School-Age Children and Teens

Trends:

- Jewish day school, summer camp, youth group and Israel experiences help lay the groundwork for lifelong Jewish engagement
- High drop-out rate from Jewish activities post b'nai mitzvah
- Current learning opportunities for Jewish teens attract less than 20% of potential audience.
- Teen years critical period for formation of identity and affiliation
- Jewish learning and engagement as teens brings greater likelihood to choose Jewish involvement as adults
- Jewish teens, in many ways, are more influenced by their peers than their parents.
- Today's demands on teen times via school, extra-curricular activities, college pressures makes Jewish involvement seem as a competition for time

Needs:

- Programming for teens that is dynamic and relevant to the world they live in – socially and technologically
- Teens need assistance in forming meaningful relationships and lasting connections with other Jewish teens – more social engagement opportunities
- Meet unaffiliated teens where they are, then bring into the fold
- More focus on social issues, how Judaism relates to them, options for participation
- Offer spaces for formation of meaningful relationships and lasting connections
- Financial and marketing support to enable more participation in Jewish school, camps, youth groups, Israel experiences

New/Expanded:

- More teen programs for socialization purposes under Jewish auspices
- One Happy Camper incentive grants, and create opportunity for incentive grants for second and subsequent years
- More children attending Jewish day school via financial assistance and merit based scholarships
- Youth Group convention subsidies

- Professional development opportunities for formal and informal Jewish educators
- Community Educational/Israel Experience Endowment
- Community Hebrew High School program
- Expand programs for parents and children to engage in family philanthropy programs
- Teen Israel and GAP year subsidies
- Community Teen Israel Trip
- Explore bringing Moving Traditions post B'nai Mitzvah programming to Portland for male and female teens.
- Strengthen partnerships between day schools, camps, youth groups and synagogues
- Work with synagogues to come up with new models for religious school education, focusing on experiences and connections

Impact/Outcomes:

- Create more opportunities for connections for youth and their families and the educators who work with them
- Create more opportunities for post B'nai Mitzvah teens to interact through joint programming
- Create opportunities for Kindergarten-B'nai Mitzvah aged families to interact through joint programming
- Increase the number of Jewish teens involved with youth groups and post B'nai Mitzvah Jewish Connections
- Increase the number of families affiliating with a Jewish organization and attending programming geared towards that cohort
- Increase funding for unaffiliated teens for Teen Israel Experience
- Increase funding and duration for One Happy Camper
- Provide gap year funding

ejewishphilanthropy.com http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/investing-in-jewish-teens-a-golden-opportunity-for-action/

Investing in Jewish Teens: A Golden Opportunity for Action

eJP

Participants at 2014 BBYO International Convention (IC); photo courtesy.

By the Jim Joseph, Marcus, Schusterman and Singer Foundations

This week, more than 3,000 Jewish teens from around the country and across the globe will join together in Atlanta for three days of service, learning and celebration as part of BBYO and NFTY's International Conventions. They will come from cities near and far, towns big and small, each on a leadership journey, all inspired to contribute to the future of the Jewish people.

We can think of no better moment to focus our communal attention on the vital importance of Jewish teen engagement and education.

That is why our foundations are simultaneously bringing together 250 Jewish philanthropists, foundation professionals and communal leaders for the first-ever Summit on Jewish Teens. Concurrently, the leaders of the major youth movements will run a Coalition of Jewish Teens Summit to set shared goals and present a coordinated plan for engaging and educating as many teens as possible about Jewish life and leadership.

These summits come at a time when we more fully understand the positive, long-term impact of engaging teens. Indeed, the good news is that study after study proves that when young people are involved in meaningful Jewish experiences during their teenage years, they are much more likely to be active, lifelong members of the Jewish community. They participate in Jewish life, take on Jewish professional and lay leadership roles, and build a strong connection with Israel and the global Jewish people. What's more, they often directly credit the organizations and programs they participated in as teens for shaping their Jewish journeys throughout adulthood.

And yet, the bad news is that as far as we have come, we still have a long way to go before we fully address the disturbing fact that in most communities, an estimated 80 percent of Jewish teens drop out of Jewish life after their *b'nai mitzvah*.

As funders and community leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure that the post-*bar/bat mitzvah* years become an on ramp to, rather than exit route from, active Jewish life and leadership.

It will take continued hard work, significant additional investment and sustained commitment if we are going to realize the full potential for Jewish engagement and education during the teen years. We are sharing here a few of the lessons we have learned that we hope will encourage and guide increased investment in the teen space.

The most successful programs put teens in the driver's seat.

Teens today are an empowered generation. They know what they want, how to find it and how to build it. That's why teens are most attracted to opportunities that allow them to take ownership for creating experiences, rather than simply consuming one-size-fits-all programs.

BBYO, for example, has seen tremendous success basing its entire model around allowing teens to shape peer-led experiences – a philosophy that has helped them grow from engaging 12,000 to nearly 50,000 teens annually over the past decade. What they and others have found is that ownership inspires leadership and continued excitement to be part of a community that values members not just as consumers but as creators.

Likewise, Jewish teen philanthropy programs are attracting more and more participants by putting teens front and center, empowering them to make strategic philanthropic decisions that have direct impact on their local communities.

Talented Jewish youth professionals make a difference.

The North Shore Teen Initiative (NSTI), a pilot project supported by the Jim Joseph Foundation, provides another successful model, due in large part to the staff. NSTI invests in talented staff who, in turn, make a point of empowering teens to be involved in everything from event planning to recruiting friends to program implementation. Indeed, according to a 2013 study, "Effective Strategies for Educating and Engaging Jewish Teens," it is that combination of empowerment and support from talented educators that best yields attractive and meaningful experiences.

Other organizations including BBYO, iCenter, Union for Reform Judaism, Foundation for Jewish Camp, Moving Traditions and Jewish Student Connection also understand the importance of investing in training and support to help develop professionals who serve as close mentors, role models and guides to our teens.

Service and Israel play crucial roles in teen experiences.

Service opportunities can be one of the most effective ways to engage teens in Jewish life. Teens are eager

to join a community of like-minded peers and make a difference in the lives of others, as evidenced by Repair the World's J-Serve, the American Jewish Society for Service, summer and gap year service programs and the overall increase in these opportunities and recurring findings from research about the millennial generation.

Likewise, opportunities to connect with Israel are effective catalysts for Jewish engagement. Teen Israel trips play a vital role in helping young Jews forge connections with their peers, with Israelis and with our beautiful and diverse homeland. Studies also show that the impact of an Israel trip actually grows over time, inspiring increased and ongoing involvement in Jewish life and with Israel.

Collaboration is key and leads to creative, new teen engagement opportunities.

It is fitting that the theme of BBYO's International Convention this year is "Stronger Together." As funders and communal leaders, we too are stronger together. As we push forward and take action to support and inspire teens, we should remember that no one foundation or organization can tackle this critical issue alone. Many of us are part of a Funder Collaborative that is focusing on how we can create local and national partnerships to help engage more teens in select communities across the country. Already we are seeing that through forming strategic partnerships, scaling innovative initiatives and strengthening the pipeline of continued engagement, we each have unique and vital roles to play.

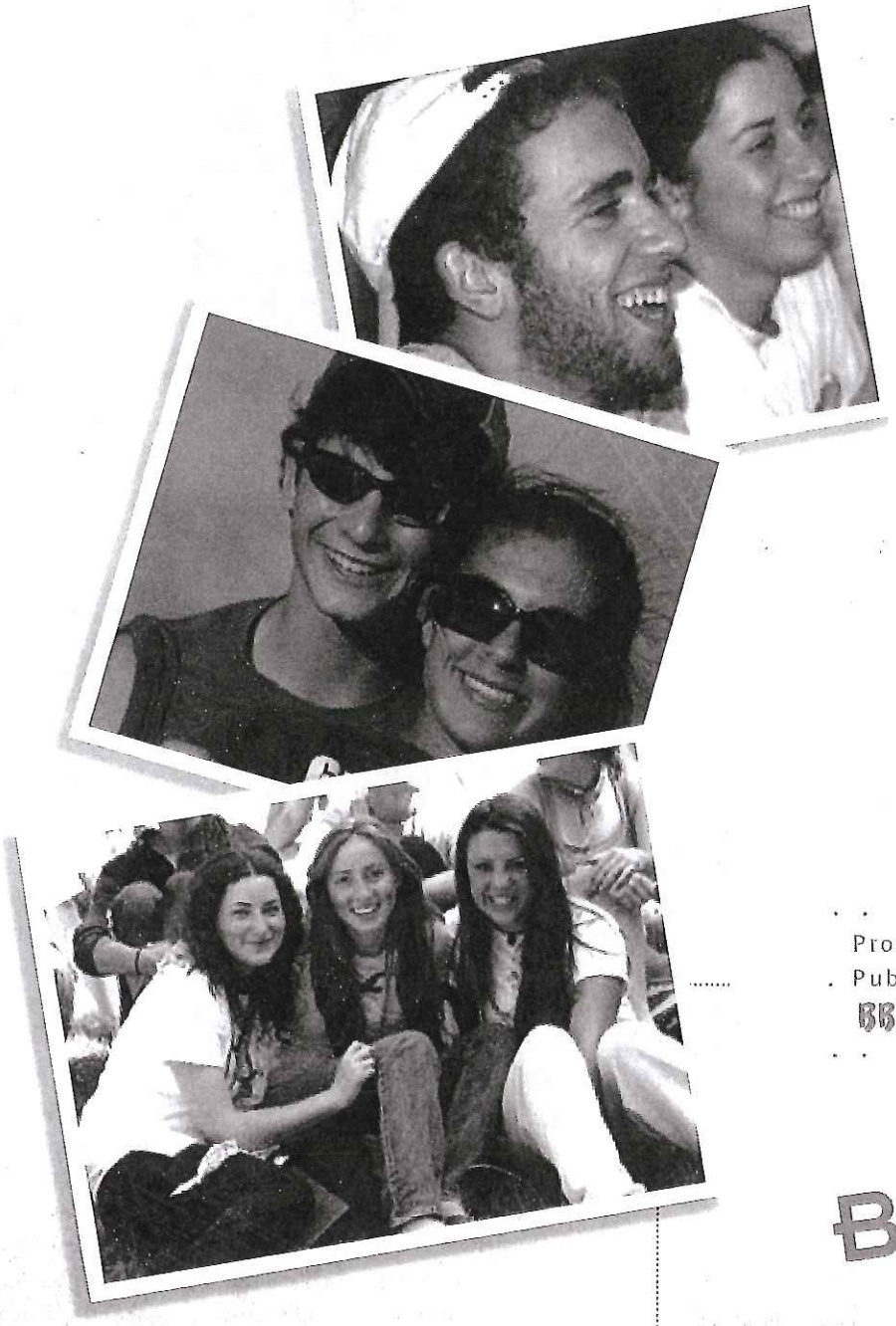
Now is the moment for us to embrace those roles as part of a broader ecosystem with shared goals and outcomes. We have models of engagement that are working. We have teens who are hungry for opportunities to tap into something larger than themselves, to live as engaged global citizens and to find new ways to connect with Israel and to repair the world. We have studies that show the quantifiable impact of this work and its direct effect on the strength and vibrancy of the Jewish future.

But we need the communal commitment. There are many who are already doing important work in this space. We hope even more will join us, starting this week at the Summit in Atlanta.

Together we can scale successful models and seed new ones so they can reach and engage growing numbers of teens. With this strategy, a generation from now, the 80 percent figure may reflect the number of teens engaged with, rather than disengaged from, Jewish life. And we can inspire teens to have a love of Jewish life and learning, to actively work to strengthen our peoples' future, and to draw on Jewish values as they create change in the broader world.

The Jewish Community's Guide to Understanding Teens:

A Compilation of Research on Teen Trends, Tween Trends and a Special Study on the Impact of BBYO on Alumni



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BBYO

WHERE YOUNG LIVES TAKE SHAPE

A Generation (Loosely) Defined

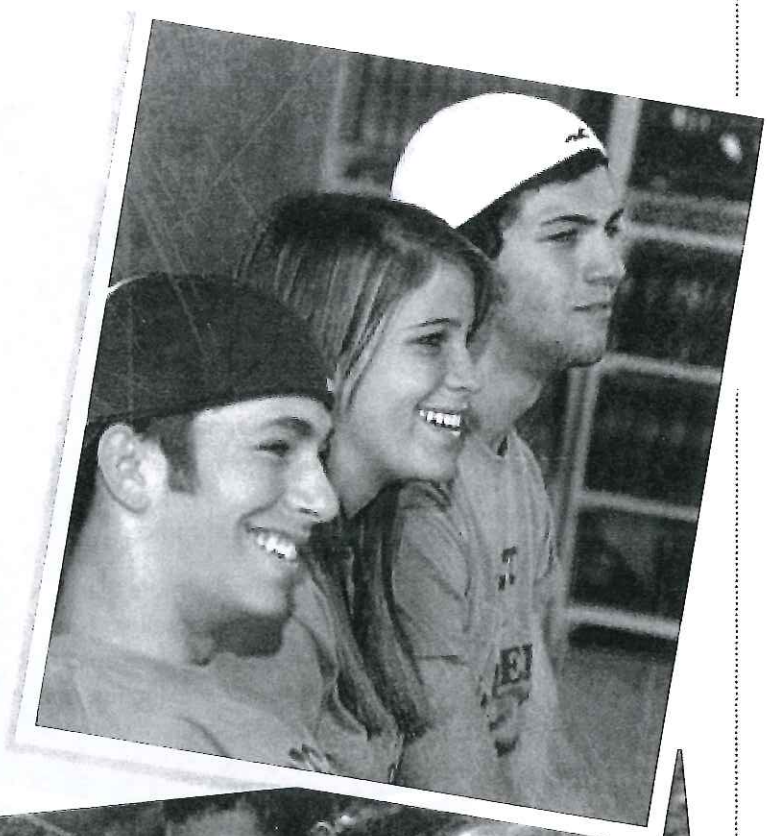
Currently, there are 33 million teenagers throughout the United States and approximately 375,000 Jewish teens nationwide. Thirteen percent of the American Jewish population is between the ages of 10 and 19 (National Jewish Population Study).

This report includes a breakdown of the main trends of teens and tweens (specifically focusing on those born between 1990 and 1996), how these trends also apply to Jewish teens, and statistics that are unique to this tech-savvy demographic.

It is important to note that there are still varying opinions surrounding the labeling and boundaries of this demographic. Often lumped together with Generation Y (born roughly between 1980 and 1994 to Baby Boomer parents), today's teens and tweens have an experience and perspective that is distinct even from those born in the early to mid '80s. This new generation, most commonly referred to as Generation Z and born 1990–1995, has never known a world without the Internet or cell phones. Also called "The New Silent Generation," "iGeneration" and "NetGen," their lives are marked by such events as 9/11 and the Iraq War. However, there are still more authors who prefer to group these two generations together into the overarching title "Millenials," born between 1982–2000.

Regardless of generational titles, today's teens demonstrate a unique understanding of and interaction with the society and the world around them.

(Sources: The New Recruit by Sarah L. Sladek; "Children of the tech revolution" by Lucinda Schmidt and Peter Hawkins; William Strauss and Neil Howe)



Spotlight on Teen Trends

CUSTOMIZATION AND IDENTITY

- Today's teens can customize and personalize (otherwise known as "pimping" in teen-speak) every aspect of their lives, from their sneakers to their talking avatars.

  Teens Defined: Avatar—a digital representation of oneself that can be an icon or picture.

- Customization is driven by a need to differentiate one's identity. Teens are the "Starbucks generation" and feel entitled to customization and choice as an expression of identity.
- Social networking sites show a more risk-taking version of a teen's personality, with more experimentation. They try something on electronically and then bring it to "the real world" if it works.
- Teens want to have choices as they form their identities. They do not necessarily want to stand out from the pack or be radically different from everyone else.

Decoding Jewish Teens: Over half of the 67 percent of teens who want to better connect to religion want an unconventional way to do so; the idea of DIY and customization seems to be leaking into religious life. Jewish teens are seeking customized ways to connect to their Judaism through special programming and unique experiences.

Decoding Jewish Teens: Though parents affect their children's beliefs, only 32 percent of Jewish teens think marrying a Jew is "extremely" or "very" important (compared with 60 percent of parents). Their departure from parental beliefs is an attempt to create their own identity.

BBYO Strategy: By offering a variety of leadership, community service, social justice programming and customizable summer experiences through the Passport to the World brand, teens can choose their own BBYO adventure.

(Sources: Rudman, TRU, 2005; Brandeis, 2000)

LIFE ON DEMAND: EMPOWERMENT/CONTROL

- Teens desire independence and control over their lives.
- Teens want to be in control of what they want and how they want it.
- Digital technology, such as cell phones and cameras, provides teens with instant gratification, e.g. snapping a picture and being able to see it immediately.
- Customization and DIY give teens the feeling of control over what they are buying or creating; they are producers, creators, distributors and consumers who actively participate in the world around them (sites such as YouTube allow teens to create, publish and view each other's videos).
- The traditional goals of driving and working an after-school job empower teens to make choices regarding their social life and money.

