

**Jewish Education
Strategic Planning Subcommittee
Final Report
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I. Executive Summary

Jewish education has been a cornerstone of the revitalization of Jewish life in Boston. At the heart of this new communal energy have been CJP programs that have engaged adults with Jewish texts and traditions in ways that have motivated them to get more involved. This has led to more interest in education for children, more willingness to support Jewish education financially and more interest in leadership roles in the community.

The strategic planning process overall is focusing on the engagement of the next generation. This must start with a compelling and inspiring system of education that begins when children are infants and carries through each developmental stage until they reach adulthood, and beyond. This plan is designed to build accessibility to the parts of the system that are working well and to build radically new approaches to the parts of the system that are working less well.. Its goal is to bring in young families and to keep them and their children involved throughout their lifetimes. It is designed to move beyond just literacy and focus on building passionate commitment to Jewish life, to emphasize the opportunity that exists in an educational setting to truly touch the heart as well as the mind.

At the same time, the plan isn't focused solely on the need for excellence and passion in Jewish education. It also deals with need to address the underlying economics, the shortage of educators, issues of affordability and other obstacles that keep the system from working optimally.

The plan is built around five general principles:

- Emphasis on fundamentally new ideas, not on incremental improvements
- Focus on the next generation; even adult learning should be oriented toward where it ultimately makes the most difference to the next generation
- Partnering with innovators and social entrepreneurs in the community
- Focusing on engaging less engaged members of the community whether they are members of organizations or not
- Dealing with underlying economic issues

The plan has 4 strategy recommendations:

- **Initiative # 1 – Supplementary education** - Encourage and support bold initiatives that “break the mold,” and that build on existing experiments but push the thinking even farther
- **Initiative #2 – Day schools** – Promote school excellence through educational and operational improvement; Enhance the scope and quality of special education services to Jewish day school students; Increase enrollment through targeted advocacy and through the launching of an affordability initiative
- **Initiative # 3 - Teens** - Increase involvement in camping and Israel programs (through financial assistance and promotion); Support creative informal and formal school year programs
- **Initiative #4 – Campus** - Support and expand IACT (pre and post birthright programming); increase the number of campuses and scope of project; Launch a venture fund to support innovative ideas for campus programming

Based on very rough initial estimates, the budget for the first year of this plan is:

Supplementary Schools	\$520,000
Day schools	\$2,000,000
Teens	\$248,000
Campus	\$250,000
TOTAL	\$3,018,000

This is likely to double in 5-8 years as the initiative matures as long as sufficient funding is available to grow them to their full potential.

In addition, there is a proposal under discussion to create a funding program that includes a combination of endowment and annual funding that would produce up to \$2 million a year (ultimately growing to \$4million) in financial assistance to make day school education more affordable for Boston area families.

II. Background

Jewish education was a major priority of the last CJP Strategic Plan and, in fact, in the last 10 years, CJP allocations to Jewish education have more than doubled. Across the country, the Greater Boston Jewish community is viewed as being on the leading edge in many of its Jewish education programs. These include, Me'ah, Ikkarim, Prozdor and many others that CJP offers in collaboration with its partners, as well as those run independently by other organizations in the community. The success of the efforts of CJP and others in Greater Boston was confirmed by the 2005 Community Study which identified levels of participation and affiliation that are higher than most similarly-sized communities. Whether it is adult education, day schools, participation in pre-bar mitzvah supplementary education programs, participation of special needs students in our educational programs, synagogue affiliation of families, or the involvement of intermarried families, the numbers show that great progress is being made.

In spite of this enormous progress, there is still a long way to go. For a substantial proportion of young people growing up in the community, their main connection with Jewish education and Jewish life is the few years of supplementary education leading up to their bar or bat mitzvahs. There is considerable evidence that this experience leaves them with a less than passionate commitment to Jewish living and can even have a negative impact on Jewish identity. For this and other reasons, teen participation drops off significantly after bar/bat mitzvah. Only slightly over a third of Boston area teens participate in any type of organized Jewish education, formal or informal.

Many interesting experiments are underway locally and around the country to improve the system of Jewish education for children and teens who do not attend day school and some are having good results. Some of the work involves greater emphasis on informal approaches (camping, travel, retreats, and youth groups) and others involve new approaches to formal learning or a combination of the two. There is a clear need for a fundamental rethinking of this entire system, for learning from what is being tried and for pushing the thinking even further. These steps are necessary to achieve increased Jewish knowledge, Jewish identity and Jewish commitment.

