

The Jewish Resource Specialist Program Year 1 Evaluation Findings

*Prepared for the Jim Joseph Foundation
and the Early Childhood Education Initiative (ECEI) at the Jewish Community
Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties*

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Introduction

JRS Overview & Context

Evaluation Overview

This report presents evaluation findings for the Jewish Resource Specialist Program (JRS) for the 2011–2012 pilot year, including key achievements and challenges. This evaluation assesses the JRS program overall—as a model—and not individual sites.

This and future reports in this three year evaluation will answer two distinct questions:

- 1. How, and to what extent, are families at JRS schools increasing their engagement in Jewish life and learning within JRS schools and in the community?**
- 2. How, and to what extent, is JRS deepening Jewish learning within the JRS school environment, including enhancing the Jewish education of teachers?**

DATA COLLECTION METHODS*

1. Key Informant Interviews
2. Site Visits
3. Parent Survey
4. Materials Review

* Please see the appendix for further information on the data collection methods as well as evaluation strengths and limitations.

JRS Overview

JRS is a flagship professional development initiative of the Early Childhood Education Initiative (ECEI) of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. JRS is currently being piloted in five Bay Area preschools over a three-year period. JRS was designed to deepen the overall Jewish experience in Bay Area Early Childhood Jewish Education (ECJE) institutions and support parents in making Jewish choices for their families. Teachers in this new JRS position are compensated for 10 hours per week, in addition to their classroom responsibilities, in which they engage in the following activities:

1. Develop and implement Jewish family engagement at JRS schools
2. Serve as in-house mentors of Jewish education and pedagogic content at JRS schools
3. Receive professional development and leadership training, focusing on Jewish learning and knowledge

The program also intends to support the ongoing professionalization of the ECEI field.

Finally, JRS is a demonstration project with intentions to replicate, adapt and/or scale to other schools and communities. JRS will lead awareness-raising activities that spotlight the need for enhanced parent engagement and a more integrated Jewish curriculum within ECJE institutions in the Bay Area ECJE community.

Jewish Resource Specialist Program Logic Model Overview

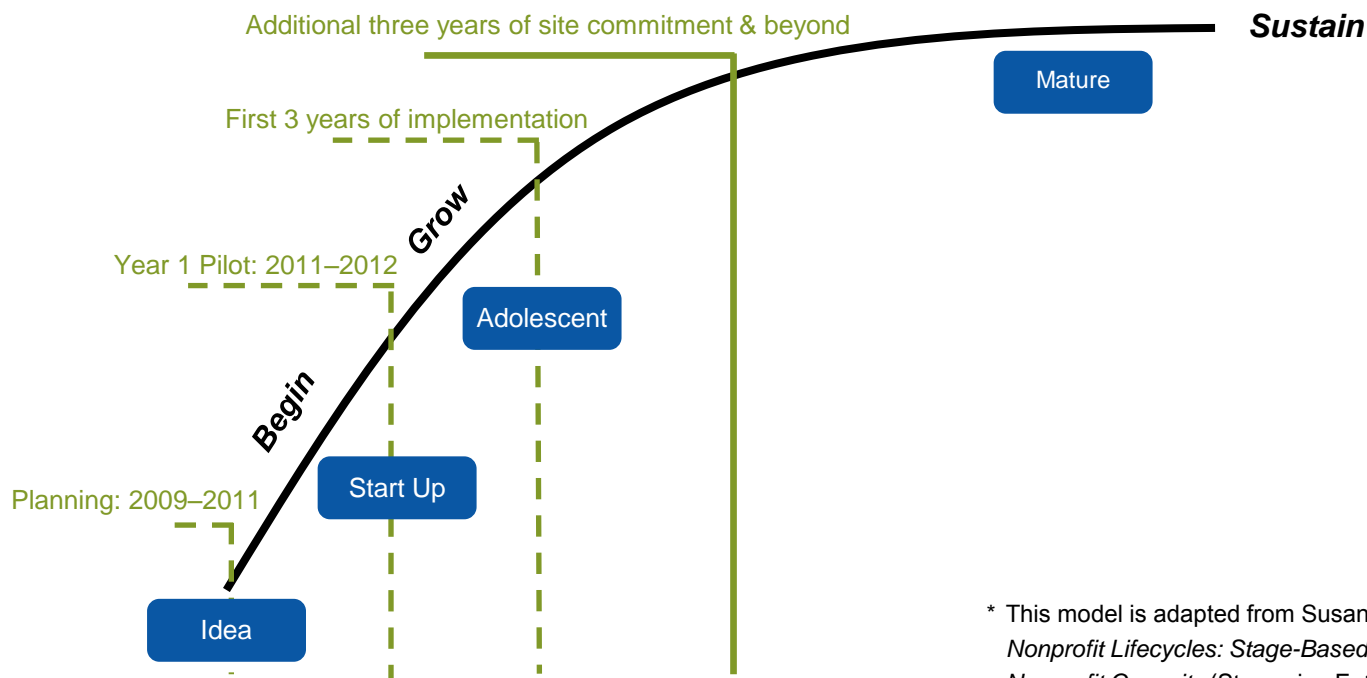
PURPOSE: To deepen the overall Jewish experience in the participating JRS schools for the staff, families and students.