Teens Defined: YouTube—a free video-sharing website launched in 2005 where users can upload or watch user-created content.

(Source: TRU, 2005)

EXPRESS YOURSELF: VOICING THEIR BELIEFS

- Though teens under 18 can't vote, they desire to have their voices heard and to express personal opinions.
- Social networking "groups" and clothing can advertise what a teen believes, from their favorite musician to their favorite politician.
- Purchasing products whose proceeds go to causes (RED, LIVESTRONG bracelets, Ethos water) and celebrity causes give teens too young to vote a way to visually show others what they believe in; 53 percent of 14- to 34-year-old trendsetters bought a product that donated money to a cause.
- Beyond political or social concerns, new forms of media and television allow teens to vote online or via text message for their favorite singers, athletes and competitors for shows like American Idol. Teens live in a participatory culture in which expressing personal opinions in these areas gives them more control over what they experience.

Decoding Jewish Teens: Though data reported that Jewish teens "do not implement [social] values through Jewish philanthropy, volunteering at Jewish organizations," teens do voice their beliefs through material goods. This trend can be seen in some youth groups selling trendy clothes or jewelry that supports a cause.

BBYO Strategy: BBYO's award-winning website My2CentsforChange.org gave teens of all ages a chance to voice their opinions on topics at stake in the 2008 presidential election, ranging from war and genocide to hunger and homelessness.

(Sources: Trend School, 2006; Brandeis, 2000)

ON DISPLAY: PRIVACY REDEFINED

- Studies are now questioning teens' desire for privacy, due to the openness of Facebook and MySpace profiles; their lives and interests seem to be an open book.

Teens Defined: Facebook and MySpace—the two most popular social networking sites that allow users to create profiles and build an online community based around similar interests, geographic regions and causes.

- Teens have a conflicting understanding and false sense of privacy, believing that what they put online is in a safe, closed network separate from the authoritative sphere; they do not realize how permeable these networks can be.
- These profiles and avatars are perceived to be private from parents, teachers and authoritative adults who are not members of the site.
- Teens have the ability to control the settings of their profile, so they can determine who is able to view it, though not all teens take advantage of this function until they feel their privacy has been breached.
- Teens seem to desire privacy only from adults who have a direct effect on their lives, versus privacy from everyone as one would expect.

- Internet sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, show their "status" and give teens the power to tell their friends and others exactly what they are doing at any given moment (homework, laundry, what song they are listening to, etc.), as if they are creating their own "Big Brother."

Teens Defined: Twitter—a free online service that allows users to send text-based updates via online messaging or cell phone texts to other users.

(Source: "Why are kids addicted to Facebook?" by Cindy Rich, Washingtonian, 2007)

FULL SPEED AHEAD: STRESS

- Teens still say they experience stress overload.
- Top concerns are good grades and getting into college.
- Between school, work, homework, social life, extracurriculars, technology and chores, teens are busy.
- Though many believe teens only live in the present, they report stressing over the "big picture" and "the future," especially concerning finances related to current buying power and future wealth.
- Getting a college degree is now seen as necessary to being financially successful and happy in life.
- Activities and goals that used to be seen as optional, such as playing on athletic teams and going to college, are now stressful and deemed necessary.

Decoding Jewish Teens: Importance of grades—over the last three decades, grades have been higher for Jewish students compared to non-Jewish students. It is also reported that Jewish teenagers apply to more colleges. Jewish students reported stress, but "almost all" of those surveyed succeeded in meeting academic demands.

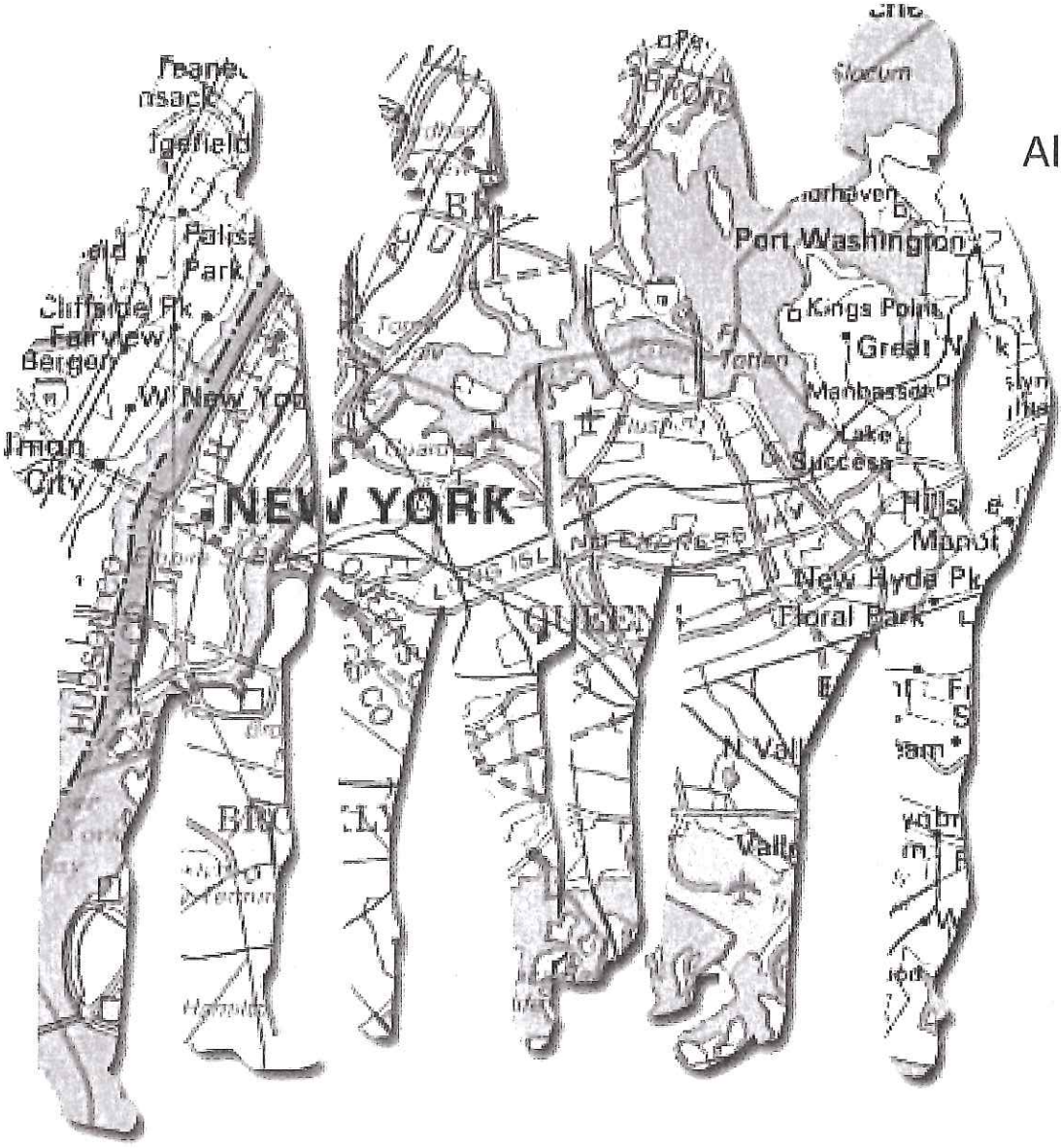
Decoding Jewish Teens: Studies show a decline in teen's Jewish activities post–Bar/Bat Mitzvah; teens are overprogrammed and overworked. They may choose what is most important to them: Jewish life vs. school/social life/sports/jobs/TV and Internet.

(Sources: TRU, 2005; UCLA)

BBYO Strategy: BBYO helps teens navigate the college experience and career choices through campus visits and Project NYC, a 10-day experience for emerging entrepreneurs.

Brandeis University
Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

ENGAGING JEWISH TEENS:
A STUDY OF NEW YORK TEENS, PARENTS AND PRACTITIONERS



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Conclusion

Commonsense notions of American adolescents abound, derived from our own teen experiences, observations of our children and their friends, or the portrayal of teen life in books and film. Engaging Jewish Teens undertook a social scientific approach to understanding this age group so that the deliberations of the Experiments in Teen Engagement Task Force of UJA-Federation of New York could be based less in personal experience and anecdote and more in systematic, empirical data. The study describes Jewish teens, their everyday reality, and the factors that contribute to or detract from their engagement in Jewish life. Its purpose is not simply to check beliefs and assumptions, but to open a conversation about Jewish adolescents and the possibilities for stimulating their Jewish sentiments and captivating their imagination.

Questions concerning Jewish teens last arose in the 1990s and repeated answers were offered by the teen commissions and research of that decade. In some sense it seems that little has changed. The values and concerns of today's Jewish teens look remarkably similar to those of a decade ago. This finding is validated by Monitoring the Future, the ongoing national study of American high school seniors which similarly finds high consistency in attitudes across time. As well, job satisfaction and quality of work life issues of the Teen Engagement Practitioners mirror those reported by youth professionals in the 1990s.

Yet we know that the world has changed significantly since the 1990s. High-speed Internet, smart phones, and social media have thoroughly permeated everyday life. Although many parents express concern about their child's extensive time on the computer and phone, technology does not register in the teens' responses. Media for them are as much a part of existence as breathing; and like breathing, the media call for no comment as long as they are working. The terrorist attacks of 2001 led to the creation of the Office of Homeland Security with its alert codes and the imposition of security measures in airports and other public institutions. Terrorist threats and security responses have become a constant in the news and in public discourse. Despite memories the teens and their parents may have of 9/11, security is also not mentioned in survey responses. We might similarly contrast the 1990s Clinton era of "peace and prosperity" with the continuous wars and economic turmoil that define today's reality. Our sense is that such societal changes form the backdrop of life but do not measurably affect the nature of the teens' everyday behaviors, interests, and concerns.

School continues to dominate the daily lives of adolescents and academic demands continue to rise toward the crescendo of college planning and admissions. Participation in extracurricular activities is as high as ever. Similar to their predecessors, today's teens are proud to be Jewish but that sentiment generally does not translate into an interest in ritual

observance or organized Jewish activities. From the perspective of the TEPs, the number one issue remains attracting teens and winning the steep competition for their time and attention. This challenge far outweighs any concerns they have with funding, staffing, technology, or space, even though few would say that these resources are fully adequate to the task.

The Jewish Challenge

Engaging Jewish Teens is based on a select sample of intact, affiliated families with high rates of education and low rates of intermarriage. The great majority of the teens are described by their parents as happy and well-adjusted in school. Almost all of them have had some form of Jewish education and celebrated a bar/bat mitzvah. These teens, well situated within the Jewish world, are the ones most likely to be captured by engagement efforts.

In fact, two-thirds of these teens are engaged in Jewish activities during the school year, whether through Jewish day school, part-time school, or an organized youth group or club. It is difficult to say whether this number represents a strength or a problem. It is certainly a higher level of participation than seen in the parents' generation and, from a business perspective, represents an admirable market share. From a communal point of view, however, the glass is part empty, with one-third of the most promising candidates not part of any regular, organized Jewish activity.

Jewish pride runs high among the teens in our study. Their positive feelings about being Jewish are grounded in an appreciation for the sense of community, connection to other Jews, and Jewish tradition and culture, most especially holiday celebrations with family. Like most American Jews, their views are not unqualifiedly positive and they also express negative feelings about antisemitism, Jewish stereotypes, religious services, and divisiveness within the Jewish community. Nonetheless, the reader is struck with the overwhelming number of strong positive statements made on the teen survey.

At the same time, fewer than half of these teens very much feel part of the Jewish people or connected to Israel. Having a strong Jewish identity is very important to about half of them. Their top life values center on close friends, academic success, and getting into a good college. Jewish identity and participation in Jewish life appear at the bottom of the list of what is important to them in their lives. Many give high importance to family and to making the world a better place, but they do not attribute their sense of personal or societal right and wrong to Jewish teachings. In short, their concerns are American and not Jewish; their outlook is universalistic and not particularistic.

These findings are based on a sample that is disproportionately affiliated and, therefore, should be viewed as the most positive description of the Jewish teen population. Beyond this sample are untold numbers of teens untouched by the community. Not included in the study, for example, are Israeli teens, Russian-heritage teens, and teens from other Jewish ethnic groups in New York. These teens are particularly difficult for Jewish programs to identify and reach. Many of their families are not affiliated with

synagogues, and other institutions that are familiar with these families are loath to grant access to their lists. Clearly, efforts must be redesigned and redoubled not only to do more for the affiliated teens but also to reach those who either come from immigrant families, have only one Jewish parent, are not synagogue members, have dropped out of Jewish education, or are otherwise on the margins of the community.

Pieces of the Puzzle

There are several pieces to the puzzle of teen engagement in Jewish life, each with its own complexity. These include the place of extracurricular activities during high school, and the role of friends, parents, Teen Engagement Practitioners, and the synagogue. Below we summarize the strengths and weaknesses of each in terms of its potential role in helping to solve the Jewish teen engagement problem.

Place of Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are seen as both the "fun" part of high school and the primary means of resume-building for the college application. Aside from their utilitarian value, the literature makes clear that these activities are critically important to life success. They are linked to positive academic, psychological, and behavioral outcomes—everything from higher grade point averages to happiness and mental health, to higher levels of civic engagement in young adulthood. Participation in religious-based activities has additional benefits including identity development, social capital, and a reduction in risk behaviors. Jewish engagement activities, whatever form they may take, come under the rubric of extracurricular activities and the literature thus validates the ETE Task Force's interest in them.

When it comes to engaging teens in specifically Jewish activities, there is good and bad news. On the one hand, like any American adolescent, the teens in our study are deeply involved in extracurricular activities. Their rate of participation in Jewish youth groups, 45%, exceeds numbers from prior research on Jewish teens and is certainly in line with data from other religious groups. On the other hand, these teens are busy. Over half are *very* concerned about finding "free" time and getting enough sleep; close to half are *very* stressed about school. After doing well in school and figuring out the future, their top concerns are lack of free time and sleep. And even though parents are far less worried about their "over-programmed" teen, the time demands of school and extracurricular activities are fundamental to the teens' reality.

The main reasons teens choose the activity in which they are most involved is that it is fun and gives them opportunities to learn new things and develop skills. The presence of friends and likeable adult leaders, or the contribution of the activity to their college application—albeit of some importance—are in the second tier of the list of attractors. This finding holds equally for Jewish and non-Jewish sponsored activities. When it comes to their #1 activity, the teens in our study are drawn by interest, enjoyment, and even passion for the particular activity. This motivation largely explains why only 7% cite a Jewish activity as their top involvement.

The solution to getting more teens to choose Jewish extracurricular activities

does not lie in better recruitment and marketing, at least not for the affiliated teens. Almost all of the teens in our study are familiar with one or more Jewish youth organizations. Curiously, they are more likely to know about college opportunities (Birthright Israel, Hillel) than they are about high school programs; and they are more familiar with Chabad and the non-Orthodox denominational youth groups (USY, NFTY) then with other types of groups. Nonetheless, asked about their views of these organizations, the great majority of respondents wrote positively about how they provide opportunities for involvement and leadership, help people in need, create community and friendships outside of school, and incorporate Jewish content. A small minority had negative comments that referred to Jewish organizations as too religious or not religious enough, too pushy, exclusive, cliquey or unfriendly. But, by and large, the teens are aware of what the community offers and have a positive view of it.

Role of Friends

Although the participation of friends is not an essential factor in a teen's choice of primary involvement, friends are the most important aspect of a teen's life and the Jewish composition of the close friendship circle is an aspect of Jewish community for teens. Almost a fourth of the teens in our study have few or no close friends who are Jewish. About a fourth have mixed friendship circles and just over half have friendship circles that are predominantly Jewish. The Jewish nature of their friendship circles appears to be set by 9th grade. Moreover, having close Jewish friends proves not to be a predictor of participation in Jewish extracurricular activities. Nonetheless, the likelihood remains that participation in Jewish activities can help build Jewish relationships, and were the experience to have the same power as a summer at overnight camp, it could indeed create deep and lasting Jewish friendships.

Role of Parents

Three-fourths of the teens in our study regularly have dinner with their family, a rate significantly higher than the national figure. The literature makes clear that this simple behavior is associated with higher quality relationships with parents and siblings. Our finding thus suggests that the parents are regularly talking with their teens and have the possibility of influencing them. Almost all of the parents feel that honest conversations with their teens are very important. The teens do not always agree with their parents on this question but, nonetheless, about two-thirds say that honest conversations with their parents are very important to them.

The parents seem well positioned to direct their children toward Jewish life. The great majority of the parents we surveyed had some type of formal Jewish education growing up, attended a Jewish overnight camp, and visited Israel. On average, they are assuring that their teens receive far more formal Jewish education than they themselves did as adolescents. Over 80% say that being Jewish is very important in their lives today and that it is very important to them that their child have a strong Jewish identity. Moreover, they hold the family together when it comes to the Jewish holidays, whether this is

lighting Hanukkah candles, celebrating the High Holidays, or holding a Passover seder, which the vast majority do every year. Comments from the teens make clear that it is these home observances that continue to power their Jewish sentiments.