At the same time, there is the potential to expand the reach of Greater Boston area day schools. Since the last strategic plan new schools have opened locally and enrollment in existing schools has expanded. Many schools have invested heavily in teaching and program excellence, have improved their operations, and have engaged in long-range planning. Almost all schools have made firm programmatic and budgetary commitments to special education and are serving their entire range of students extremely well. However, there is room for even greater excellence and there will likely be even greater expansion if the community can help families overcome the obstacles of affordability, accessibility for students with learning difference and awareness of the benefits of a day school education.

To support the education of children and teens, it will be necessary to maintain a strong commitment to adult learning, which while vibrant by national standards, could be

reaching many more affiliated and unaffiliated Jewish adults. The philosophy of CJP in the last strategic plan was that unless the children and teens see the adults learning, they will not believe that Jewish learning is important. And, unless the adults themselves are engaged in learning, they won't make it enough of a priority for their children. They won't pay for quality teachers; they won't make enough time in their children's schedules; they won't be advocates for upgrading the role of Jewish education in the Jewish organizations to which they belong. For this reason adult learning, and especially learning for parents, needs to be integrated into all strategies.

The Boston area has 15% of the nation's college students and many stay on for graduate school and beyond. The Taglit-Birthright Israel program has produced a tremendous opportunity in creating a cadre of thousands of alumni whose identities have been awakened by a trip to Israel and who are ripe for being invited to become more active on campus or in young adult activities in the Greater Boston area. On campus the IACT initiative has already demonstrated great potential for increasing participation in trips and in pre and post programming. Off campus, for college graduates, Geshar City and other early-stage programs have been very successful. In both cases there is a need for more breath of offerings, more experimentation and much more reach.

Finally, there is a shortage of talented educators at all levels in the Greater Boston area and around the country. All strategies need a professional recruitment and development component in order to be successful because Jewish education can only be as good as the people carrying out the work.

III. Vision

Imagine a community where a critical mass of people engage in lifelong learning opportunities that build Jewish knowledge and foster passionate commitment to Jewish life. These learning opportunities will include the following elements:

- Integrated high-quality formal and informal learning
- Linkages between learning and living Jewishly
- Broad accessibility
- The best and brightest educators

IV. Priority Strategic Initiatives

Initiative #1: Supplementary Education

Goal

Support development of new K-8 Jewish education models that build sufficient Jewish passion, identity and involvement to inspire children to stay involved beyond Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Target

K-8 and beyond and their families

Description

Building on the learning from local and national experiments that have taken place over the last decade, and are still ongoing, CJP will partner with local organization to launch a series of bold experiments in supplementary education. These experiments will be designed to “break the mold” and push thinking beyond what has been tried before. Some will take place within the synagogue environment, some will take place outside of the synagogue and some will be cross-congregation experiments. Embedded within these experiments will be attempts to deal in creative ways with the basic issues and challenges facing supplementary education e.g.:

- Low per capita budgets
- Difficulty attracting and retaining high quality educators
- Trouble engaging children in formal learning at the end of the school day and on weekends
- Lack of family engagement and commitment
- Unclear goals and underdeveloped curriculum
- Insufficient sensitivity/training in how to create a welcoming atmosphere for interfaith families

Not every experiment will be expected to deal with every issue, but CJP will be looking to partner with entrepreneurial organizations and with the help of outside experts to jointly develop new approaches that each address several of these and other challenges. Of particular interest will be models that provide economies of scale or other ways for the program to afford higher quality staffing, or even full-time staff. Learning from models such as Prozdor, Keshet and cross-congregational models will be important in designing these experiments. Each experiment will need to include an adult learning component and a professional development approach that is closely linked to the new educational design. Attention will be paid to building involvement of congregants (or other members of the lead organizations), parents, families, and other adults. The experiments will also be likely to include the integration of both formal and informal elements as well as the creative use of new technologies.

The idea of this program is to draw upon the best thinking from education theories that help create environments for active learning, child-centered learning and places where children can construct their own answers to religious questions. The project will draw upon the enormous expertise available in the Boston area both in the field of Jewish education and the in the field of general education. It will also build on learning from programs around the country such as the Experiment in Congregational Education. Attention will also be paid, where the program is within an existing institution, to building the capacity for institutional change.

In addition to helping develop and fund these experiments, CJP will play an ongoing role in networking the organizations together that are engaging in the experiments and creating a process for gathering and sharing knowledge. All of the experiments will be designed with scalability and transferability in mind. The Family Educator program will be refocused to support this initiative and to help ensure that integrated family and adult learning is part of every experiment. In addition, there will an effort to emphasize family retreats and build stronger capacity internally to help congregations plan retreats.