<p>PROBLEMS/ISSUES ADDRESSED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish families are not inspired by Jewish life & learning, & lack information about Jewish educational opportunities • There is a need for enhanced Jewish education for Jewish preschool children • Preschool institutions & educators need support to integrate enhanced Jewish frameworks into their classrooms, family programming & their relationships with families • There is a poor public perception of ECJE teachers & directors • ECJE standards of excellence are not yet widely applied • There is high turnover among ECJE teachers & directors & challenges filling director positions 	<p>TARGET CONSTITUENCIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five JRS school sites • ECJE teachers & directors • Parents of preschool children at JRS sites, their preschool aged & other children • Bay Area ECJE community 	<p>OUTPUTS</p> <p>JRS Educators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten hours per week supporting teachers, engaging families, participating in professional development & implementing curricula • Number & nature of new programs & outreach methods • Number & nature of one-on-one meetings for coaching, mentoring & monitoring <p>Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents attend programs & events at each JRS school <p>Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued JRS partnership with all five schools <p>School Educators & Directors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support received from JRS educators • Meetings between JRS educators & school directors • New or improved resources in the school <p>Bay Area ECJE community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with host institution executive directors • Events featuring JRS 	<p>SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES (1-3 years)</p> <p>The JRS School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity to connect families with Jewish community resources & post-preschool educational opportunities • Teachers have deepened Jewish knowledge and Jewish pedagogic knowledge • Improved integration of Jewish content & learning into classrooms • JRS is sustained in five sites <p>Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased family participation in school events • Increased proportion of families informed about Jewish life/learning opportunities • Increased proportion of parents whose Jewish engagement is informed by JRS <p>Partnerships & Community Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased school interest in learning about the JRS model <p>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (3+ years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased prominence & prioritization of family engagement at JRS schools • Increased integration of Jewish frameworks into school-wide activities • The JRS position is institutionalized in 5 sites & expands to 5+ additional schools • Continued contribution of JRS educators to the ECJE community • The Bay Area is an ECJE leader
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ULTIMATE IMPACT: More Bay Area families are engaged in and inspired by Jewish education and Jewish life in their community.

The JRS Trajectory: Moving from start-up to early adolescent implementation

- The 2011–2012 school year marked the completion of the first year of the JRS pilot. This is a foundational year of setting the groundwork for the JRS position in participating schools. From an evaluation perspective, we see this as a baseline year with expectation for growth in future years.
- This start-up year has been an opportunity to experiment with the JRS program. Now is the time to pause, reflect on what did and did not work, and make early-course adjustments.



* This model is adapted from Susan K. Stevens' *Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-Based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity* (Stagewise Enterprises, 2002).

5 diverse JRS Schools + 5 diverse JRS Educators = 5 Different JRS Programs

Understanding this is critical for understanding the different attributes of JRS across the sites.

School Name	Location	Total Students	Total Families	Host Site	Affiliation
Chai Preschool	Foster City	52	45	None (housed at a Congregation)	None (loose connection with Chabad)
Osher Marin Jewish Community Preschool	San Rafael	205	111	Jewish Community Center	Jewish Community Center Association
Oshman Family JCC Preschool (T'enna)	Palo Alto	260	238	Jewish Community Center	Jewish Community Center Association
Temple Emanu-el Preschool	San Francisco	126	109	Congregation	Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)
Temple Sinai Preschool	Oakland	119	110	Congregation	Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)

Programmatic Findings

Deepening Jewish Learning
Jewish Family Engagement

The most successful component of JRS in this pilot year has been empowering teachers—especially preschool educators who do not identify as Jewish—to become Jewish educators.

- Teachers report increased confidence in integrating Jewish learning into the classroom. This is especially the case for teachers who are not Jewish, which can be a high proportion of preschool teacher staff.
- While teachers do not consistently seek out their JRS as a resource, they report benefits in having a peer resource for Jewish content—someone they can go to with a quick consult or a seemingly “stupid question” they may not otherwise ask.
- Overwhelmingly, teachers want to engage more deeply with Judaism as adults before they teach it to the children. Access to and support from the JRS makes non-Jewish teachers in particular feel increasingly valued and included in the school’s Jewish fabric.

“I am excited to work with [JRS]—I am not Jewish and I have been here for years now. I want to be able to do more, not just regurgitate back what I know. And I want to know more personally about Judaism so that I can form my own thoughts, so I can speak more freely.”