The parents' modeling, behavior, and influence do not extend to attendance at religious services, Shabbat dinners, or engagement in activities sponsored by the synagogue, JCC, or other Jewish institution. Fewer than half of the families in our study regularly engage in these activities. About a third of the parents do not feel their child's involvement in a Jewish community is very important and over half do not feel Jewish ritual is very important for their child. These parents, it should be recalled, are synagogue members and relative Jewish "elites."

The general literature shows parents to be the key social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents, and it shows a high correlation between the practices and affiliations of both. Although our data show correspondence between Jewish parents and teens in terms of practices and affiliation, they also reveal differences in the views of parents and teens. Notably, the greatest differentials concern the Jewish dimensions of life: As compared with their parents' responses, teens most often give a lower rating to the importance of Jewish identity, Jewish community, and Jewish ritual.

It is also not clear that parents have much say over their teens' decisions when it comes to extracurricular activities. A small percentage of the teens we surveyed say that their parents' desires had a strong influence on their decision to participate in a particular activity (whether Jewish or not), and only a minority of those in Jewish part-time school say that they are there at their parents' insistence. For their part, the great majority of parents say that they do have influence on their teen's choice of activities.

According to the TEPs, parents are the least supportive stakeholders (as compared with co-workers, lay leadership, rabbis, and others). Some of the TEPs believe the parents undermine their efforts by placing a lower priority on Jewish activities and sending the message to their child that Jewish activities are not important. At the same time, 85% of the parents report that they were highly supportive of their teen's participation in a Jewish-sponsored activity. Again, there appears to be more than one truth.

There may be work to be done to bring parents into the fold, and it is possible that increasing their enthusiasm for Jewish engagement could prove useful. Nonetheless, if we view the world from the teens' perspective, they are their own decision makers, and the factors driving their decisions lead them to places that often have little or nothing to do with the Jewish community.

Role of the Teen Engagement Practitioner

There are clear and persistent issues within the realm of the TEPs, many of which connect to the fact that they do not work within a defined field of practice. There are no designated entry points, career paths, professional development programs, inter-organizational or field-wide convenings, communities of practice, or other such developmental, motivational, and support

structures. Turnover rates continue at the high level found in other studies, with over one-fourth saying it is very likely that they will leave their current position in the next two years. The field, such as it is, is characterized by low tenure and high turnover. The result is that almost 40% have been on the job for one year or less.

The great majority of TEPs are satisfied with their current jobs overall. The key issues for them are opportunities for advancement, supervision, and pay. These items imply that youth work is not designed as a long-term career. Importantly, outside of age, the number one predictor of the likelihood of turnover is unsatisfactory supervision. Even where job structures do not permit career tracks and where resources do not permit better salaries, employers could do more to provide the kind of supervision that improves the TEP's work experience, performance, and longevity on the job.

It is also clear that more could be done to provide professional development for the TEPs. Fewer than half are very satisfied with the chances they have to develop skills and learn new things. Few are well aware of opportunities for professional growth or find that their organization provides time and financial assistance for them to participate. As well, improvements could be made in related internal procedures such as formal job descriptions and annual performance appraisals, both of which many TEPs lack. The driving factors in satisfaction are the chances to accomplish something worthwhile and the chance to make a difference in the lives of young people. Comments make clear that these workers are "mission driven" and it is the teens who make the job what it is. Such opportunity for accomplishment and success appear to be both the attractor to the job and the glue that holds people in their positions. In the end, it is indeed about the teens.

In terms of the recruitment of new professionals, there is but one need to be filled—attracting more men into the field. The predominance of female TEPs mirrors the gender imbalance found throughout the Jewish sector, but it represents a particularly serious shortcoming when it comes to working with teenage boys and providing role models for them.

The TEPs potentially play an important role in the lives of the teens. The parents give high ratings to the quality of the adults who staff Jewish-sponsored programs and, indeed, rate them significantly higher than the adults who run non-Jewish programs. In interviews, the teens spoke of the role of a beloved teacher in turning a class into one of their favorites and in drawing them into extracurricular activities in which the teacher is involved. From our studies of Jewish summer camp, we understand the significant impact that counselors can have on campers, even through the teen years. The need for a "counselor" does not disappear during the school year. In fact, the Teen Professional Panel for our research discovered that the highest value may be in the relationship between the individual teen and the TEP rather than in the program per se. Panel members met with teens to interview them about their school, extracurricular activities, and

Jewish involvement. The professionals were excited by the conversations and uniformly reported back that, in the one-on-one setting, the teens opened up to them and told them about parts of their lives that they had not previously shared. In a short time, a bond was created between teen interviewee and TEP interviewer, an outcome that outweighed the value of the data itself.

Given their commitment and positions within the organized Jewish community, the TEPs could be a partner in developing new frameworks for engaging teens in Jewish life. However, in order to gain full advantage of what they have to offer, the community would need to develop a comprehensive list of players, weave them into a network, increase participation in professional development, improve supervision, help them secure more resources for their work, and stem the turnover rate. None of these are easy tasks.

As well, the TEPs may lack the vision needed to make a significant difference in current rates of teen engagement. Almost all of the TEP respondents say their organization encourages them to be creative and to experiment with new ideas. Creativity is obviously important to the TEPs as such support is strongly correlated with overall job satisfaction and the intention to remain on the job. Nonetheless, it seems that with all of the creativity bound up in these TEPs, they do not think big enough or have not been given license to imagine far beyond current realities. Asked about future vision, they talk about more staff and more money. Given how hard they work to attract teens, they understand the challenge to be growing the number of involved teens. They understand that more teens participating would create a critical mass which would *ipso facto* raise the level of their program and its impact and then, in turn, raise support for the program. Although they do not express it in these terms, they envision a virtuous spiral driven by increased numbers. Unfortunately, a vision rooted in numbers is unlikely to captivate teens.

Role of the Synagogue

From the array of organizations that are potential partners for UJA-Federation in its teen engagement experiments, we single out the synagogue for several reasons. The great majority of American Jewish teens celebrate becoming a bar/bat mitzvah and do so most commonly in a synagogue. The synagogue is thus a common starting point. Based on the lists we received for Engaging Jewish Teens, we estimate that there are at least 16,000 teens known to the synagogues within the four geographic areas studied. If these teens are similar to those selected for the study, then almost all of the parents have maintained their synagogue membership after their teen's bar/bat mitzvah, and a majority of their children feel comfortable in the synagogue. As well, the denominational youth groups offer a ready-made youth function within the synagogue setting. The analysis shows that the two factors that increase the likelihood of participation in a Jewish youth group involve the synagogue (i.e., multiple years of part-time school education and family attendance at synagogue-sponsored events). Synagogues should thus be a way to tap into a talent pool of youth professionals and to gain access to large numbers of Jewish teens.

Despite the presence of a youth group, the synagogues' readiness to embrace the teen agenda is questionable. Many synagogues in the catchment area were reluctant to be part

of this study, even though it promised to help them learn more about their high schoolers. Of those that joined the study, only a few actively encouraged their families to participate. According to their comments on the survey, TEPs who work in congregational settings can feel like "islands" separated from the rest of the synagogue. In the words of one, there is "no time, no money, no space, no interest from leadership." Post-bar/bat mitzvah retention rates suggest that the synagogues have not universally positioned themselves as leaders in Jewish teen life.

There are certainly synagogues that have the will, leadership, and resources to move the teen agenda, but a few pockets of excellence cannot produce the kind of sea change that is needed. In the four geographic areas of our study, there are at least 150 synagogues with a sizeable teen population. It would take tremendous effort to energize a critical mass of these synagogues although doing so could be a win for all concerned—the synagogues, their professionals and families, and the community.

Big Ideas Needed

Examination of the puzzle pieces suggests that steps can be taken to move parents toward greater concern with their teens' engagement in Jewish life, to improve the work lives and performance of the Teen Engagement Practitioners, and to energize the youth movements and synagogues to embrace a new teen agenda. These steps, however important, would limit efforts to current institutional structures and would have little impact beyond the realm of the affiliated. If past experience is any indication, they would not produce a sea change. In addition to these improvements, a process is needed to generate new thinking and action.

The challenge of teen engagement may be what is referred to as a "wicked problem" (Collins, 2001; O'Grady, 2008). Such problems are complex and, despite superficial similarity to other problems, they are unique. The effort to solve them is never "completed" but simply ends when some resource runs out or the solution creates a newer problem. The results of Engaging Jewish Teens do not point to specific programs that could significantly increase teen participation in Jewish life and activities. They do, however, provide parameters for the solution to the engagement problem and steps for creative problem solving.

In terms of parameters, the results of the research make clear that the programs will need to fit with the reality of teens' lives—their absorption in academics and college preparation, their lack of "free" time, and their commitment to their friends. They will have to stimulate interest among those who do not place Jewish life high on their list of priorities. They can build on the positive feelings that teens have about being Jewish (the pride, the family celebrations) but they will also have to circumvent the negative feelings that some hold. They will need to impress teens from across the spectrum, from the relative "elites" in our study to those who are less engaged and more marginal to the Jewish community.

In terms of process, the following steps can help release the new thinking that will be

required to solve a problem of this complexity.

1. Define the problem. What is the nature of the program that The Jewish Education Project and the ETE Task Force are trying to solve? Is there a single problem or a set of related problems? And is there agreement on definition? According to our research, the problem might be the number of teens who are receiving no Jewish education during high school and are otherwise not engaged in Jewish life. Or the problem might be the erosion of Jewish identity and teens' superficial understanding of what it means to be a Jew. Or it might be the small numbers who make Jewish activities their primary involvement. The first problem is based on the broad population, the second on the affiliated teens, and the third on leadership. Each suggests a different solution from broad-based initiatives aimed at increasing numbers to efforts to devise richer, deeper, more powerful programs for the relative "insiders." Regardless, the ETE Task Force and The Jewish Education Project must arrive at a shared understanding of the problem and a commitment to the solutions.

2. Set goals. If teen engagement is in fact a wicked problem than the goal must be "audacious," or as *Good to Great* author Jim Collins says, it requires BHAG: "Big Hairy Audacious Goals." In the 1990s, too much time and effort undoubtedly went into planning and too little into action. The resultant initiatives were too small and too far removed from the teens to make a difference. Needed now are audacious goals and big ideas.

3. Seek big ideas. Big ideas should not be confused with big programs. Big ideas are powerful concepts that can mobilize energy and drive a social movement. Birthright Israel was founded on the big idea that it is every young Jew's birthright to go to Israel as part of an educational program. The power of the idea and its capacity to change the trajectory of a Jewish life (Saxe & Chazan, 2008) has stimulated a multiplicity of program forms and caused the entire enterprise to grow in numbers. The bar/bat mitzvah celebration functions like a big idea. The idea is that there is a transition in a Jew's life from childhood to adulthood and this transition is linked to Torah study. The power of this idea has made the bar/bat mitzvah normative in North America, for both boys and girls, so that thousands of bar/bat mitzvah ceremonies take place every year. The process involves participants in Jewish education over a period of years; it engages the entire family, brings them into the synagogue, and impels them to invest heavily (dollars and time) in the preparation and the occasion; and it leaves the child with wonderful memories. Like Birthright Israel, the bar/bat mitzvah is not a unitary program. And it, too, is appreciated more for its impact than its size. Note that neither Birthright Israel nor bar/bat mitzvah was a new idea. Both derived from ideas that the Jewish community has long known "works"—Torah study and Israel experience (Mittelberg, 1992). Although there may be original aspects to their application to the teen and young adult populations, they are not inherently novel ideas.

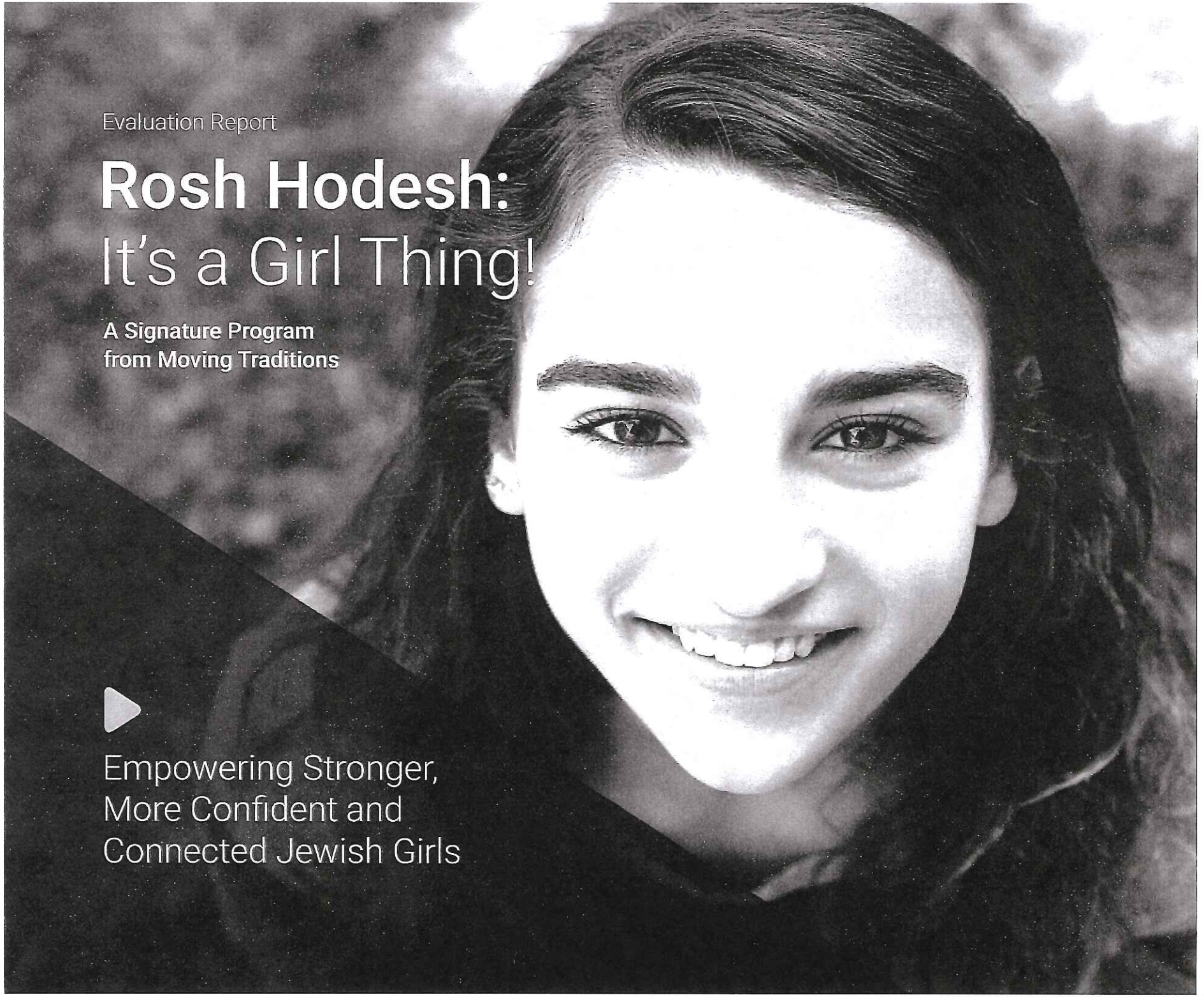
The big ideas that can drive experiments in teen engagement may already exist and, if so, the first purpose of problem solving is to uncover them. These ideas might harness the teens' wide ranging interests and talents and enormous energy. Or they

might change the bar/bat mitzvah so that it becomes more of a launch pad and less of a graduation. Or they might capitalize on teens' curiosity about the world and take advantage of the global nature of the Jewish enterprise. Or they might emphasize the application of Jewish values to life. Or they might concern teen empowerment, healthy development, or life success, to name just a few possibilities.

4. Look at existing programs. Do not do so with an eye for adoption, but to understand the theory behind them and the ideas that drive them. Also, look at existing youth movements, not to replicate them but to understand the power of ideologically-driven movements.

5. Bring this information to the planning table. Wicked problems inherently require multi-disciplinary approaches to problem solving that open up new thinking. The planning group should cover diverse perspectives: religion, psychology, sociology, medicine, social work, community organizing and other disciplines, all of which may contribute valuable insight and ideas. Once this group has elaborated big ideas, the programs—whether service learning, youth philanthropy, Israel experience, international partnerships, physical challenge, cultural arts, or a new form yet to be named—will follow.

The challenge for the community is to move quickly and audaciously from ideas to action. If we are indeed solving a wicked problem, the big ideas will be neither right nor wrong. But implemented with force, they should provide a "good enough" solution to the problem of teen engagement by creating a profound Jewish experience that touches young people and becomes a normative or expected life opportunity. The community will know that it has succeeded when the 12 or 13-year-old on the *bimah* is not only relishing the moment of becoming a bar/bat mitzvah but is also looking forward to what awaits him or her as a Jewish teen.



