benefits from being led by professionals and lay leaders who are immersed in a culture that values continuous learning, especially in Jewish texts, tradition, and Jewish thought. These learning opportunities provide Jewish communal

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professionals more language, tools, and inspiration to engage their communities and Jewish wisdom that is applicable to people's everyday questions and struggles.



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(sketchpad, continued)

SketchPad is a value-driven workspace community and the reason SketchPad has the reputation as a warm, welcoming, lively Jewish space. Our values include:

- A belief in the power of community building, relationships, the exchange of ideas, and radical hospitality
- Dedication to a variety of types of learning
- Supporting and incubating bold, emerging, innovative ideas that will make a difference in the world
- Nurturing a joyful, supportive, collaborative, and productive work environment
- Commitment to living out our Jewish social justice values and a belief that we have a responsibility to make our society more just and more compassionate

Concretely, Sketchpad offers:

- A workplace environment structured so that Jewish nonprofit professionals from a variety of organizations collaborate, share resources, and have reduced operational costs
- Classes, workshops, and events that encourage upskilling, networking, and collaboration
- Internal systems that promote collaboration and resource-pooling
- Member committees that ensure:
 - SketchPad is meeting the physical and material needs and wants of members (Space Committee)
 - SketchPad is an environment that promotes Jewish values (Spirit Committee)
 - SketchPad remains an environmentally and socially conscious space (Space & Green Committees)
 - SketchPad offers quality, relevant opportunities for members to upskill and grow (Network Committee)

Secret Sauce

SketchPad was founded by a collaborative group of organizations and this grassroots approach continues to be essential to our success. Most of our members participate in SketchPad committees to ensure that our offerings and culture continue to reflect the needs of our community. The committees also ensure that our members remain invested in building SketchPad's collaborative culture.

Funding Sources: Earned Revenue through membership fees and space rentals, grants, and individual donations.

The Jewish Learning Fellowship (JLF)

Erica Frankel (efrankel@hillel.org), Hillel International's Office of Innovation

The Jewish Learning Fellowship (JLF) is a ten-week educational seminar for Jewish college students of low to moderate levels of Jewish engagement run by the Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Experience at Hillel International. JLF introduces college students to the study of Torah, the practice of the Jewish calendar and life in a Jewish community in a pluralistic environment. Today, 3,500 students are enrolled in JLF on nearly 200 campuses, making it the largest Jewish educational program on campus in North America.

Goals

JLF graduates:

- Have a Jewish mentor to help them address life's big questions
- Have a strong Jewish social network
- Love the study of Torah
- Live the Jewish calendar

Design Principles

Over the course of a semester in the Jewish Learning Fellowship, students emerge not only inspired to learn more Jewishly but as members of a community — with a friend group and mentor to anchor their communal participation.

JLF adds two critical components to traditional study: (1) it builds a cohort of students within each class who befriend one another and support each other in their entrance into Jewish communal life, and (2) it teaches classical Jewish texts by drawing on the life experience and intuition of college students, conveying some of the building blocks of a vibrant Jewish life.

JLF classes are 20–25 student seminars co-taught by two senior educators. Additionally, each class engages two older students who function as peer- to-peer engagers. These can be interns or paid student workers. Much like counselors-in-training at a camp, or “big-siblings” in a fraternity or sorority, these older students facilitate group cohesion and help onboard students into communal life by inviting them to events and programs. Each class spends two Shabbats together outside of class, one at the educator's house and one on campus. Participants earn a \$300 scholarship for their participation in the fellowship.

Even with JLF's large enrollment, there is an unmet need, with a waiting list of more than 500 students who would like to study and a list of dozens of campuses who would like to run JLF but currently lack the resources.

(the Jewish learning fellowship, continued)

Class topics focus on issues of immediate interest to students and present them through a Jewish lens.

Current curricula include:

- Life's Big Questions: Or How to Get More Out of College
- Judaism as Art: A Search for Congruity
- Pursuing Justice
- Sex, Love, and Romance: Toward a Postmodern Jewish Ethic
- Judaism From the Inside Out: Spiritual Practices for Real Life
- Big Israel Questions

Secret Sauce

Educators make no claims about the “right” way to practice or not to practice Judaism. Rather, our job is to help young adults learn classical texts and explore the tradition in a safe space, and find their own place, on their terms, in Judaism’s great conversation.

JLF is designed as a community building experience, not just a content-delivery mechanism. Every detail, from icebreakers to decor, from shabbat experiences to student interns, are considered and refined to bolster social networks. JLF succeeds not when students learn Torah alone, but when they leave the ten weeks of class with a group of friends, a sense of community, and a relationship with the local rabbi/educator.

JLF provides invaluable professional development. While students are the clear end-user of JLF, the process of learning how to teach content, construct UX, and manage social architecture are excellent professional development opportunities for junior and senior Hillel staff alike. Critically, these learnings take place in situ, in the campus context where the professionals are working. Thus lessons need not be transferred from the seminar or classroom back into the campus space. The campus is the classroom.