—Preschool Educator

“Everybody working in a Jewish preschool should be a Jewish educator. They don’t need to be Jewish. They have to be a Jewish educator.”

—Anonymous

The integration of Jewish content and learning is becoming increasingly intentional in each school.

- Directors unanimously report increased attention to the schools' Jewish learning environment this year. They all attribute this change to JRS and are excited to have an address for coordinating Jewish learning. Similarly, teachers report increased focus around integrating Judaism into their curricula (see box).
- As JRS becomes a part of the school fabric, directors and JRS's are planning to increase the emphasis of Jewish content and learning in the coming year, particularly around building teacher knowledge and supporting new curricula.
- Schools have a range of Jewish curricular resources available to teachers (and parents), however these resources are not consistently accessible and available to teachers.

"A teacher asked for help to take a moment and make it Jewish. Two kids were playing and they wanted the same thing. Instead of fighting over it, they had a conversation. The teacher stepped in, complimented them, and said that their cooperation and sharing was a Jewish value."

—JRS

"There will be more directed curriculum support next year. We are opening our thinking about what makes us Jewish beyond having challah on Fridays. We need to teach our kids that we exist to make the world a better place—this is the biggest Jewish concept."

—Preschool Director

"There were subtle things we started this year. We're more organized and more consistent. This change is because of the role and the time [JRS] was able to put into this effort."

—Preschool Director

Unsurprising for a pilot year, there have not yet been meaningful, tangible changes in the overall Jewish nature of the schools. However, there have been isolated classroom-based improvements.

- There have been small, incremental changes in the broad Jewish environment at schools this year (see box).
- Teachers report that they are thinking more about building Judaism into their curricula and they would like to receive more targeted coaching supports and curricular resources to facilitate this.
- The deepening of Jewish learning is happening primarily in the classrooms of teachers who seek out support from their JRS. However, many teachers do not actively reach out for this support, because they do not remember to go to their JRS with questions or because they are not clear about what supports their JRS can provide.

"I love working with [JRS] and want to work more with her. I had a project idea and wanted to connect it to something Jewish but I didn't know how and I didn't know which words to use...[JRS] supported me with ideas and helped me make it age appropriate."

—Preschool Teacher

EXAMPLES OF NEW & IMPROVED CLASSROOM-BASED PRACTICES

- Integrating Jewish values, such as *shomrei adamah* (guardians of the earth) into art projects
- Connecting the science of making honey with Rosh Hashana through a visit from a beekeeper
- Beginning to build a shared Jewish vocabulary with teachers (e.g., *Tzedekah*)
- Creating more connections between home and school, such as a classroom Shabbat Box and Monday morning Havdalah
- Compiling a photo album for each child that includes Jewish holidays and values

The purpose of classroom observations—a core component of the JRS model—is not uniformly understood and its practice is not implemented consistently.

- Some JRS's do not seem fully comfortable with their leadership role as in-house mentors.
- Some JRS's and Preschool Directors do not consistently communicate the purpose of classroom observations to other teachers.
- Classroom observations are not regularly followed by a reflective discussion with the teacher. As a result, observations feel awkward and forced to some teachers.
- Schedule challenges and logistics around finding a substitute teacher made it difficult for the JRS's to leave their classrooms to conduct observations.
- It was particularly difficult for JRS's who teach the younger children to leave their own classroom to observe others.

"I do see [JRS] coming into the classroom. I don't always know what [JRS] is there for; it's not communicated in advance. [JRS] just kind of shows up and might be observing something not at all Jewish. [JRS] has never come back to me and said, 'Hey, I've observed X and you should try Y.' The only time we have ever had a one-on-one is when I approached [JRS] and asked for help with something specific."