Evaluation Report

Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!

A Signature Program from Moving Traditions

Empowering Stronger, More Confident and Connected Jewish Girls

According to the study, which was comprised of qualitative and quantitative research, *Rosh Hodesh* is successfully achieving results in all four areas of development:

1 ***Rosh Hodesh* helps Jewish girls build greater self-esteem.**
Research indicates that, as a result of the program, girls gain a greater sense of self-worth and confidence.

2 ***Rosh Hodesh* helps empower Jewish girls.**
Research indicates that the open discussion of gender and women's issues empowers girls to believe that they can take action for themselves, other women, and their communities.

3 ***Rosh Hodesh* fosters positive peer-to-peer relationships.**
Research indicates that the experience delivered through *Rosh Hodesh* enables girls to develop honest and supportive relationships with other Jewish girls.

4 ***Rosh Hodesh* cultivates deeper Jewish connections.**
Research indicates that the program engages girls through relevant, meaningful, and dynamic Jewish experiences, and encourages them to stay connected to Jewish life.

By The Numbers
Since the launch of *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* in 2002:

12,000+

teen girls have experienced the program in intimate, monthly, ongoing groups, with between 6-12 girls per group.

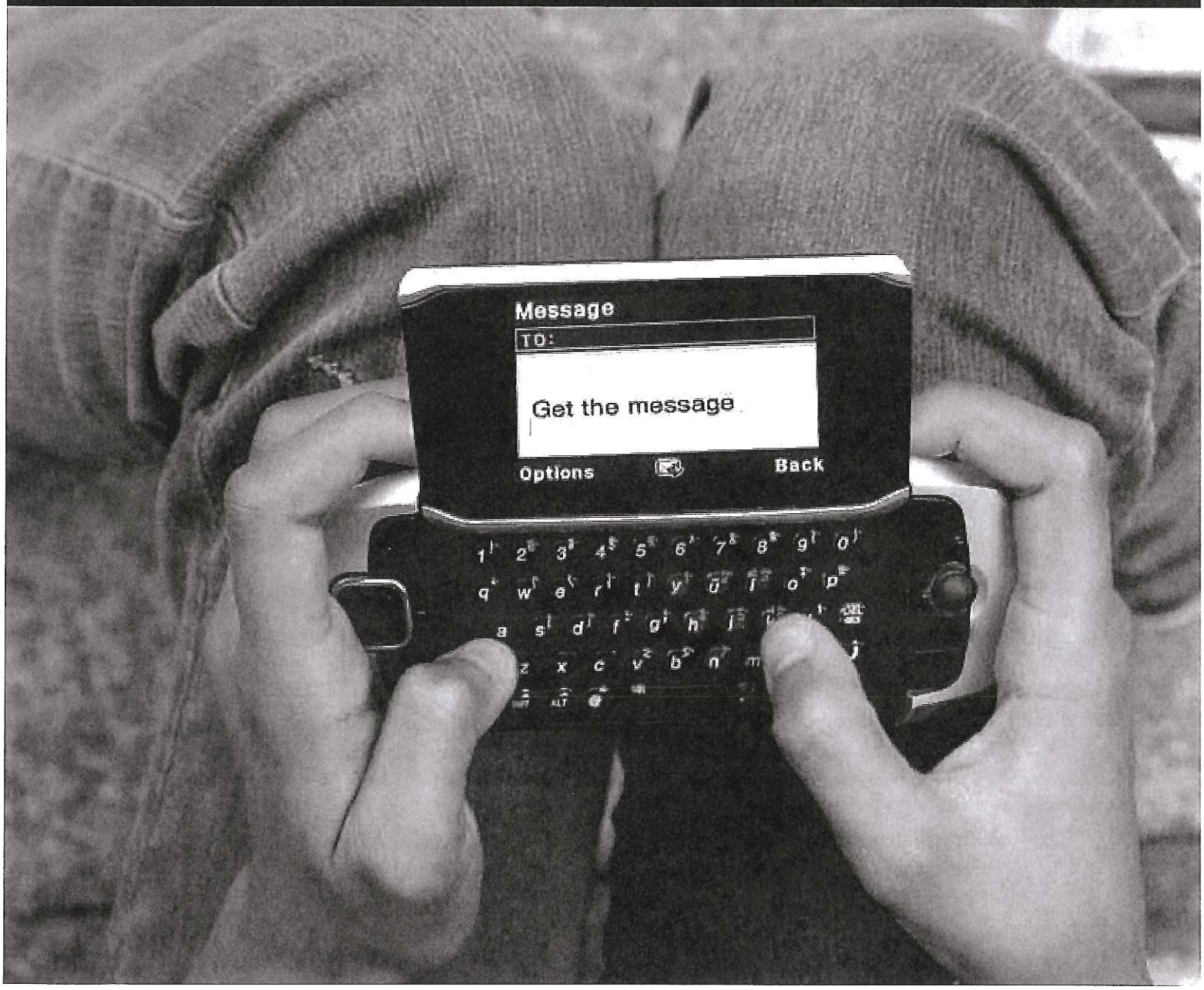
1,200+

Jewish women—educators, clergy, and professionals from other fields—have been trained to facilitate *Rosh Hodesh* groups.

388

Jewish institutional partners, synagogues, JCCs, day schools, summer camps, and youth groups of all denominations have run *Rosh Hodesh* groups.

Engaging Jewish Teenage Boys: A Call to Action



With a Foreword by William Pollack, Ph.D.
Author of *Real Boys* and *Real Boys' Voices*

MOVING TRADITIONS

Executive Summary

The Jewish community is losing boys who drop out of Jewish life after bar mitzvah in unacceptably large numbers. Jewish institutions are struggling to keep teenage boys engaged. Left unaddressed, the trend threatens to undermine the Jewish future and leave a generation of boys ignorant of the wisdom, core values, community, and spiritual nourishment Judaism provides.

As an organization uniquely equipped and positioned to engage Jewish teens, Moving Traditions presents *Engaging Jewish Teenage Boys: A Call to Action*. We invite policy makers, funders, parents, clergy, and educators to join us in better understanding teenage boys and adopting new ways to work with them. By doing so, we can help Jewish boys connect meaningfully with their Judaism, their masculinity, their peers, and themselves.

Engaging Jewish Teenage Boys: A Call to Action draws on knowledge distilled from three years of research, focus groups with Jewish boys, and program development, and grows out of the success of our work with adolescent girls. Moving Traditions' innovative program, *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*, draws on an understanding of gender and core Jewish values. It has helped thousands of teenage girls negotiate adolescence and develop meaningful identities as young women and as Jews.

The report contains seven lessons and seven principles, supported by a marketing toolkit, a program curriculum sample, appendices describing the research, and a list of resources. Together they provide Jewish educators with the research, concepts, and resources needed to understand and meet the unique needs of Jewish boys.

Moving Traditions calls on Jewish communal leaders and educators to join us in partnership to reverse the exodus of teenage boys from Jewish life through a connected set of actions:

1. **Advocate for gendered spaces for Jewish teenage boys.** Being male matters to boys: the literature shows it, and our focus groups and action research confirm it.

2. **Train educators and build the field.** Our ability to engage Jewish teenage boys is limited by a lack of trained men in Jewish education, and a lack of understanding on the part of men and women in education about who boys are.

3. **Implement Moving Traditions' program, *The Brotherhood*.** When boys participate in programs that put the lessons and principles in this report into practice, they become more engaged in Jewish life.

By working together, we can help adolescent boys grow into self-aware Jewish men comfortable exploring both their religion and their masculinity, strengthening the broader Jewish world that is so precious to us.

Part I: The Seven Lessons
Understanding Jewish Teenage Boys

Moving Traditions' research has been grounded in a simple but powerful belief: if we are to make Judaism relevant and engaging for Jewish teenage boys, we must strive to understand them deeply and substantively, through their eyes and on their terms. Any program will be unsuccessful if it is based on superficial conceptions or unexamined adult assumptions and perspectives on what boys want and feel. For this reason, we have worked hard to listen to the authentic voices, concerns, and feelings of Jewish teenage boys.

If we are to make Judaism relevant and engaging for Jewish teenage boys, we must strive to understand them deeply and substantively, through their eyes and on their terms.

An emerging body of research provides a basis for understanding the challenges and dynamics of male adolescence in the 21st century. In the past decade, influential books by psychologists and educators have detailed the social rules that strictly, sometimes violently, limit boys' behavior and emotional expression. These works also reveal the social and personal isolation many boys experience, and highlight the ways traditional educational settings and programs fail to accommodate boys' needs and interests.

Because of its broad, national, and secular focus, little was known about how or to what extent the insights of this literature might apply specifically to *Jewish* boys and their inner lives. To fill this gap in knowledge, Moving Traditions conducted 40 focus groups with 8th to 11th grade boys with widely varying levels of engagement in Jewish life. The focus groups were facilitated by psychologists, educators, and marketing professionals.

In an open, articulate manner that flies in the face of cultural stereotypes about teenage boys, the boys in our focus groups echoed the basic themes highlighted in the research literature while providing essential depth and insight into their uniquely Jewish perspective on male adolescence.

Most impressively, teenage boys who participated in this research and development process not only related rich and insightful accounts of their personal experiences, but also proved themselves critical interpreters of ideas who are able to contribute actively to the design, organization, and content of our curriculum. From their insights, we learned seven lessons that form the basis for the principles in the next section of this report.

1. **Judaism Is Home.** Boys in our focus groups consistently spoke of Judaism as a source of identity and pride. Whether they attend Jewish day school, participate in a Jewish youth group, or simply hang out with Jewish friends, the boys we interviewed describe Judaism as a "home

base" that helps them feel grounded amidst the changes and challenges of adolescence. Jewishness forms a core component of their identity and enhances their self-image.

The teenage boys feel strengthened by Jewish connection, which provides respite from the marginalization and stereotyping they sometimes experience as minorities in secular environments. In short, the Jewish connections in their lives give them a gratifying sense of belonging. "You have stuff in common with people at school," explains a boy who attends public school, "but you don't totally know them. When you go to temple, you're raised the same way generally. You just have this natural connection."

"There's this gap, from your middle school and high school years, where there's really nothing strong. There are youth groups and things, but they're honestly pretty weak and they don't keep kids connected."

Many boys also feel a sense of accomplishment and competence having become bar mitzvah, and are interested in continuing to explore what it means to be Jewish. They have a desire to grapple with meaningful, existential questions through a Jewish lens.

Yet the boys generally feel uninspired by post-bar mitzvah offerings that might help facilitate this exploration. As one says, "There's this gap, from your middle school and high school years, where there's really nothing strong. There are youth groups and things, but they're honestly pretty weak and they don't keep kids connected."

Adolescent Jewish boys are not satisfied with the available programming, but they do have a desire for the knowledge and connection Jewish education can give them. Jewish educators thus have a tremendous opportunity to tap into boys' desire for Jewish community through innovative programming that helps strengthen boys' pre-existing sense of Judaism as "home."

2. **Jewish Identity Is an Active Choice.** Jews identify with and practice their religion in a wide variety of ways. It is therefore not surprising that most of the boys we spoke with make active, intentional choices about how and when to identify, connect, and engage with Judaism. In their earlier years, boys may have come to Jewish participation at their parents' behest; but now, as sophisticated teens with many years of parental negotiation under their belts, their choices around Judaism are primarily their own. As one teenager says, "My mom dragged me to services when I was younger; I hated it. But now I love it and find ways to make it work, like I go to the early service on Friday and then I can go to my concert or take a girl out on a date."

While ongoing parental involvement is essential, our focus groups demonstrate that boys want to be supported in the specific choices they make. Boys are engaging on their own terms, adapting Jewish practice to the currents and demands of their lives. Jewish programming for teenage boys should account for this adaptive quality; it should be as flexible as possible in terms of timing and structure, and avoid making restrictive assumptions about how boys might understand themselves as being Jewish.

Many of the teenage boys in our focus groups revealed unexpected perspectives on their masculine identities, which stand in stark contrast to the norms of popular culture.

3. **Jewish Engagement Allows for Choices in Masculinity and Enhances Resiliency.** One of our most striking and encouraging findings is that the stronger a boy's Jewish identity, the more his personal conception of masculinity can withstand the distorting pressures of mainstream, secular culture. Like many teenage boys, the boys we interviewed feel restricted by conventional definitions of masculinity. Their development and self-expression are challenged by masculine norms of "toughness" and stoicism, and often are policed by homophobia, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Yet many of the teenage boys in our focus groups revealed unexpected perspectives on their masculine identities, which stand in stark contrast to the norms of popular culture. In their interests, personal styles, social lives, and extracurricular activities, the boys represent the full range of American male adolescence, and they are fully conscious of what mainstream culture expects of them. But they are equally forthright in refusing to conform or be "cool" at all costs. They embrace academic achievement, are comfortable expressing affection towards others, value kindness (including towards younger boys), and care about the larger world. Moreover, they understand that their pursuit of these qualities helps them feel good about themselves, which is particularly important given the negative messages teenage boys often receive about themselves.

The more Jewishly-affiliated boys we interviewed evinced greater resilience: a nuanced self-understanding, a particular kind of maturity, and an expressivity that gives them freedom to operate outside restrictive social norms. As one Jewishly-affiliated boy observes, "There's a stereotype that guys can't express their emotions and I think there's a pretty massive homophobia, but I don't really think that exists with my Jewish friends. We can be comfortable and really talk with each other and not have an issue. But with my friends who aren't Jewish it's harder to talk about

personal things like family, or other stuff in my personal life." Such comments show us that Judaism is a powerful resource for the healthy emotional development of young men.

4. **Connection Is Constant.** Today's teens live in a digital world and are connected 24/7. The majority own cell phones and use them continually for texting, talking to friends, and searching the Internet. Most also have regular access to a computer and report going on-line multiple times a day to visit social networking sites, find information, and email friends. As one boy explains, "I am on-line a ton. After school I get on Facebook and YouTube, and addicting game sites are fun. I text to keep in touch with friends, meet girls, and make plans." Social networking is not optional or an "add-on" for teens' understanding of themselves and their worlds; rather, it is integral.

   Moreover, research shows that digital life has a particular twist for boys: they spend more time than girls alone or in small groups playing video games. This can make it difficult to engage them in face-to-face, group-based programming. At the same time, it represents a new opportunity to engage Jewish boys by incorporating electronic communication, game play, and other technology-oriented activities into Jewish educational programming.

5. **Friends Are Central.** Teenagers value peer friendships highly and experience them as central to their lives and emerging identities. The boys we interviewed turn to friends for advice on everything from new topics and trends, to what to do after school, to how to handle personal problems and challenges.

   Amid the pressure of school and stress of adolescence – for younger boys, the transition to high school, establishing a group of friends, and dealing with puberty and for older teens, obtaining a driver's license, finding a first job, and thinking about college – boys enjoy simply "being a teenager" more than anything else. They look for opportunities to be with their friends and have fun. As one boy tells us, "In my free time I like to hang with my friends. We play Xbox or watch TV. We play sports or go to the movies, but mostly we hang out and just chill."

   To connect effectively with teenage boys, Jewish programming must integrate these peer relationships into the experience, making space in the educational enterprise for boys to "just be" together.

To connect effectively with teenage boys, Jewish programming must make space in the educational enterprise for boys to "just be" together.

6. **It Can't Feel Like Working Overtime.** In our focus groups, it became clear that when teenage boys connect to each other, they are not only creating friendship networks. They are also creating environments in which those networks exist – environments that are intentionally less formal and rigid than those of day school, Hebrew school, and other obligations. Boys say they feel overloaded with highly structured activities that tax their physical, intellectual, and emotional stamina. As one memorably put it, "We go to school five days a week and then we're doing homework. The last thing I want to do is sit in a classroom again for three hours on a Sunday morning."

"We go to school five days a week and then we're doing homework. The last thing I want to do is sit in a classroom again for three hours on a Sunday morning."

The boys want to be challenged and explore central life issues about meaning and purpose, but they're insistent that they have a real say in the schedule, pace, and setting of such explorations. Over-scheduled and sleep-deprived, they do not want to feel like they are putting in overtime on nights and weekends. Creating a relaxed, give-and-take environment that respects their time will help fully engage boys in meaning-making activities.

7. **It Has to Be Engaging, Challenging, and Relevant.** Our respondents expressed discontent with what they perceive as didactic, skill-based learning taught by instructors who don't really see or connect with them. They highlight three elements of educational programming that can make a difference in their experience and keep them coming back for more.

   First, programming must be engaging: boys want experiences that include physical activity, excitement, humor, and a healthy dose of playfulness. Boys love laughter, and often use irony to distance themselves even as they embrace learning. Adults who are comfortable with this and work to accommodate it in their teaching practices will find greater success.