Lastly, JLF creates a common curriculum for Hillel. Hillel has long dreamt of a “Hillel curriculum” which could be applied broadly across campuses of every type — from elite to commuter, from public to private, from large to small. JLF has been roundly successful in each of these environments, thus becoming the manifestation of a common curriculum. Moreover, as Hillel educators teach JLF they develop their own insights, teachings, and reference points. We regularly collect, analyze, and collate this material, re-publishing curricula with the editions, commentary, and quoted insights of field staff. The result is a kind of “Talmud” of Hillel curriculum. This is a profound endeavor. Indeed, it is the first inkling of a bottom-up, shared vision of Hillel Jewish education.

Funding Sources: Donations; funds are raised in partnership between Hillel International and the local campus.

The Tribe

Arinne Braverman (Arinne@ToStrength.com), Returning the Sparks

The Tribe strengthens Jewish identity and character by teaching Jewish values experientially, builds Jewish community by creating connections with other Jewish families, and strengthens Jewish families by deepening the parent-child relationship.

In its pilot year, “tribe-size” groups of Jewish families, 85 in total, met together twice per month, engaged in activities focused on teaching Jewish values. “Tribes” were formed by a supported coordinator from a JCC and a local Jewish Russian American group matching eight families together following their children's school grades (Kindergarten through Second Grade), their proximity in the town in which they live, their affinity group (if desired), and the language the meeting would be conducted in. The eight families now gather for a two hour meeting, hosted on a rotating basis in the home of a Tribe family or in a community building, once per month. Families also were invited to attend an existing family activity in their community together once per month, as a tribe. Additionally, families are provided with optional Jewish values-based activities to engage in at home each month, on their own time.

Measures of Success (Goals)

- After nine months of Tribe participation, families reported a 260% increase in feeling connected to the Jewish community.
- At the time of enrollment, 78% of Tribe families were not affiliated with a synagogue and only 14% of Tribe families then expressed interest in learning about Jewish values. After nine months, Tribe families reported a 69% increase in the frequency of intentionally engaging in “living Jewish values and doing ‘good deeds’” on a monthly or more frequent basis.
- More than half of Tribe parents reported that their relationship with their child(ren) was better or closer because of their Tribe participation.

Design Principles

- The relationships and connections within and between families is primary.
- The flexibility of the Jewish learning experience is compelling--the ability for families to adapt The Tribe curriculum's games, activities, and discussions as needed, selecting the parts that most resonate for implementation.
- The Tribe helps families create meaningful, quality time together, making Jewish memories to be cherished.
- The Tribe was designed to distribute responsibility for hosting meaningful Jewish family experiences among participants, deepening their investment and giving them ownership over what they choose to do and learn.

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(the tribe, continued)

- A participating Jewish family has the opportunity to experience reinforcement of the featured Jewish values each month while being supported: (a) in a small, private group (b) by attending events with families they know in their community while intersecting with that community's Jewish organizations, and (c) at home, with the Jewish value having been modeled previously in a group setting.

Secret Sauce

The focus on relationship building between parent and child, between children, and between parents is at least equal to the focus on meaningful Jewish content.

Funding Sources: Private Jewish family foundations

The Tribe is looking to grow. We welcome your ideas and suggestions!

The Weekender

Yudit Timo (ytimbo@ujafed.org) UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, Silber Family Centre for Jewish Camping

Everyone loves camp and everyone should have the chance to experience it!

We want every child in our community to taste the magic of overnight camp. The Weekender offers children a free weekend at overnight camp, whetting their appetite to return summer after summer. We partner with six local camps to offer sessions throughout the summer, and market the initiative community-wide to get the greatest uptick. The program is targeted towards children in grades 1-3, with each camp developing program parameters relevant to their camp.

On the Weekender kids have an amazing time, learning about camp in a safe bite size experience and gearing up to return summer after summer. We have dramatically increased the base of campers and have experienced high retention rates from the Weekender to full-session camping.

Increasingly, parents and children want to 'try on' camp before enrolling their kids in a full session. The Weekender offers that opportunity. As well, by marketing a similar initiative at multiple camps across the community, we're able to reach a far broader market than any one camp could (usually, individual camps reach siblings of existing campers and children of alumni)

Parents put down a refundable \$50 deposit. In the week after the Weekender, the camp calls the parent, tells them about the amazing experience, and asks if the parent would like the deposit refunded or converted into \$150 towards registration the next summer.

Measures of Success (Goals)

The introduction of the Weekender dramatically increased participation.

Secret Sauce

Community-wide marketing is key. While camps were running similar programs before the introduction of the community-program, they were only reaching children of alumni or siblings of existing campers.

Funding Sources: UJA Annual Campaign, donor designated gift, camps - which view it as an investment in future enrollment.