A work group consisting of CJP staff and outside experts will more fully develop the program and its basic principles and operating methodologies.

Justification

Supplementary schools are the primary Jewish learning experience for most children. Teen and young adult engagement and Jewish identity is highly dependent on a positive grade school experience. There is a national trend of attempting to make major improvements in supplementary education. There are models out there that are working somewhat better and a good number of them are in Boston. With the resources and expertise of the Boston area, we can and should be a leading community in pushing forward the state-of-the-art in this critically important area of Jewish life. With 82% of our kids passing through this system at some point, we can't afford not to do something to make it better.

Feasibility/Risk

We can't guarantee that we can "fix" a system that has been so broken for so long. The basic economics are problematic. The staffing approach is an obstacle to success. The very concept of supplementary education is challenging. Yet, there are real reasons for optimism. Boston has created Prozdor and Keshet which are two very successful models. Some of the Boston area congregations are held up as national models and are achieving measurably better outcomes. The seeds of success are already there and the combined resources and intellectual "horsepower" of the lay leaders and professionals at CJP, with Brandeis, Hebrew College, Harvard School of Education, BU and others give us the potential to make significant progress.

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Projected First Year Budget

Developing and funding experiments	\$500,000
Professional development	<u>\$20,000</u>
TOTAL	\$520,000

Initiative #2: Day Schools

Goals

Assist Jewish day schools in their quests for educational and operational excellence and enable all students to attend regardless of their special learning needs or financial circumstances.

Description

The initiative has 4 parts: academic and organizational excellence, accessibility to those with special needs, advocacy for day school education and affordability.

- **Excellence** - CJP will work to ensure that the community's Jewish day schools have what they need to succeed in their quest for educational and operational excellence and in creating powerful communities of teaching and learning in a Jewish context. This will include support of innovative initiatives in areas such as Hebrew language, science, sports, or gifted education. It will also include sustained school-based professional development specifically teacher induction and retention programs. CJP will also support school efforts to improve operations such as fundraising, financial aid processes, financial management, and endowment building.
- **Accessibility** - CJP will work to make it possible for a greater number of students with special needs to attain a formal, daylong Jewish education in our Jewish day school system by expanding the number of students and range of needs our schools can serve and enhancing the quality of special needs services offered. This will include support of school-based special education personnel, school subsidies for Gateways services, and ongoing professional development in teaching a diverse range of learners. It will also include promoting innovations in special education and assisting institutions in creating a solution for special needs high school aged students and for K-8 students with more severe special needs and autism.
- **Advocacy** - CJP will assist schools in their own efforts to recruit, enroll, and retain students and advocate on a community-wide basis for the concept of day school education. This will involve the implementation of marketing and PR plan that includes targeted marketing initiatives particularly pre-school pipelines and untapped potential markets. The initiative will also include an innovation fund to encourage innovative marketing practices in individual schools.
- **Affordability** - CJP will implement a plan in partnership with schools and families to increase assistance to families who cannot financially afford to sustain formal, daylong Jewish education in attending a Jewish day school and graduating. The plan aims to increase enrollment, decrease attrition, share the responsibility of a long term commitment to a day school education, and increase schools' effectiveness and efficiency in their own fundraising, financial planning, financial aid programs, and endowment building.

Justification

Jewish day school is a critical component of a vibrant and viable Jewish future. It leads to high levels of Jewish literacy and identity and is critically important for raising the next generation of core Jewish leadership. Research shows that day school education leads to much higher levels of Jewish communal engagement and philanthropy than other forms of Jewish education. However, there are many obstacles that keep enrollments in Jewish day schools relatively low. Prominent among these is the high cost. Like most private schools, Jewish day school is expensive. Boston area day school tuition costs between \$9000 and \$24000 per year, a substantial burden for a middle class family, especially if they have more than one child or a child with special needs. Another barrier to enrollment is concerns about the quality of the education that children will receive. In some cases families simply aren't aware of how well the schools are doing and the amazing education they offer. In other cases, there really is a need for improved quality. In the past, many Jewish day schools have been ill equipped to handle students with learning differences and some schools have been unwelcoming to these families. These obstacles work together to make families look elsewhere for education for their children. This initiative builds on the recent success of the excellence and special education agendas and addresses these obstacles together to create a new sense of possibility and energy around day school education in our community.