   Second, programming must be challenging: boys are drawn to programming whose content speaks to their interests and provokes them to think. While they want a degree of relaxation and levity, they also want educators who take the material, and them, seriously. Educators who display knowledge and passion for the subject matter, as well as dedication to their students, will be able to connect to Jewish teenage boys and tap into their desire for substantive learning.

Finally, programming must be relevant: boys want programming that relates to their lives and addresses issues and questions they find personally meaningful. Boys understand that Jewish education can be enriching if it is presented in a way that speaks to who they are and where they are in their lives.

Too often boys are asked, implicitly and explicitly, to fit themselves into contexts and curricula that do not serve their interests and may, in fact, run counter to their basic needs. They are expected to be silent about this mismatch and submit themselves to it. But if programming is not engaging, challenging, and relevant, boys will act even if they don't speak up. They will vote with their feet: they will tune out, turn off, and walk away.

Part II: The Seven Principles
Engaging Jewish Teenage Boys

Moving Traditions has distilled the insights, experiences, and lessons learned from our research into seven principles for effectively engaging teenage boys:

1. **Honor the journey to manhood** by making issues of masculinity central to educational programming.

2. **Select the best educator,** with a focus on men who understand and connect well with teenage boys.

3. **Create a space** in which relationships and community among participants are as important as the transmission of content between teacher and student.

4. **Harness the power of ritual** by making rituals a meaningful and compelling part of the educational experience.

5. **Bring physical activity into the mix** by combining physical activities with thought-provoking discussions.

6. **Infuse Judaism throughout the program** by presenting text, history, culture, and values in creative and engaging ways.

7. **Get them in the door** by actively marketing educational offerings in ways that reach teenage boys where they are and appeal to their sensibilities.

These principles are particularly suited to programming aimed at boys 8th grade and up, the years following bar mitzvah, because they:

- Draw on Jewish values and wisdom to help boys navigate the journey into manhood.
- Encourage boys to consider what it means to be adult male members of the community into which they have just been graduated.
- Inspire boys to draw on their bar mitzvah learning as a bridge to a lifetime of Jewish engagement.

We are confident that these principles are applicable in any Jewish educational context. We encourage educators in day schools, supplemental schools, camps, youth groups, and elsewhere to implement these principles in a manner suited to the particular needs of their environment and the Jewish boys with whom they work.

challenging. But that's the whole point—in the game and in the EJE Challenge. We can stop trying to impose definitions on the term *EJE*, and embrace the idea that it can stand for multiple, significant ideas that may not benefit by being lumped together in one term. It may be difficult, but try it—at least for a while. Next time you want to use the term *EJE*, think *Taboo*—and just say what you *really* mean.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Kress *is the interim dean of the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of The Jewish Theological Seminary.*

From Chair Pose to Congregational School Poised for Change

Dr. Zachary Lasker

This summer I was in Cleveland teaching a course on Jewish education, and after days of sitting my legs yearned to stretch. Nervously, I entered a nearby yoga studio. I'd only been practicing for 18 months. At home I had managed to overcome my insecurity as one of life's least coordinated individuals by sticking with a few particular instructors. In Cleveland, I was out of my comfort zone—new location, new class, new teacher. We proceeded through a series of poses to which I was, thankfully, accustomed. Standing pose. Chair pose. Plank. As I settled into the core Downward Facing Dog pose, my nerves melted into confidence. I could walk into any yoga studio, and feel at home in my practice. How do they accomplish this? And why does this question feel all too familiar?

How can we inspire our Jewish children across the world to seek out Jewish community, and be active in their practice? Settings of education may vary, but most aspire to cultivate some type of lifelong commitment to Jewish living and learning. An example of success might be a school, camp, or youth-group graduate who seeks out a prayer service at college, feels at home in the pews, and even stands up to lead now and then. If my experience with yoga in Cleveland became a college student's story with Kabbalat Shabbat at Ohio State, then *dayenu* ("that's good enough for us")!

Currently, I am exploring how congregational schools can be strengthened to cultivate within learners a positive Jewish identity and a commitment to a set of Jewish values, practices, and beliefs. The stakes are high. The majority of non-Orthodox children enrolled in a program of Jewish learning find themselves in part-time settings. Fortunately, congregational learning is receiving a lot of attention from Jewish professionals and parents who are not satisfied with the current level of engagement. Folks are working hard to try out new ideas. In fact, the purpose of my trip to Cleveland was to teach a course titled The Best of Camp in School Settings. As I settled into the next Chair pose, I wondered how Jewish educators could learn from the practice of yoga.

Question: how is it that many kids sit through two to six weekly hours of instruction on Hebrew language, prayer, values, and holidays and retain very little, and yet, as an adult, I've logged a similar number of hours learning yoga and can enter any studio and participate?

Children are like sponges when it comes to education: they have the capacity to learn a tremendous amount. Yet there are challenges when it comes to congregational schools. Hours of instruction decrease as schedules grow busier. Trends in 21st-century secular education are veering from a focus on content toward skills in critical thinking, teamwork, and the ability to ask questions and self-navigate to the answers. Regardless, there remains an expectation for congregational schools to focus on b'nai mitzvah preparation and a laundry list of subject areas. Important conversations are taking place about the goal of these schools, and my focus is on the support we offer educators to succeed.

Yoga instruction includes a range of goals from the mechanics of the poses to the life benefits of breathing and mindful intention. As an adult, I learned that when a yoga instructor calls out "*Ardha Candrasana*," my mind translates "Half Moon pose" and my body topples over as I balance on my right hand and leg with my left hand and leg extended up (photos omitted on purpose). I can even explain the benefit of this stretch. In the meantime, when congregational teachers call out "*Lulav*" and ask about the four species, too many students are like deer caught in the headlights.

I attribute my strides in yoga to a particular teaching style. Enter a yoga studio for your first class, and you will not see a desk, book, or whiteboard. Your tools are a mat, blocks, and a blanket. When class begins, you engage in the *practice* of yoga. We need to *practice* or *do* Judaism with our learners in the same way that they put their hands to piano keys to learn music, dribble on the basketball court to become athletes, or dissect a frog as young biologists. How is it that the same kid who struggles to recite the *'Amidah* prayer can shine on the basketball court and recall statistics for players and games? Of course, part of it is motivation. I am self-motivated to take on yoga. Still, we spend a lot of time with kids on mastering the *'Amidah*. How can we be more successful?

The simple answer is to engage kids in the many different forms of prayer and guide them toward opportunities in which to be prayerful, rather than stick them behind a desk and force them to recite the words from a photocopy or textbook. Fortunately, many congregational schools are already moving past overly frontal techniques. The more mindful answer is to strategically employ the approach of experiential learning, currently at the center of many conversations about Jewish education. For years we have seen the fruitful impact of the experiential approach in the setting of Jewish summer camp or through organized trips to Israel. Current debates question whether experiential methods can be integrated more prominently in non-immersive settings where educators lack the luxuries of residential living, lakes, and fields.

Experiential Jewish education is a broad approach, and not restricted to one particular environment. Dr. Jeffrey Kress, an expert at The Jewish Theological Seminary, explains experiential Jewish education as a combination of several attributes that involve relationship building: entry points for a variety of learners and engaging a person's emotions, providing opportunities for reflection, and connecting with other life experiences. The practice of yoga is quite experiential—relationships are formed with instructors, emotions are engaged, there are several opportunities for self-reflection, and instructors connect the practice to issues confronted outside the studio. While individuals interested in yoga can certainly attend a retreat, most learn within a limited number of weekly hours in a studio near home, conditions that are similar to the congregational school.

Conversations about an experiential approach to congregational learning often start with the question "How can we make Hebrew school more like camp?" This is a fine way to begin the conversation, but we need to be careful as we experiment with answers. People who expect to enter a school and see the exact same magic that can occur in a Jewish camp are doomed to disappointment. We cannot extract individual activities from camp, replicate them in a school, and expect the same outcome. A Jewish cooking activity is effective at camp because the hour spent kneading challah dough takes place in a larger context: the camper also sits near his cooking instructor during prayer services or joins her for Israeli folk dancing before lunch, or he might use his baked challah during Shabbat dinner that night. An experiential approach is more than "hands-on learning." There is a risk that a cooking elective in a congregational school will exist in a vacuum. It becomes "culinary education" and not "Jewish education."

Most yoga instructors are authentic experiential educators. As pedagogues, they are knowledgeable about the mechanics of yoga, appropriately challenge students while scaffolding us to success, assess progress and offer feedback, and draw connections between our practice of yoga and our daily lives. As classroom managers, they are generally patient and nurturing and bring us together as a group, while also offering individual hands-on support as needed. Much of this success can be attributed to their training. A minimum standard requires 200 hours of training in areas ranging from alignment and anatomy to the science and art of sequencing a class, as well as how to offer hands-on adjustments. Many instructors receive a total of 500 hours to deepen their abilities, and benefit from a greater amount of mentoring and practice teaching.

If we want congregational schools to adopt an experiential approach, then our top priority must be to prepare teachers to integrate these techniques into their pedagogy and classroom management. The profile for congregational school teachers varies greatly from emerging educators who teach while in college to adults for whom teaching is a secondary avocation. Most bring some combination of interest, personal experiences in Jewish education, and varying levels of content knowledge. Few arrive with formal training in experiential learning. Those who have benefited directly from experiential programs have strong instincts, but need guidance on how to explicitly modify for settings that are not residential.

I am eager to continue my exploration of this approach, and giving thought to the art of yoga helps clarify some immediate needs. Leaders in Jewish education must allocate resources in time and funding for the preparation of experiential educators on a local and national level. This preparation should certainly include the school educators, but must also include other professionals in the synagogue community so that the school is truly embedded in a larger community. In turn, our educators have an obligation to collaborate internally and externally to ensure that schools, camps, and youth groups take advantage of opportunities for joint training, programming, and communication as we steward families through an increasingly wide network of experiences.

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Worthwhile Change: New Models of Congregational Education

eJP

by Anna Marx with Cyd B. Weissman and Rob Weinberg

We're hearing a lot of talk these days in the Jewish community about new approaches to Hebrew school: relationship building, experiential learning, and alternative models. Terms from the broader educational world have entered the conversation in Jewish education: whole child, learner directed, peer-to-peer learning. Some may wonder, "How much do children really learn in this kind of environment? Don't you need students sitting at the desk listening to sages at the blackboard for them to really learn?"

Our recent research says: rich and accessible Jewish content is not sacrificed in learning *experiences* that are relationship-based, co-constructed, and relevant to everyday life. Education can be a great experience for children and families while also being excellent learning.

Some Background

The Jewish Education Project and the Experiment in Congregational Education initiated the Coalition of Innovating Congregations, a group of more than 50 New York congregations, to develop and adapt innovative models of Jewish education. These models look and feel different from traditional Hebrew schools. Coalition congregations are changing the learning experience to consider the "whole learner," that is, what the learner will know, do, and value as a result of the experience, as well as how much they feel a sense of belonging to their community and the Jewish people.

In order to reach the whole learner, the new models utilize four design principles in their learning experiences:

1. Learning will be anchored in caring, purposeful relationships
2. Learning will seek to answer the questions, challenges, and meaning of everyday life
3. Learning will enable individuals to construct their own meaning through inquiry, problem solving, and discovery
4. Learning will be content-rich and accessible

(The first three design principles are adapted from *Redesigning Jewish Education for the 21st Century*.)

The Jewish Education Project and the Experiment in Congregational Education engaged Rosov Consulting to assess how well these design principles were implemented. The 18-month study included 79 observations in 12 synagogues, including Coalition and non-Coalition congregations and innovative and traditional Hebrew school modelsi.

Innovative Learning Models

In their assessments of the 79 observations, the Rosov research team found that Coalition congregations' alternative models outperformed the traditional Hebrew school models in each design principle.

- "The four design principles of 21st century whole person learning are being more fully implemented within alternative models for congregation-based Jewish education than in traditional models for congregation-based Jewish education."

It was perhaps unsurprising to find that Coalition congregations scored higher than other congregations in the first three design principles: relationships, co-construction, and relevance to daily life. After all, these "alternative" models were designed to emphasize these principles. Notably, the study also found that alternative models in Coalition congregations scored higher in the fourth design principle: "Learning will be content-rich and accessible". This finding indicates that content-rich learning is not sacrificed when children experience powerful Jewish education that utilizes newer design principles.

The Rosov team found three characteristics that worked as "intensifiers" for the design principles; where one or more of these characteristics were employed in the learning, the design principles were more fully implemented.

1. **Real-time learning**: takes place in real-time rather than in an artificial setting. For example, families learn about tikkun olam by volunteering in a soup kitchen. See, for example, Temple Emanu-El's Mitzvah Corps and Temple Beth Sholom's Gimme 10.
2. **Family activities**: treats the family as the learner rather than just the child, sometimes in joint family learning and sometimes in parallel programs. See, for example, Temple Shaaray Tefila's MASA and Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore.
3. **Near peer activities**: grounded in relational elements that connect young people of different ages, and expose younger children to near peer role models; often times older students act as teachers or guides for younger students. See, for example, CSAIR's Project Chaverim and Village Temple.

Worthwhile Change

Educational leaders, parents and funders should be asking: "Is all this change worthwhile?" In more than five years of work with New York congregations and in our work with Rosov Consulting, we have found that the answer is yes.

Yes because learning can be a better experience for the child. A focus on relationships, co-constructing learning, and seeking answers to everyday questions is possible and real in part-time congregational settings.

Yes because education can be a better experience AND excellent learning. Content-rich learning is not sacrificed in utilizing these design principles. Quite the opposite, the team found content-rich learning to be more prevalent in congregations that also more fully implemented one or more of the other design principles.

Yes because educational principles and practices go hand-in-hand. Congregations providing new models of Jewish education are better implementing the design principles. In part, they demonstrate these principles more fully because they also employ certain educational practices: real-time learning, family activities, and near peer activities.

Yes because redesigning part-time Jewish education is good for our kids. In the end, what may be perceived as "fluff," turns out to have the real "stuff" of education. Children and families are learning rich

Jewish content while also building relationships, experiencing Judaism and its values in action, and deeply rooting themselves in the Jewish people.

Anna Marx is an independent consultant who has worked with The Jewish Education Project and the Experiment in Congregational Education for the past five years. Cyd B. Weissman is the Director of Innovation in Congregational Learning at The Jewish Education Project. Rob Weinberg is the National Director of the Experiment in Congregational Education at HUC-JIR's Rhea Hirsch School of Education. *They authors wish to express their deep gratitude to Cindy Reich who played an integral part in the successful completion of the Powerful Learning Study.*

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When School Doesn't Look Like School: Applied Judaism

eJP

By Wendy Grinberg

There is a lot of talk about changing the name, the times, the locations and the format of synagogue schools. But calling something experiential, changing the hours or even inviting the parents is not enough to make deep change in religious school. What is needed is a change in thinking.

Is school the right model for what we are trying to do in our synagogue education programs? Why do they exist? There is a lot for students to learn in order to be knowledgeable in Jewish practices, values and traditions. But children who can "get an A in Judaism" are not our ultimate goal. A person can become an expert in these areas without even being Jewish. Our goal is mastery of "applied Judaism," demonstrated by students who are part of a Jewish community and can face the challenges of this life in a Jewish way. Let me give you an example of what this can look like within the bounds of a typical third grade Sunday morning religious school class structure. Here's how the teacher described it:

In the synagogue kitchen, nineteen third graders gathered around the stainless steel island upon which was heaped bunches of leeks, onions, carrots, turnips, parsnips, and bundles of parsley and dill. On the stove behind them, four free-range chickens were simmering in big soup pots. Mamma Barbara, grandmother to one of the students and the guest of honor for the morning, stood at the head of the island, handing out peelers, instruction, and encouragement to eager hands. Within minutes, the floor was a mess of carrot tops and parsnip shavings that missed the compost bags. The smell of chopped onions brought tears to some sensitive eyes.

A sense of community, sometimes so hard to foster in a classroom setting, was everywhere one looked in this overheated kitchen. Kitchen tools were shared without a teacher's guidance. One child held a hard–to-cut vegetable for another to chop, while, across the way, another student warned his new friend to "be careful of the splashing soup" as she put her cut up celery into the pot.

Cleanup over and soup gently simmering on the stove, the class climbed the stairs back up the classroom, where Mamma Barbara told them the story of the recipe, passed down from her own great-grandmother

through the daughters of her family, from a Russian shtetl to the suburbs of New Jersey. The soup ("Jewish penicillin," Mamma Barbara called it) would now be strained, frozen, and ultimately delivered to the ill in our community by the sixth graders of our synagogue as part of their bar or bat mitzvah projects.

More than a kitschy hands-on activity, this effort coordinated by Jessie Losch at The Barnert Temple Congregation B'nai Jeshurun of Franklin Lakes gets to the heart of what applied Judaism in a school setting looks like. A few key components:

1. **The school is not separate from the greater community.**

In our scenario, students function as a class community within the context of the synagogue community. Mamma Barbara brought her family recipe and became part of the effort. In addition, the students planted chicken soup herbs in the synagogue garden to harvest for their soup under the direction of a synagogue member who is also a master gardener. Another group of expert adults facilitated the students in creating a Matzah Ball Mensches logo which will adorn the labels of every package of soup. As a mitzvah project, a sixth grader will serve as the liaison to the caring committee, coordinating delivery. K-2nd graders will create cards to go with the soup.