#engageJewish

Images of the Possible



Tot Shabbat

Gabrielle Burger (gburger@cjeb.org), Macks Center for Jewish Education (Baltimore)

Tot Shabbat is a weekly Shabbat - focused family gathering in our Jewish experiential play space, J Town. Our target audience is families raising Jewish children under 5 years of age. Adults may include parents, grandparents, nannies, aunts, uncles, special friends, etc. Our numbers vary from week to week from between 5 and 20 families. The goals of the program are to engage families in marking Shabbat as well as developing Jewish connections and community.

Families are looking for Jewish activities, and our Tot Shabbat is low-barrier, welcoming, fun, and child-centered. Tot Shabbat is a free Friday morning program open to the community at large. No Jewish religious observance or knowledge is required.

Goals

- Our educational impact goal is to encourage families to engage with Shabbat in a way that is developmentally appropriate for their children and encourages joy. For example, the children experience Shabbat through art, song, story, and ritual objects. Families will be able to incorporate these activities into their home practices, including songs, blessings, and creating rituals at home.
- Our engagement impact goal is to make Jewish community connections. By schmoozing together over challah and grape juice on a weekly basis, families develop friendships and on-going connections across the boundaries of observance, age, and neighborhood. Families take this opportunity to continue the gathering by choosing to eat lunch together in our local JCC cafe. This is a grass-roots initiative that grew out of their desire to spend more time together.

Design Principles

- Tot Shabbat happens at the same time in the same location every week.
- There is no on-going commitment since this is a free drop-in program, but the weekly repetition does build community and familiarity.
- There are two schmooze times built into the program - before Tot Shabbat and during challah and grape juice.
- We start with a song, always include a PJ Library story, there is always dancing, there is a spiritual Shema ritual, and an opportunity to give tzedakah.
- Depending on the facilitator, other tools are used such as art and recorded music.
- Every person that is able to sit on the floor is encouraged to do so, including the facilitator, and adults are expected to participate in the activities. This creates a feeling of equality, respect, and community.

(tot Shabbat, continued)

Secret Sauce

The program we offer is a high-quality, low-barrier, developmentally appropriate, intentional Jewish educational experience. So much so that people keep coming back, and bring more and more of their friends. The facilitators are all master Jewish educators, and they bring a level of sophistication and knowledge that adults expect and children love.

We are very intentional in the way we craft the relationship building during the schmooze time. We explicitly encourage families to exchange contact information, so that they may get together again. However, our subtlety around connections creates a low-pressure environment that allows the families to create community at their own pace.

Funding Sources: This is a low-cost initiative. The location is already in existence and available to us, and the staff are full-time members of the CJE. The only true weekly cost is challah and grape juice and any art supplies we use. All monies come from our Jewish Federation support.

YLD Pride

Sally Kudert (sallypreminger@juf.org) Jewish United Fund (Chicago)

<https://www.juf.org/yld/YLD-Pride.aspx>

Since 2012, JUF (through our Young Leadership Division) has made a concerted effort to create more outreach and programming geared towards LGBTQIA+ Jews. In the fall of 2013 planning committee gathered to determine a course of action and help build a more welcoming Jewish community. An inaugural event was held in March of 2014 with nearly 100 people attending the now annual YLD Pride Happy Hour. YLD Pride aims to serve the Chicago Jewish LGBTQIA+ community by offering various social and volunteer opportunities that will enhance the Jewish LGBTQIA+ community's needs. YLD Pride has been tasked with a goal of shaping programming with inclusivity in mind and for LGBTQIA+ Jews to feel more comfortable attending YLD and JUF events. Since its inception, YLD Pride has engaged over 600 LGBTQIA+ Jews and allies.

The YLD Pride Committee was created in 2015 to serve as a leadership group to better inform the Pride programming. The 2019-2020 Committee has two co-chairs and 14 members at large and will plan about 10 events for the year.

YLD Pride offers a place for LGBTQIA+ Jews in Chicago to connect. As a group of JUF and YLD, we aim to build and support a stronger, more vibrant Jewish LGBTQIA+ young adult community in Chicagoland.

For a long time, there was not a dedicated space within Federation for LGBT-identifying Jews. This is a population who wants their own programming and to feel included in Federation programming at large. By establishing the YLD Pride initiative and leadership group, we legitimize an important population within our community that has felt marginalized and can integrate them into the Federation community on their terms.

Design Principles

- The YLD Pride programming is a mix of education, volunteer and social. Next week, we have a panel discussion on the history of marriage equality and have had past event topics including pink washing, the history of the LGBT community in Chicago and Intersectionality 101.
- Allies are encouraged to participate in programming.
- YLD Pride partners with other community organizations and members for most events whether for panel speakers, OneTable Shabbats or volunteering at Federation support agencies.

#engageJewish

Images of the Possible



(YLD pride, continued)

- The YLD Pride content is created by the YLD Pride Committee/community members and our JUF Professional who does not identify as LGBTQIA+ is a partner in planning and executing the events. That the LGBT community is informing the topics and content, makes the initiative that much more genuine.

Funding Sources: The cost of most of YLD Pride's programming comes from the event ticket sales. We have a donor advised fund focused on LGBT support that can be used to supplement costs as well.