Projected First Year Budget

Excellence	\$100,000
Special Needs	\$200,000
Marketing and Advocacy	\$200,000
Affordability	<u>\$1,500,000</u>
TOTAL	\$2,000,000

Initiative #3: Teens

Goal

Increase teen participation from current 36% to at least 50%

Target

Ages 11-18 and their families

Description

CJP will work to expand participation of Jewish teens in formal and informal Jewish learning and Jewish living. The three cornerstones of the plan are camping, Israel trips and year round programming:

- **Camping** – Building on the success of the camping initiative, CJP will expand incentives and needs-based scholarships and will invest more in marketing activities to promote Jewish camping. The goal will be to maximize participation in this powerful identity-building experience
- **Israel trips** – The Passport to Israel program will be refreshed and redesigned to become more appealing to teens and families who are less intensively involved in Jewish life, and to be more aligned with the true cost of trip to Israel today. Scholarships will be made available as well for participants in financial need.
- **Year round formal and informal programming** - CJP will work to expand models that are already working (e.g. Prozdor and synagogue youth groups), to other geographic areas or other organizational settings and to increase participation. In addition there will be a major push to innovate and develop new low-barrier-to-entry programs for new and reluctant participants. These could include youth groups that cross specific congregational or denominational lines, after school Jewish clubs at public or private schools, Jewish sports programs, Jewish arts programs, and other “out-of-the-box” ideas.

As part of the implementation of this program, CJP will launch an adult learning program for parents of teens (similar to the Ikkarim model) to engage or keep engaged the entire family. Also, the CJP Youth Educator network will be integrated into the initiative and professional development will be designed into the implementation of all of the above strategies. Since teen engagement depends on meaningful experiences and expectations set during primary school years there will also be a marketing aspect to the program targeted at pre-bar/bat mitzvah students and their families to get them excited about teen programming before they drop out of the system.

Justification

The 36% of teens who are involved in Jewish life in Boston tend to have multiple Jewish involvements. The rest tend to do little or nothing. National long term studies suggest

that involvement during the teen years is one of the major determinants of lifetime levels of Jewish identity and commitment. Birthright is there as a safety net in case we fail to engage young people when they are growing up, but we should not depend on a 10-day trip to make up for years of lost Jewish education. Therefore this is a critically important group to engage more fully in Jewish life. However, it is also a challenging group. The research also shows that camping, Israel trips and synagogue youth groups are powerful identity builders during the teen years. Expanding participation in these activities is a high priority part of the plan. However, these activities are most likely to appeal to teens who are already somewhat engaged in Jewish life. Because these activities won't meet the needs and interests of the teens who are least engaged, there are other aspects of the plan designed to reach out to the less engaged segments. Many of today's teens are busy and are looking for lower time-commitment options. CJP's research shows they are most interested in opportunities to spend time with other teens, to combine Jewish involvement with an area of personal interest (e.g. sports, arts, theatre), to do something that helps their chances of getting into a good college, to work on helping others or making the world a better place, and to work on finding individual personal meaning and identity. The strategy is designed to build innovative programming to tap into these interests and build diverse programs that will interest and attract a very large percentage of teens in the community.

It is worth noting that although Birthright provides a "free" trip to Israel during the college years, the teen trip to Israel is still a cornerstone of the strategy because it leads to Jewish involvement and Jewish friendship circles throughout the teen years, results in higher levels of Jewish knowledge and commitment, and it leads to higher levels of student involvement on campus beginning with freshman year. Also, teen trips tend to be 3-6 weeks compared with the 10 day Birthright trip, providing a much more serious encounter with Israel.

Feasibility/Risk

Expansion of camping, Israel trips and traditional youth groups is not a high-risk undertaking. With more resources devoted to eliminating barriers to participation (affordability, convenience, information, etc) it is highly likely that there will be a fairly substantial increase in involvement in these activities. The more innovative programs are, of course, riskier. In starting a broad variety of innovative year round programs, it is likely that some will succeed and others will fail, and the overall success rate is difficult to predict in advance.

Projected First Year Budget

Camping and Israel	\$218,000
New programming	<u>\$30,000</u>
TOTAL	\$248,000

Initiative #4: Campuses

Goal

Increase intensive participation in Jewish campus life

Target

College students

Description

The national Taglit-Birthright Israel initiative has brought more than 160,000 young Jewish adults between the ages of 18-26 to Israel on transformative 10-day trips in the past eight years. Research has shown that participants bond passionately with Israel and increase their interest in Jewish life, and that those who are still in college return to campus more interested in Jewish campus life. The impact on Jewish identity lasts long after the trip has ended. CJP has launched an initiative called IACT (Inspire, Act, Commit, Transform) to promote participation in Birthright trips among less involved college students and to offer pre and post programming to engage students in campus life in new ways. The IACT initiative is run in partnership with the campus Hillels and the Hillel Council of New England and is tailored to the unique needs of each individual campus. The initiative currently operates on 5 campuses providing a full-time staff person to each campus Hillel who is totally focused on Birthright recruitment and pre/post programming. The goal of this strategic initiative is to expand IACT to more campuses, in locations that will have the biggest impact on future leadership and to expand the number and types of pre and post programming on the existing campuses.