2. **Judaism is not confined to a time of the week or a room of the synagogue.**

The boundaries that often segment children's Jewish life (Sunday mornings at the synagogue) were permeated by people and activities around making the soup and delivering it. Community members and older students joined in. The sick people who will receive the soup are not necessarily third grade classmates. Deliveries will occur on different days and in other places, and cooking and planting took place outside of the classroom, albeit on synagogue property.

3. **Jewish values are put in action to solve real problems.**

Students learned about taking care of the earth, dietary laws, and preventing the suffering of animals and then discussed how to make the soup in an ethical way. They studied Rabbi Akiva's teaching on the power of visiting the sick: "He who does not visit the sick is like a murderer!" A connection to Jewish history and heritage was made real through Mamma Barbara's recipe and family story. Empathy and care for the sick went from theoretical to real as eight year olds did what they could to help and provide comfort to those in need.

4. **There are widening circles of involvement.**

This project has grown since it was first initiated. The excitement of participating in real and meaningful Jewish acts that make a difference is contagious. Director of Lifelong Learning Sara Losch has invited other classes to be a part. Now the fifth grade class is involved in creating a book that will tell the story of this project to the recipient, including the mitzvot it teaches and the recipe for chicken soup. Students become teachers to community members and spread their learning.

Under the direction of Senior Rabbi Elyse Frishman, this synagogue has been in a constant cycle of experimentation, assessment and improvement. That being said, this experience of applied Judaism did not require a full restructure of the synagogue school. Jessie understands the world of her classroom as a part of a greater Jewish community. She incorporated the enduring understandings that were articulated for her class and asked herself: What would a student who integrated these ideas know/do/understand in the real world? Others were able to get involved and see how this project could connect to their efforts as well.

Applied Judaism is my term for a way of thinking about Jewish learning and its purposes. Judaism is not a

subject matter to be mastered in our schools; it is a salve for the human condition. At the heart of Jewish education is a belief that being Jewish, living in a Jewish way, makes life more meaningful, more enjoyable, and more beautiful. With the right approach, children can experience this and enrich the whole community, even within the context of a conventional Sunday morning program.

Wendy Grinberg is the founder and director of the Jewish Education Lab and is currently earning an Ed.D. at the William Davidson School of Education at Jewish Theological Seminary.

Riding the wave of change in part-time Jewish education

By Rabbi Phil Warmflash and Anna Marx/JNS.org

Amid the numerous studies and analyses regarding Jewish American life, a simple fact remains: part-time Jewish education is the most popular vehicle for Jewish education in North America. Whenever and wherever parents choose Jewish education for their children, we have a communal responsibility to devote the necessary time and resources to deliver dynamic, effective learning experiences.

The only way we can do this is by creating space for conversations and knowledge-sharing around innovative new education models. That also means making the necessary investments to further models that already have proved successful.

On the ground, these new models resonate with today's learners and their families. Such educational approaches build relationships between families, integrate technology, and move the learning outside of classroom walls. This is big change we're talking about, and big change takes partnerships and collaboration across the Jewish community—partnerships with synagogue professionals and lay leaders, educational agencies, funders, and most importantly, parents.

Nancy Parkes, director of congregational learning at the Temple Israel Center in White Plains, N.Y., recently offered important recommendations to advance the congregational educational experience. We would like to call attention to two of her suggestions: "stop the negative narrative" and "be our partners." Opting for part-time "supplementary" Jewish education has been a very good choice—indeed, the right choice—for thousands of families. But it's time to tell a new story. One of experience, of possibility, of real impact. It's time to work together.

Five Jewish education agencies from around the country—including New York, Cleveland, Houston, Philadelphia, and San Francisco—are engaged in these important efforts through "Shinui: the Network for Innovation in Part-Time Education," created with the support of the Covenant Foundation. The stories coming out of our communities are inspiring real change that other communities can model and adapt.

One example of an innovative model is the Rimon Initiative at Philadelphia's Temple Sholom, whose premise is to offer students project-based *chugim* (electives). One parent comments, "My son retains so much more because teachers now focus on a few core areas for a longer period of time. And the fact that he can choose a *chug* makes for a more personal experience and gives him a chance to explore a subject that *he* wants to."

In San Francisco, Shalom Explorers is a vehicle for families to form neighborhood learning groups and customize individual lesson plans. Now in its second year, the initiative has expanded to multiple sites in the Bay Area. An Explorer parent says, "Shalom Explorers provides parents with an amazing toolkit of resources to bring great lesson plans to life. We were able to select the activities and content that worked for our group of families, and the children were able to learn in fun and exciting ways—through drama, art projects, outdoor activities, and more."

These stories show that part-time Jewish education presents one of the greatest opportunities to engage, inspire, and connect with families. No longer are students learning prayers and stories simply to "check them off the list." Instead, educators across the country are wrestling with how the learning experiences they offer can best support children and their families, and make a true difference in their lives. In those precious few hours of part-time programs, teachers are parents' partners in raising children to become *mensches*.

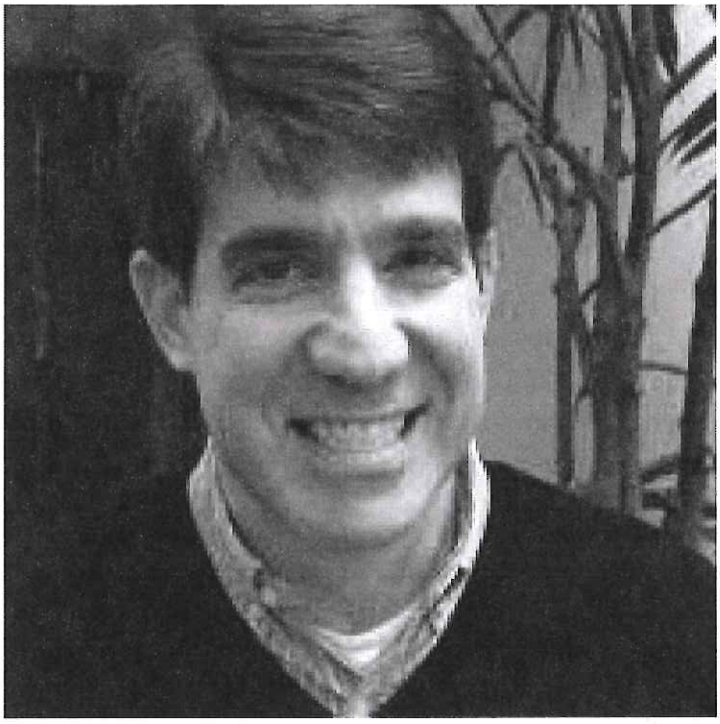
With this understanding, more and more congregations around the country are trying new models to invigorate the educational experiences they offer. The Jewish community still must do more to help this change happen in a serious, sustainable manner. Fortunately, many are answering this call, and important changes are happening in Jewish education: learning experiences that involve the entire family, deepen connections to Israel, teach Hebrew in more meaningful and relevant ways, and bring the summer camp experience into our schools.

We see these changes in the Shinui-affiliated communities, and we invite others to be a part of this change—to help build today's narrative of part-time Jewish education. Together, we can create and sustain major changes across the country.

Rabbi Phil Warmflash is executive director of the Jewish Learning Venture in Philadelphia. Anna Marx is project director of Shinui.

shabbat

When Jewish Education Becomes a Family Affair



Ben Light Oct 15, 2015 11:11AM

In the 80s, my father and I did parent/child Hebrew classes (before it was cool). Every Saturday afternoon after religious school, my father arrived at our temple with a Burger King Italian Chicken Sandwich and we spent 90 minutes studying Hebrew with three other families. The two most memorable parts of that experience were the chicken sandwiches and the fact that my dad and I did this together.

When I asked to quit Confirmation Class at the beginning of ninth grade, my parents said I could if it was replaced with something else that furthered my Jewish education. My father had a friend who was studying with his son on Sunday mornings at a nearby yeshiva, so we joined them. We started each

Sunday by putting on *teffilin* and saying the morning prayers followed by Torah study with one of the rabbis at the yeshiva. There were no chicken sandwiches, but again, my father and I were doing this together.

READ: Unplugging for Shabbat

My parents believed that Jewish education was extremely important. They made this point to me by making it a family activity.

Now my wife and I have tried to make the same point to our daughter.

For six of the last eight school years, our family attended a program at The Temple-Tifereth Israel in our suburb of Cleveland called Shabbaton.

The structure of the Shabbaton program is simple. Instead of dropping our daughter off at religious school on Sunday mornings, we attend as a family on Saturday afternoons. The afternoon begins with a brief service or song session, then the children head off to Hebrew or Judaic Studies while the adults have a Torah study session led by the senior rabbi or one of the other members of the clergy. We come back together for parent/child Hebrew (which is now cool) and conclude each afternoon with the *havdalah* prayers.

The impact of the Shabbaton program on our family is anything but simple.

At the core, the Shabbaton program is about building community. We have had the good fortune to develop wonderful friendships throughout our time in the program. Friendships with like-minded adults who are also making a bold statement to their children that Jewish education is a family activity.

READ: Accidental Shabbat

Each academic year has a unique theme that the children follow with their teachers. The adults also address this theme in the texts we study with the rabbi. Last school year, we addressed "The Great Questions and Answers in Judaism." This led to some very thoughtful discussions with the rabbi that continued after the formal study sessions concluded. This year's topic is "Standing at Sinai is an Ongoing Experience." These are relevant and interesting areas of study, and allow us to relate what we are learning to our daily Jewish lives.

But in addition to learning from the rabbi, we learn from each other. We share parenting lessons, family traditions, perspectives on current events, and spend time deepening our relationships with other members of our community.

We learn through art, music, drama, and other non-traditional methods. We focus on the importance of *tzedakah* and giving back to our community as well as those who are less fortunate. We support other families in our community who are struggling with illness or loss.

And we do it all as a family.

I have watched my daughter develop meaningful relationships with children of all ages as well as with other adults who participate in the program. She has been mentored by many of the older children and she has mentored those who follow her. This year, she will begin serving as a *madricha* (teacher's aid) at Shabbaton. She cannot wait to work with the younger children and help them on their journey to become more active members of the temple and Jewish community.

My daughter truly feels that the temple is a second home. Her experience is an example of part-time Jewish education that works well. Like many others around the country, my wife and I turned to our congregation to deliver an educational experience with personal meaning and impact. We have not been disappointed. We found that our congregation offers much more than a traditional "sit-behind-the-desk" education—indicative of a change in other communities across the country as well. Increasingly, part-time Jewish education offers innovative, dynamic educational opportunities that inspire Jewish life and build community.

READ: Experimenting with Shabbat Sleepovers

So how does this all play out with the kids? Currently, The Temple-Tifereth Israel's main facility is undergoing renovations, and as we began planning our daughter's upcoming bat mitzvah, there was some question of where her service would take place. But in her mind, there was never a question. The Temple was the only place she could imagine going through her formal transition into Jewish adulthood. Shabbaton is the primary reason why she feels this way.

When my wife and I made the decision to join the Shabbaton community, we did so with the hope that it would clearly demonstrate to our daughter how much we value her Jewish education. We value it so much that we were willing to pay with our time, our most precious commodity. The outcome of this investment has been greater than we ever could have imagined.

Although there are no chicken sandwiches at Shabbaton, making Jewish education a family activity is now a family tradition. We hope our daughter will continue the tradition when she has a family of her own.

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A Community Model for Supporting "Beyond the Classroom Experiences"

eJP

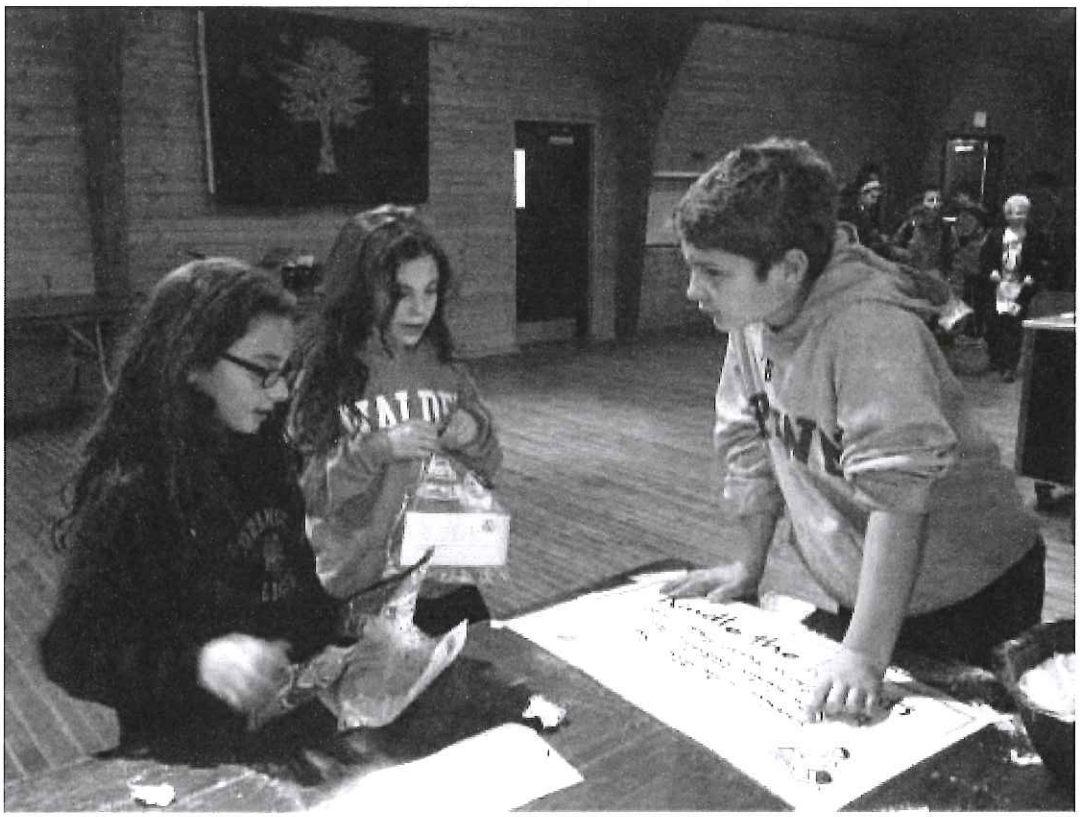

Photo courtesy Jewish Education Center of Cleveland

By Judith Schiller

Earlier this year, David Phillips shared the exciting launch of a comprehensive assessment of the Jewish Retreat and Conference Center sector. Premised in part on the proven concept that multi-day, immersive, experiential education can shape a Jewish journey for a lifetime, this assessment would help create a hub of data and best practices that any retreat or conference organizer could turn to for guidance.

Through our involvement with Shinui: The Network for Innovation in Part-Time Jewish Education, we have seen first-hand the benefits of sharing an effective model with colleagues. In this spirit, we are compelled to share the model of the Retreat Institute (RI), a program of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JECC)

that receives generous support from the Jewish Federation of Cleveland. The RI supports congregations, schools, and other Jewish organizations plan and implement "beyond the classroom" experiences – uniquely impactful opportunities for deeper learning, community building, and for fostering a love of Judaism.

For these experiences to be high quality and to have real impact, they need to be designed and implemented with strategic thought. How do you select a retreat location, develop a program with meaning, and build a cohesive structure for the whole retreat? Coupled with these questions are the essential details that go into marketing and recruitment, necessary to reach audiences beyond the small, self-selecting participants. Importantly, these experiences, which often have a high price tag, have to be funded, thereby reducing financial barriers to participation.

Think of the RI (a staff of three) as a collaborative, one-stop-shop to help congregations and schools in the Cleveland community design a wide range of immersive experiences – from overnight retreats to smaller scale programs – for diverse audiences of youth and families. Our holistic model is unique in these key ways:

- **Funding:** Rather than offer a block grant, we give funding allocations that are directly connected with our RI planning process. Institutions are invited to apply for RI support on a yearly basis by submitting proposals and projected budgets for the coming year. Financial support and staff are provided to each project, depending on the needs and circumstances of each institution. Through funding from the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, we are able to subvent participant costs by up to 50 percent.
- **Collaboration:** Our work is not "off-the shelf" programming. The RI and the partner institution each assign a liaison, and together, they have primary planning and decision-making responsibility. Working collaboratively, we develop experiences that integrate with curriculum and broader learning goals relevant to each specific participant group. Each institution hires their own retreat staff, and the RI co-facilitates their training and preparation.
- **Planning Process:** We engage an intensive, complex planning process, encompassing educational programming, cultivation of the environment, recruitment of participants, community building, logistics, staff training, and many administrative tasks. We see all aspects of the retreat – programming, meal times, use of space, *Tefila*, free time, and bed time – as interconnected parts of the whole.
- **Jewish text and content:** RI Retreats and programs embrace Jewish text, values, and traditions, while operating with a fully pluralistic approach. Through an experiential framework, we bring text and tradition to life in ways that fit the culture of the institution.
- **Resources:** We offer a deep level of resources, encompassing a repertoire of programming and expertise in experiential Jewish education, educational materials, and much logistical support – from ritual and kitchen, to games and posters.
- **Use of space:** We do not have our own retreat site, we utilize a variety of facilities – the JCC camp (which is the only Jewish site), an environmental education center, hotels, Christian camps, as well as public spaces such as museums, and zoos – and create a sacred Jewish space in all of them.
- **Professional Development:** We help build the capacity of our institutional partners to mobilize these experiences through professional development of their staff, informally, through collaborative partnerships, and with formal workshops and seminars. We are building a community of practice in experiential Jewish education (EJE) and strengthening the culture of EJE through my participation in the Yeshiva University EJE program.
- **Evaluation:** Eight years ago, as part of an independent evaluation from JESNA, we developed an evaluation structure that operationalizes all aspects of an experience. Since then we have maintained a database of participant and staff feedback, providing insights into the participant takeaways, and

ways to improve.