As part of this initiative, CJP will establish a venture fund to support programming ideas that bubble up from the campuses. This will encourage students, Hillel staff, other campus organizations and entrepreneurs to develop new approaches to engage unengaged and under engaged students. This will include Israel-oriented programming that comes out of the work of, as well as volunteering, social justice, Israel advocacy, arts and culture and other creative programming with Jewish content, all of which can be post-programming for Birthright as well as an opportunity to engage other students.

In addition to these initiatives, CJP will set up a system to recruit more Jewishly involved students from campuses to work as Jewish educators in a variety of settings that are part of the implementation of the strategic plan

Justification

15-20,000 Jews students attend college in the Greater Boston area. More than half are at top institutions like Harvard, Tufts, BU, Brandeis, and MIT where they are preparing to assume important professional leadership roles. Only roughly half of today's college students have two parents who were born Jewish. While they say that being Jewish is important in their lives, and a fairly large percentage have personal Jewish religious practices of some kind, a minority are involved in any way in organized Jewish life on campus. Hillel is the primary Jewish organization on most campuses, but currently Hillels are reaching less than a third of college students on a regular basis. There are other organizations operating on campuses but their reach is much less broad.

The Taglit-Birthright Israel initiative has been the most successful initiative ever created at reaching large numbers of students who had previously not been attracted to participate in organized Jewish life on campus. The scale of outreach is exponentially greater than any other effort taking place in the Jewish community, with x going national and y going from the Boston area each year. For many, this intense, 10-day microcosm of a tightly-knit community is a first opportunity to connect Jewishly. In spite of the scale and success of the trips, there is considerable research that shows that the impact of the trip wears off after a while. Unless there is exciting, compelling programming that engages students when they return, the full potential of what the trip can accomplish will not be realized. CJP has launched IACT, its pilot initiative on 5 campuses, where it has already been highly successful at increasing the numbers going on Birthright. More importantly, it has achieved measurable success at engaging Birthright returnees in Jewish activities when they return. Now that the pilots have succeeded, it is time to expand the initiative more broadly. This effort has the potential to literally transform the Jewish lives of thousands of young Jews as they enter adulthood.

The venture fund will reinforce this initiative and support the unique needs of each campus. It will make available funding for entrepreneurial ideas that emerge from the campuses and from the work of the IACT coordinators. This will strengthen the work of the IACT program as well as expanding the reach of CJP beyond just Birthright alumni.

Projected First Year Budget

IACT campus resources	\$250,000
TOTAL	\$250,000

Please note that that all of the recommendations in this document may or may not be implemented. All budget figures in this document were preliminary rough estimates by the subcommittee. These projections will be re-evaluated and updated as appropriate during the implementation of the final plan.

Appendix A – Other Initiatives

While not part of the four major recommendations, the subcommittee discussed a number of important ideas and decided the following:

Adult Learning

- **Young Adults** – Launch Virtual 92nd St Y type programming targeting young adults, in satellite locations and with more extensive use of the web – *decision made to integrate this recommendation with Participation and Engagement Subcommittee recommendation on innovative programming for young adults*
- **Me'ah/Ikkarim** – Revamp as a more flexible and more diverse signature adult learning program on the Me'ah/Ikkarim model using a modular approach – *decision made to recommend to ongoing committee and staff to implement but not as a big strategic initiative*
- **Family Educators** - Broaden the role of the Family Educator to include more integrated adult and family learning, retreats, etc. - *decision made to integrate into K-8 supplementary initiative*
- **Learning for Leaders** - Jewish learning for professionals and lay leaders across the community - *decision made to integrate this recommendation with Leadership Development Institute being recommended by Paradigm Committee*

Professional Development

- **Senior and mid-level educators** - Intensive networking and training program for senior and mid level educators (similar to Acharai and Wexner) – *decision to integrate with individual initiatives and development of senior educators to be part of the new Center for Leadership Development*
- **Whole school professional development** – Work with an entire school to integrate professional development with a school change initiative – *decision to integrate with K-8 supplementary initiative and day school initiative*
- **College students as educators** - Opportunities/clearing house for college students to work as Jewish educators – *decision to integrate with campus and other initiatives*
- **Educator benefits** - Endowment fund for benefits for educators – *decision made indicating this was not an immediate strategic initiative but should go on a menu for interested donors*