Surveys from participants and faculty show that this model is an integral strategy in the Jewish education offered in our community. We hope it is a model other communities consider as well.

While funding is a significant incentive, institutions also say that working with the RI process makes for a richer, more meaningful experience with lasting value to the participants and their institutions. Over the years, institutions have integrated retreats into their educational program and culture of their organization.

Last year, Temple Beth Shalom, a smaller congregation outside of Cleveland worked with the RI on a congregational retreat, "Shabbat Tzedek," held over Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. It was the first-ever overnight retreat for the entire congregation and also came at an opportune time as the congregation welcomed a new rabbi.

"We are a small congregation with limited resources," says Stefani Carlson, education director of Temple Beth Shalom. "But the Retreat Institute empowers us to think beyond our normal means and think about what we would *like* to do. It is paradigm shifting in this way. But it's also so much more than the funding. The RI helped us do everything from selecting the location to thinking about a thematic arc for the whole weekend. Every learning session connected to the other in some way to create a powerful community experience. We launched a yearlong initiative after the retreat to engage with a transitional housing establishment in our city – something that brought incredible meaning into our congregants' lives. We simply could not do this without the RI."

More and more, the Jewish community understands that "beyond the classroom" experiences are one of the *most* impactful elements of Jewish engagement – for all ages. Our surveys reflect positive outcomes about retreats in numerous areas: after retreats participants agreed that they would use Judaism in their lives "more fully and on their own terms;" participants appreciate the opportunity to engage in Jewish rituals and practice, and they enjoy the "fun and exciting" learning that occurs. They also like the opportunity to build connections to peers and community.

A recent survey of Temple Emanuel El families affirmed the findings above. "We learned that families truly wait for the retreats each year," says Kate Milgrom, education director of the 450 member family congregation. "They love the communal nature, they love the learning that comes to life for their children in front of their eyes. We now work with the RI throughout the year on programming like day-long education and holiday experiences that somewhat model aspects of a retreat.

As more people seek out these experiences, more Jewish organizations want to be positioned to deliver them. With a generous commitment from our Federation, the Retreat Institute helps make these opportunities accessible for many participants. We support, on average, 36 projects among 12 institutions with 1,700 participants on a yearly basis. We know that other successful models exist too, and we want to add our voice to the growing number of people committed to sharing information that will increase our collective effectiveness and will make these "beyond the classroom" experiences as meaningful and as high quality as possible.

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Limud by the Lake Revisited: Growth and Change at Jewish Summer Camp

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Limud by the Lake Revisited:
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It is a bright blue-green day in Summer 2008 as we leave the highway and head up into the foothills toward camp. We have not been here for eight years, but the image in our minds is so vivid and the sights and smells so familiar, it could have been yesterday. We expect (and hope) that the camp will be unchanged. After all, in *How Goodly Are Thy Tents*, we documented summer camps' "vigorous adherence to tradition" and the power of camp culture (Sales & Saxe, 2004). The affection that members of the camp community have for the camp would surely maintain everything as we had last seen it.

At the same time, we expect (and hope) that it will be different, closer to its full potential as an educational and socializing institution. Indeed, we had also written about summer camps' "great flexibility and openness to experimentation." Eight years marks a generation of campers and staff, and it seems only reasonable to us that as members of the camp community have grown and changed, the camp too will have evolved.

This report presents the results of our Summer 2008 study of Jewish summer camps. It describes changes in the field over the previous eight years and presents new data on the families and staff that comprise the camp community. It concludes with a set of questions about the future of the field and five recommendations for expanding and deepening the Jewish summer camp experience.

METHOD[1]

In 2000, The AVI CHAI Foundation asked the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies to undertake a study of Jewish summer camp with the purpose of mapping the landscape of Jewish residential camps and exploring how these camps socialize young people as members of the Jewish community.

Findings, first presented in *Limud by the Lake: Fulfilling the Educational Potential of Jewish Summer Camps* (Sales & Saxe, 2002), led to seven recommendations:

1. Expand the reach of Jewish camping.
2. Make camp a model of Jewish education.
3. Prepare directors to enhance Jewish life at camp.
4. Focus on Jewish staff as a target group in their own right.
5. Bring more Jewish counselors to camp.
6. Provide the training and support counselors need to advance on their personal Jewish journeys and flourish in their work as Jewish role models.
7. Conduct research to inform the field of Jewish camping and ground its future development in reliable information.

[1] More information on method can be found at http://bir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/24197/Limud.Revisited.Method.01.31.11.pdf

Eight years after our first foray into the camp world, the Foundation asked us to return to camp to examine how much progress has been made in these areas and what lies ahead for the field. The new study is based on field observations at 22 Jewish overnight camps selected to represent different types of camps in three regions of the country (Northeast, South, and West). Fourteen of these camps took part in the original study. Four were added to round out our sample and three other camps, new on the landscape, were added so that we might learn how startup camps think about and enact their Jewish purposes. For the purposes of contrast, one for-profit private camp was added to this portion of the study only. During the course of our site visits, we spoke with nearly 500 informants at all levels in the camp system—executive directors, directors, assistant directors, unit heads, specialists, bunk counselors, and *shlichim* (Israeli emissaries).

The new study also includes:

- Two surveys of staff at 20 of the camps in our sample. The first was administered at the beginning of the 2008 camp season (n=2,195, 82% response rate) and the second the following spring (n=1,475, 55% response rate). The former gathered demographic and job information. The latter looked at what counselors brought from camp into their lives back home.
- A survey of 4,100 families (60% response rate) with children at these camps. Administered in Spring 2009, the survey included questions about what children take away from their camp experience.
- A survey of 423 families with a child of camp age who has *never* been to a Jewish overnight camp. These families were compared with 1,456 camp families matched to them on location, child's age and gender, denomination, and marriage type (i.e., intermarried and inmarried).
- An analysis of data from the Foundation for Jewish Camp's 2008 census of the field.
- A re-analysis of data from 2008 applicants to Taglit-Birthright Israel, both those who have been to a Jewish summer camp and those who have not.

The multi-method approach enabled us to examine the camp experience from various perspectives, while the replication of methods and questions from the earlier study enabled us to document changes between 2001 and 2008.

CHANGES OBSERVED 2000-2008

The very beginnings of the new study hinted at change in the Jewish camp world. In 2000 we encountered great difficulty getting camps to participate in the study. They could not see the value of the research and neither Brandeis University, The AVI CHAI Foundation, nor Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) were in a position to leverage camps' participation. Eight years later the situation was completely changed. Camp, which had been ignored as an area for study for decades, had become a hot topic.

Several forces ignited interest and activity in Jewish summer camp: the original *Limud by the Lake* report; the emergence of FJC with its new chief executive officer, Jerry Silverman, and his vision to "push the field into the 21st century;" and the support of The AVI CHAI Foundation and Harold Grinspoon Foundation. As these forces aligned, a number of other funders, foundations, and federations joined in serious support of Jewish summer camp. The resultant changes can be seen in four areas: new initiatives, the new reality of camps, new programming, and emerging target groups.

New Initiatives

The past eight years have seen a plethora of capacity-building initiatives in the areas of fundraising, enhancement of program and facilities, professional development for top leadership, retention and training of North American and Israeli staff, and incentives for first-time campers. Each area of endeavor obviously depends on and contributes to the others: Fundraising depends on executive leadership; improved facilities depend on funding; and the expansion of camp requires the facilities and staff to serve the additional campers.

Taken together, these initiatives have generated palpable excitement and momentum in the field.

Fundraising

One of the most stunning changes in the field is the dramatic expansion and increasing sophistication of fundraising efforts, both capital and endowment campaigns. The Grinspoon Foundation, for one, has begun a Camp Legacy Program and a technology initiative. The former helps create and implement legacy giving plans; the latter helps provide the software needed for fundraising campaigns and related communications and alumni relations efforts. During our site visits in Summer 2008, we found that the shift toward fundraising has led not only to more resources for the camps, but often to changes in the job responsibilities of the director, the hiring of development professionals, the reorganization of the lay board, and greatly increased activity in communications and alumni relations. One camp that underwent these changes raised a half million dollars in the first year, more than ten times the amount it had raised in any previous year. Numbers from the 2008 FJC camp census indicate at least 40 development directors now work in the field, almost half of whom have been in their positions for under five years. Seven of the 21 nonprofit camps in our study now have a professional fundraiser on staff.

Improved Facilities

In concert with the emphasis on fundraising is a new focus on expanding and upgrading facilities. FJC has led the charge, arguing that the nonprofit Jewish summer camps need to upgrade their facilities to be competitive with the for-profit sector. Help with capital improvements has come from all quarters. FJC has offered capacity grants, consultation, and technical support for the creation of site master plans, strategic plans, quality control systems, marketing and consumer research, and the like. The Grinspoon Foundation has offered a set of challenge grants and The AVI CHAI Foundation established an interest-free loan program for capital projects. The result is obvious in our field observations and in interviews with staff who invariably comment on new and upgraded facilities.

Staff Development

Various staff development programs have been implemented in this time frame as well, each targeting different positions within the camp hierarchy. At one end is FJC's Executive Leadership Institute which helps camp directors acquire business, management, and leadership skills for raising their camp's level of excellence and deepening its Jewish impact. At the other end is the Cornerstone Fellowship, created and sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation to retain North American Jewish bunk counselors into their third year at camp and empower them to serve as Jewish educators and role models. AVI CHAI also instituted the *Achva* program for returning Israeli counselors and encouraged and supported the hiring of *roshei mishlachat* (heads of delegation) at camps with large contingents of *shlichim*. In 2000, this position did not exist at any of the camps in our study; in 2008, 11 of the camps had a head of delegation. Indeed, so much professional development is now available that we invariably encountered camp leaders who had participated in at least one initiative. In addition, several of the directors in our study were preparing for the rabbinate or pursing advanced degrees in Jewish education or management.

Expansion

The number of children attending Jewish overnight camps is growing. Lacking full information from all camps in 2000 and 2008, it is not possible to specify the exact number and percentage increase. Nonetheless, in the 87 camps responding to the question of total enrollment in the two years, we see an increase of over 1,300 campers, approximately 3% growth. These camps represent a broad swath of the field, and this pattern of growth likely holds throughout.

In the 2008 FJC census, 120 camps provided information on number of beds, a measure of total capacity at any one point in time during the summer. Camp capacity ranges from 65 to 1,000 beds and averages just over 300. Total number of beds across all 120 camps is 36,270 (8,947 in Canada and 27,323 in the United States).

Table 1: Total Excess Capacity 2008

	Camper Capacity	Campers Served	% Excess Capacity
Boys only camps (n=10)	4,917	3,457	30%
Girls only camps (n=7)	5,926	5,057	15%
Coed camps (n=87)	53,515	42,960	20%
Camps serving boys and girls separately (n=2)	632	382	40%
Overall (n=106)	**64,990**	**51,856**	**20%**

Because most camps offer more than one session, the total number of campers they can serve over the course of the season is greater than the number of beds. The total number of individual campers who could have been served ranges from 65 to 2,100 with a mean of 613. All totaled, the 106 camps providing data could potentially have served 64,990 campers (9,407 in Canada and 55,583 in the United States). As seen in Table 1, there was 20% excess capacity in the field in 2008.[2]

Incentive grants. One strategy for increasing the reach of Jewish summer camp is to bring more first-time campers into the system through incentive grants. Millions of dollars in incentive grants have been proffered in the past few years with the expectation that a reduction in tuition cost in the first year will motivate families to choose a Jewish summer camp for their child. Overall, 30% of the children in our study were first-time campers in Summer 2008. Half of these campers received some form of monetary assistance, an incentive grant and/or scholarship.

There are only a few differences between surveyed families who came in with an incentive grant and those who came in without one. Incentivized families are less likely to be members of a Jewish congregation; the parents are less likely to have attended or worked at the particular camp; and the incentivized campers have fewer close friends who are Jewish. The numbers bear out our commonsense notions: Many synagogues have become active about getting their children to a Jewish summer camp so it is reasonable that synagogue members would be more likely to choose such a camp without a monetary incentive. Children of parents who have attended camp are more likely to go to camp, and a parent's strong connection to a particular camp understandably establishes a preference that his or her child attend there as well, without additional incentive. Importantly, friendship circles are implicated in many Jewish choices, and it is not surprising that they show up in the camp decision. Lacking dense social friendship circles, the monetary incentive would logically become a more important factor in the decision.

All things being equal among first-time campers, families with lower household incomes are significantly more likely to receive an incentive grant than are those with higher incomes. The grants are not just functioning as an incentive but also appear to serve as financial aid.

Camp growth. The second strategy for expanding the field is to increase the size and number of camps. Census data from the 87 camps responding in both 2000 and 2008 show an increase in average size from 314 beds to 322 beds. The total across these camps represents a 2.3% increase in capacity over the eight years. In addition, new Jewish overnight camps opened during this time period, just as they have in every decade of the 20th century. The ten new nonprofit camps added some 2,000 beds to the field and, in 2008, served over 2,500 children and teens. For the first time, there is now a concerted national effort to prime the creation of new camps. With funding from the Jim

[2] N.B. This analysis is based only on the 106 camps providing information on both capacity and numbers served.

Joseph Foundation, FJC established a Specialty Camps Incubator to support the development of new camp models. The first of these camps opened in Summer 2010, and we should expect to see continuing expansion through this effort.

In some regards our field observations reveal no discernible difference between the new and more established camps. For example, they think about their facilities in similar ways, even though the new camps have had less time to customize their properties to their purposes (e.g., kashering the kitchen, building a *beit midrash*). In other regards, the new camps lag behind the more established camps. Patterns in Jewish ritual and Jewish and Israel education look like those identified eight years ago in similar camps—low on creative experimentation, high on centralization and missed opportunities. It appears that the other camps have progressed in the development of Jewish life while the new camps are just beginning to move in this direction.

New Reality

The camps still feel remote. Some are, in fact, miles away from the highway, an hour or more on winding, one-lane back roads. But even those situated close to the highway feel isolated once inside the gate. Some camps still turn the clock back one hour and literally exist within their own time zone. Nonetheless, the bubble is not as air-tight as it was eight years ago.

For one, technology has come to camp. Eight years ago, we commonly found one dial-up computer for staff to research materials for their activities. Today we find wireless hotspots throughout the camps and multiple computers in constant use in the staff lounge and the Jewish education center. Staff are not only doing research for activities but are using email and social media to be in regular contact with friends in the "outside" world. Although the camps try to control the use of cell phones, everyone has them, and certain spots at camp are known to have adequate reception.

Security is a more prominent issue than it was in 2000. At many of the camps new security measures were put in place after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. For example, in addition to an electronic security gate, the administration at one camp has "strangers" come onto the property to test the length of time it takes for a counselor to approach them and ask who they are.

Safety has always been a key concern of the camps, but the nature of this concern has changed. New laws and increased awareness of liability have led to more intrusive camp policies and practices. Counselors feel the new pressure and sense a more serious tone at orientation training. The concerns with safety are exacerbated by the "helicopter parents" who hover over their children. Directors report that these parents have added immeasurably to the burden of communications. It seems there can never be enough photographs on the website, letters from the director, emails from counselors, or telephone calls from the Camp Mom to satisfy the parents' concerns.

The bubble of camp is also threatened by new scheduling options, with many of the camps offering more sessions of different lengths than they did eight years ago. According to the FJC census, in 2000 about one-fourth of the camps offered three or more different session lengths; by 2008 half of the camps did so. The result is that parents show up periodically as more campers move in and out over the course of the summer.

The bubble is similarly threatened by the increasing openness of the camps to outsiders—researchers, funders, board members, alumni, visiting faculty and special guests, and parents who are invited to stay in the guest house for a weekend at camp. The openness of the Jewish nonprofit camps to visitors stands in stark contrast to that of the for-profit camp in our study. Here the director discourages all visitors outside of visiting day. He reasons that children are the camp's focus and every minute of the staff and administration's attention should go to them.

New Programming

As compared with 2000, the camps evidence an increased awareness of their educational mandate, stronger Judaic programming, and more openness to experimentation.

Some camps increased the number of educational staff and opened up more space in the schedule for them, revised their educational programs to be more responsive to different age groups, or began experimenting with new forms of prayer. Others raised the importance of Judaic competence as a criterion for new hires. Camps whose Jewish programming was relatively weak in 2000 cite increases and improvements in their Jewish education: more Jewish content in activities, more use of Hebrew, more *t'fillah* during the week, and more spontaneous Jewish teaching. Camps with previously strong education are experimenting with new programs. One such camp, for example, experimented with a service learning program in the local community. "We always talk about *tikkun olam*," the director explains, "but why not do it here?" The pilot was so successful that the camp is now considering ways to expand it.

Despite this activity, Jewish education at camp is still very much a work in progress with great opportunity for further development.

Emphasis

The emphasis on Judaism varies from camp to camp. One of the newer camps is still grappling with core questions: How much should we focus on instruction in basic Judaism versus higher levels? How much emphasis should we place on transmitting Jewish content versus inspiring Jewish feelings? The other camps have largely resolved these issues, most often along the lines of their movements and markets.

Jewish Values

Across the spectrum, camps routinely use Jewish values as a basis for Jewish programming and practice, but the application varies greatly. At one end are camps that simply apply Hebrew names to the value, for example, placing recycling, environmental education, volunteerism and social action activities under the umbrella of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). At the other end are camps that teach the Jewish perspective and the textual sources that support the focal value.

Formal and Informal Jewish Education

As described in 2000, instruction at camp takes place through informal and formal education. In either case, the quality of the learning depends on its success in engaging the campers. Although one might assume that informal, experiential learning is ipso facto the more engaging, we observed several instances of formal Jewish education that worked. For example, disturbed by the raucous *Birkat Hamazon* at a denominational camp, one of the rabbis created a lesson about the blessing. He began by asking a group of teenagers if they had ever stolen anything and several admitted to having done so. He then linked stealing to eating something and not saying a blessing. He analogized thanking God to writing thank you notes for bar mitzvah gifts. The campers bombarded him with questions about blessings, and it was clear that dialogue and learning were occurring. Lessons that engage the campers to this degree all have similar elements: a topic that is grounded in Judaism and relevant to camp and the campers; and an able facilitator who creates safe space for the campers, invites their questions, and answers them intelligently.

Decentralization

The original *Limud by the Lake* study posited that Jewish education at camp benefits when rabbis and educators share responsibility for it with bunk counselors and activity specialists. Only then, we argued, can Judaism infuse the camp. A great deal has been done over the past eight years to raise the level of the staff's Judaic and pedagogic skills so that more Jewish education can be placed in their hands. These efforts include the institution of regular lunch-and-learn programs for the staff at several of the Reform, Zionist, and community camps.

The current study found that the quality of the Jewish education at camp is influenced not only by the capacity of counselors to teach but also by the role they play in developing the educational program. In a movement camp with highly decentralized education, themes are developed using a waterfall design. The director of education draws up ideas for addressing the theme in each unit; the unit heads

invent lesson plans for each idea; and the staff work together to write activities; and then individual bunk counselors select the activities best suited to their campers. Many hands thus take part in the development task. As well, the front-line counselors have the support of senior educators and the opportunity to exercise their own creativity. Another movement camp also organizes Jewish education by bunk, but in this case the curriculum is in the hands of the unit heads who in turn relay it to the counselors. According to the program director, the design has two shortcomings: In terms of motivation, the counselors are not invested in the Jewish education they are delivering, and in terms of content, they lack knowledge of the larger context.

Although more prevalent than it was in 2000, decentralization is not yet possible at all of the camps. The two most extreme examples are a community camp in the Northeast with a number of non-Jewish staff members who lack Jewish knowledge and a Southern camp with Jewish counselors who do not see themselves as Jewish educators and do not feel prepared to lead Jewish programming.

Integration

The original study noted that Jewish education at camp benefits when it is integrated into different activities and is not compartmentalized in its own time block, separated from the rest of camp life. Integrated programming, we argued, can create a more harmonious and fully involving experience of life in a Jewish community.

In 2008, we found evidence of increased experimentation with integration at a handful of the camps. At one camp, for example, science workshops led by scientists-in-residence integrate Jewish education in highly creative ways. A project on yeast becomes a chance to learn about challah; an activity creating ink from cabbage turns into an opportunity to teach about the writing of a Torah scroll. In addition to integrating Jewish/Zionist education into its everyday activities, a Zionist camp insinuates Jewish content into the physical environment. There is constant conversation at this camp about Judaism and Israel because there are boards around camp with news from Israel, notes, puzzles, magnetic letters, or other conversation triggers. Even in free time—at the pool, on the ropes course, or waiting to go into the dining hall for meals—the campers are learning from the postings.

There also remain a number of settings where integration has not taken hold. In some places understanding of the concept is simplistic. For example, the head of the drama program at a new camp mounts classic Broadway plays, overlaying Jewish content by throwing in Yiddish words (many 'oy veys') and giving the characters Jewish names. In other places, the specialty staff lack the necessary Jewish preparedness or do not feel integration of Jewish content is necessary.

Challenges Going Forward

Regardless of positive changes, the camps face challenges and opportunities that vary from setting to setting. A denominational camp must plan Jewish education for a camper community that increasingly includes a mix of day school and part-time school children. Another denominational camp would consider implementing a Hebrew immersion model but suffers from insufficient Hebrew proficiency among its staff. A new community camp has to build Jewish education from the ground up. Its current program is minimal, has no textual basis, and employs no informal educational techniques. Another community camp has been reinvigorating and upgrading its Judaic programming but still follows a one-size-fits-all model for Shabbat learning. The centralized curriculum requires the counselors to adapt the materials for their units, a task for which they are not yet prepared. Every nonprofit camp in our study has opportunities to further develop experiential learning and to ignite its campers with a love for Jewish learning.

Emerging Target Groups

Teens and special needs campers are potentially valuable markets for camps. Camps, however, are currently challenged to serve them well.

Into the Future

The future requires a strong vision for the field of Jewish summer camp, one that can inspire its planning and actions in the next eight years and help sustain the remarkable dynamism of the past eight years. Fulfilling the vision calls for continued efforts to expand the reach of camp, support innovation, raise the level of professionalization, develop camp's full potential to create powerful Jewish life and learning, and make the most of camp's greatest asset—its people.

1. Expand the Reach of Camp

Eight years ago, our first recommendation was to expand the reach of Jewish camp by increasing capacity, extending beyond the summer months, and increasing scholarships. Today, despite significant progress, only a small fraction of Jewish youth has a Jewish summer camp experience. Simply put, current efforts by the Foundation for Jewish Camp, philanthropists, movements, local communities, and camps need to be redoubled.

a. Retool marketing and recruitment.

J-West and other incentive programs have introduced new ideas for marketing Jewish summer camp and for recruiting first-time campers. While these ideas are being studied and further developed, more experimentation is needed in the use of social media, community organizing, strategic partnerships with schools, synagogues, JCCs and other local organizations, use of alumni networks, and other vehicles for stimulating interest in the Jewish camps.

b. Bring cost under control.

To some extent, enrollment is linked to cost. Incentive programs are one way to reduce the cost to families, but other efforts are needed as well. These include, for example, building endowments for scholarship, developing new pricing structures, generating other sources of income to reduce reliance on tuition, and seeking more efficiencies in camp operations.

c. Expand opportunities for teens.

Teens have a lower retention rate than younger age groups. At the same time, they are especially precious to the camps because they are carriers of the camp spirit and the most promising candidates for future staff. The research makes clear that the camps need to program differently for teens by providing them more freedom, choice, leadership opportunities, challenges, and special experiences. There are pockets of innovation in teen programming but the need remains for more, whether they be travel programs, programs that permit serious engagement in a specialty area, or other experiences. Now is the time to convene a taskforce on teens at camp to learn from current models and to develop pilot projects that might help keep camp relevant to teens through their high school years.

d. Expand services for the special needs population.

All of the camps in our study have campers with special needs but many of these camps are not well prepared

to serve this population effectively. Moreover there are few places for children with moderate to severe needs, particularly when they get older. It is clear from the research that camp is a highly valued experience for this growing population of children and their families. More opportunities are needed for these children to attend summer camp. Also needed is a triage system that would enable each camp to focus on particular segments of the special needs population. There is much to be learned from the camps that have established programs for special needs campers and their expertise should be made widely available to the field.

2. Maintain Momentum in the Field

Camps run on unbridled creative energy. This energy explains how the camp environment generates fun, risk-taking, and constant invention. Indeed, camp is full of surprises (Sales & Saxe, 2004). The field as a whole needs to embrace this same creative spirit and continue to surprise the community with new ideas. Many of the initiatives in the past eight years (e.g., incubator camps, incentive programs) show just such imagination and willingness to take risk. These efforts suggest that this is a time of great opportunity. Momentum increases uncertainty about old assumptions and opens the way for new thinking. Continuing the momentum requires not only vision but also leaders and resources.

Foundations, federations, and philanthropists are currently investing tens of millions of dollars in Jewish summer camp. Appropriately, a key concern of grantors and grantees is sustainability. Philanthropists are often looking to create or support something new, leaving open the question of the future of programs already created.

a. Support capacity building for camps.

Camps need to determine which initiatives are most compatible and beneficial for them. They then need to devise business plans that will enable them to develop and grow the initiative on their own or in partnership with their funders. Such a plan may include fundraising campaigns, off-season revenue-generating programs, interest from endowment funds or other investments, government grants, and so on. Regardless of the vehicle, camps will need significant capacity building in terms of budgeting and planning in order to take on this responsibility.

b. Make the most of evaluation research on innovation.

Evaluation research covering both process and outcomes is needed for the field to make the most of innovative and entrepreneurial efforts. Camp is modeling how a field can change and grow over a relatively short period of time. It behooves us to study each move to understand not only its impact but also the conditions under which it is most effective and possibilities for adapting it to other settings. Results of evaluation studies should not sit in a file cabinet but should be shared broadly and deliberated. The understanding that emerges from such a process can be used to gain continued support for innovation and to inform plans for bringing good ideas to scale.

c. Pay special attention to the start-up camps.

The research reveals the extraordinary excitement found in new ventures but also the great challenges. The rule of thumb in venture capital is that only 10% of new businesses last a decade (Herman, 2009). Start-up Jewish camps are not immune from the difficulties faced by other new organizations. The new camps play an important role in expanding the reach of camp and in creating new venues for innovation. They need to be watched carefully and supported in their early years when they are developing their brand, markets, program, staff, leadership, culture, and mission. Consultation, mentoring, communities of practice, and other forms of support can help the start-up camps take advantage of the opportunities of newness while avoiding the pitfalls of new ventures.

3. Raise the Level of Professionalization

In 2000, our recommendations for the training of camp directors focused singularly on preparing them to enhance Jewish life at their camps. Advances in the field now highlight the critical need for advanced training in executive leadership and management.

Camp directors need to match the skills and expertise of top leadership in the nonprofit world. The list is lengthy and includes, among other requirements, the ability to inspire with vision; to identify, recruit, train, and motivate an excellent board of directors (or camp committee) and a cadre of volunteer leaders; to raise funds; to build and work effectively with a top-notch management team. The great leaders are not mired in everyday operations but are able to think intelligently about the mission of the camp—its role in Jewish education; its impact on child, teen, and young adult development; its contribution to Jewish life, and so on. These skills and habits of thought cannot be learned at a weekend conference.

a. Support advanced degree programs for top professionals.

Serious thought should be applied to developing a graduate program for camp directors and assistant directors that not only imparts technical skills but also the intellectual content that makes for thoughtful leadership in the field. A new model is needed that takes into account the camp calendar, the difficulty directors have in absenting themselves from camp for any period of time, and other logistical hurdles. As well, philanthropists will need to build scholarship funds and lay leadership will need to appreciate the value of this education to their camp. Such a posture increases the likelihood of the professional's being able to take a sabbatical for intensive learning. The model would not target a mass audience but rather seek select talent capable of undertaking a serious course of study and using it to enhance not only their own camp but the field overall.

b. Continue to expand year-round staff.

The assumption in 2000 was that almost all staff members were hired on an annual basis and worked only in the summer months. In the ensuing years, the FJC camp census has shown an increase in the number of year-round employees. Nonetheless, more year-round staff will be needed as camps grow in size and complexity, as the demand increases for them to extend their program into the school year, and as the need grows for continuous marketing, recruitment, fundraising, Judaic and general program development, and planning. The number of year-round staff will necessarily be tiny compared to seasonal staff, but all camps will need an optimal number of professionals expert in the tasks that camps must perform continuously in order to excel. As well, by providing more opportunities for year-round employment, the field might attract more talent, as young people who love camp come to see that it can be a "real" job and a career.

4. Develop Camp's Full Potential to Create Powerful Jewish Life and Learning

The research makes clear that camps have been able to incorporate greater Jewish content without compromising the character of camp nor its appeal to parents, children, and staff. The field should no longer be debating whether or not it is possible to move in this direction but rather how to further develop the role of Jewish learning and living at camp, particularly in those places where the efforts to date have been simplistic or superficial.

a. Work with camps one-on-one to strengthen Judaic programming.

Camps share a great deal in common with one another, but when it comes to Jewish programming, the differences among them are notable. Differences generally break out along the lines of camp type (denominational vs. Zionist movement vs. community) and region (Northeast vs. South vs. West) but are also accentuated by the age of the camp (established vs. start-up), the proclivities of top leadership, the capabilities of staff, the expectations of parents, and so on. Given the importance of integrating the Jewish program into the life and culture of the particular camp, the most effective approach to improvement would be individualized consultation. Just as the Grinspoon Institute for Jewish Philanthropy provides consultation on fundraising, governance, strategic planning, and technology, so too should the camps have access to consultation that will help them imagine, design, implement, test, and further develop ideas for Jewish experiences that are excellent in quality and in their appropriateness to the specific camp community.

b. Bring summer camp to a central place in the Jewish educational system.

One reason camps are popular and effective is that they are not school, and one would not want to conflate the two institutions in the minds of participants. However, if camp were seen to be as key to a child's education as the bar/t mitzvah is, then the field would be able to move much faster in expanding its reach. Moreover, closer ties between camp and other arms of the educational system may be valuable at the level of idea generation, curriculum planning, and program development. Such a connection can be especially important to the denominational camps, whose mission is not only to socialize children as Jews but as Jews who understand and appreciate the perspective of the movement and are being groomed for its future leadership.

5. Envision Camp as Laboratory for Jewish Peoplehood

Diversity at camp—the mix of American, Israeli, and international staff and the inclusion of campers from varied backgrounds—is one of camp's great assets. To take full advantage of this asset, however, the camps must recognize it as such and incorporate the value of *K'lal Yisrael* into their culture and program. The advent of the Peoplehood Index Project and the flurry of debate and writing on the topic of Jewish peoplehood make this a particularly propitious time for camps to model themselves as laboratories in Jewish peoplehood.

a. Intentionally recruit and program for diversity.

To become demonstration projects in how to build a cohesive Jewish community, camps will need to develop intentional recruitment strategies for bringing in diverse campers and staff. They can then design activities around the principles of inter-group dynamics and community building and the concept of Jewish peoplehood. They can elevate the value of exploring and appreciating commonalities and differences within the camp community. Succeeding in this endeavor will require special training for staff as the camps will need to develop sensitivity to differences and mechanisms for confronting the challenges that inevitably surface in such work.

b. Create a forum for raising the level of *shlichut*.

Israelis play a very important role at camp not only by their contribution to Jewish, Zionist, and Israel education but also by their mere participation in the camp community. At the same time, we have seen the impact that camp has on the Israelis themselves. In recent years, camp directors have become more involved in the recruitment of Israeli staff, traveling to Israel to meet with prospective *shlichim*. They now need to become more involved in the preparation of Israeli staff for their summer at camp. Training and preparation—on the part of both the camps and the Jewish Agency—could be improved if camp and JAFI professionals came together to learn from one another about what is needed and share ideas for meeting those needs.

CONCLUSION

Each summer is an opportunity for camps to influence the Jewish life trajectory of the children, teens, and young adults who form the camp community. Job #1 for camps, therefore, is assuring that camp is fun and that friendships flourish. The emphasis on camp operations and program must not distract leadership from this fundamental responsibility.

As well, camps must steer a clear course through the new reality of customer demands, "helicopter parents," security concerns, and omnipresent technology. They must understand that they are, in fact, the antidote to these forces. They offer children and teens the opportunity to be part of a real (not virtual) community—a community dedicated to fun, attentive to personal growth and development, and committed to Judaism and Jewish values.

The goal for the field of Jewish summer camp is to expand the reach of camp and to continue to strengthen its role in Jewish education. The field must not only preserve the goodly tents but also enlarge and strengthen them.