—Preschool Educator

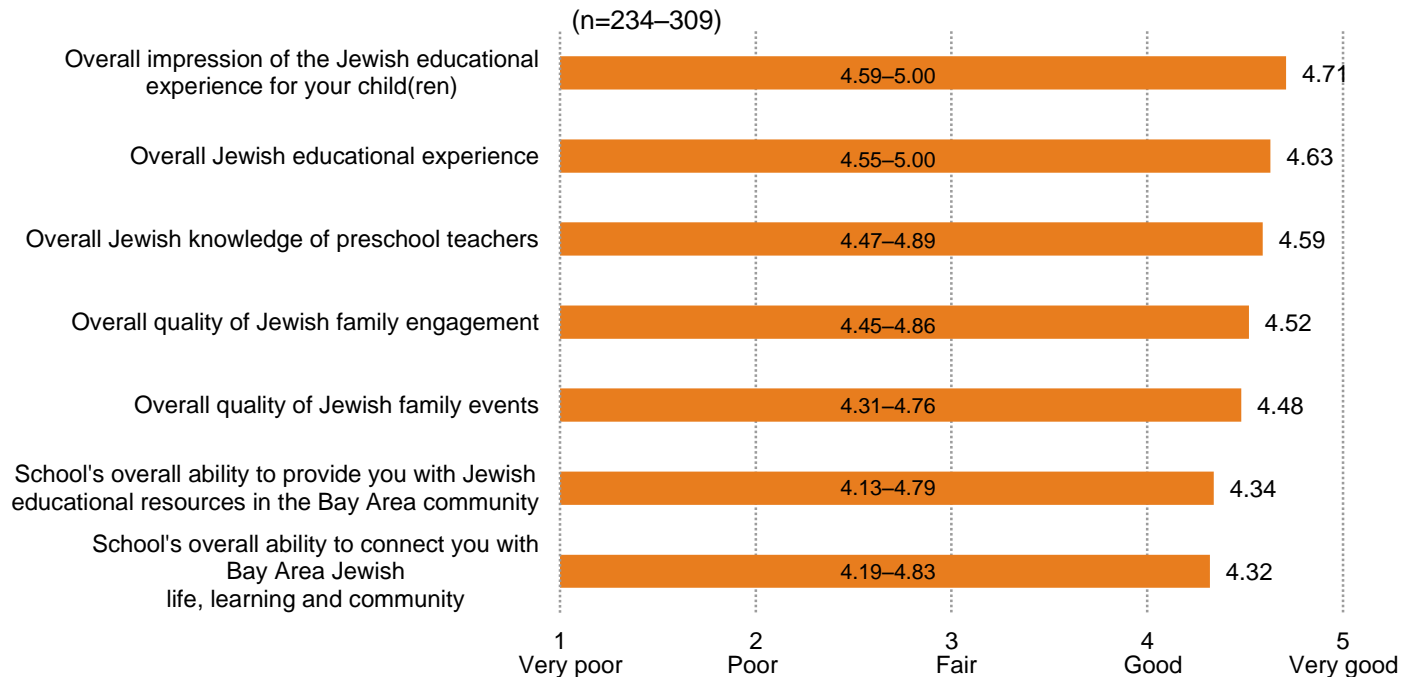
"I think some teachers think that when I come into their classroom I am there to do their work—they treat it like a break."

—JRS

Parents are highly satisfied with the Jewish educational environment in their child's school.

- While the range of responses for each question was from 1 to 5, the vast majority chose good (4) or very good (5).
- Parents often referenced the school environment as “nurturing,” “well-rounded,” “supportive” and “loving.”
- A few parents expressed interest in the preschool connecting them to the broader Bay Area Jewish community and supporting interfaith families.

Parents' Assessment of the Preschool's Jewish Educational Environment*



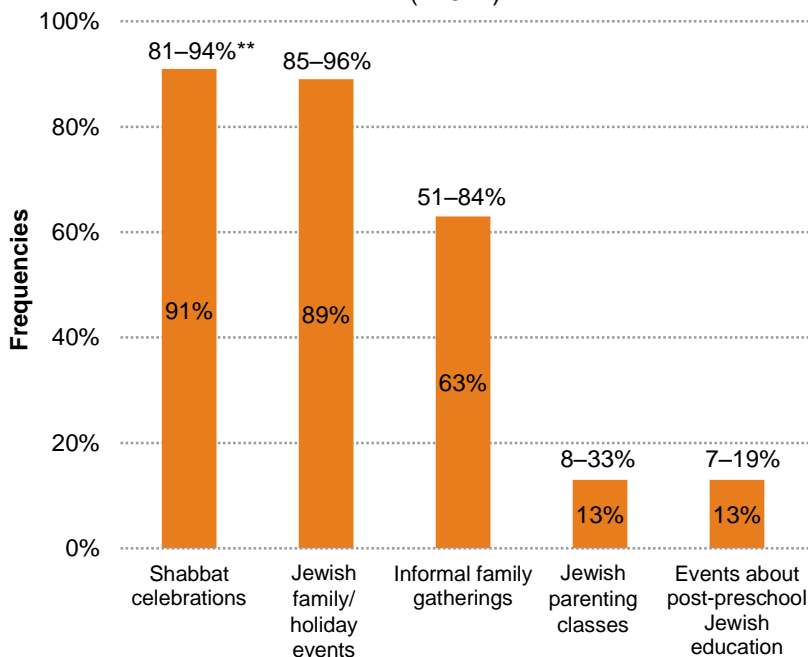
* The numbers within each horizontal bar represent the range across the 5 sites.

Parents report high attendance at Jewish events, both in the preschool and the broader Jewish community.

- Parents report attending an average of 10 Jewish school events and 19 Jewish community events in this last year (fall 2011–spring 2012). The number of events offered by each school varies, and often relates to school size.
- Given such high participation and satisfaction with current Jewish family events, adding more events might not be as effective as improving the quality and integration of Jewish themes into existing events.

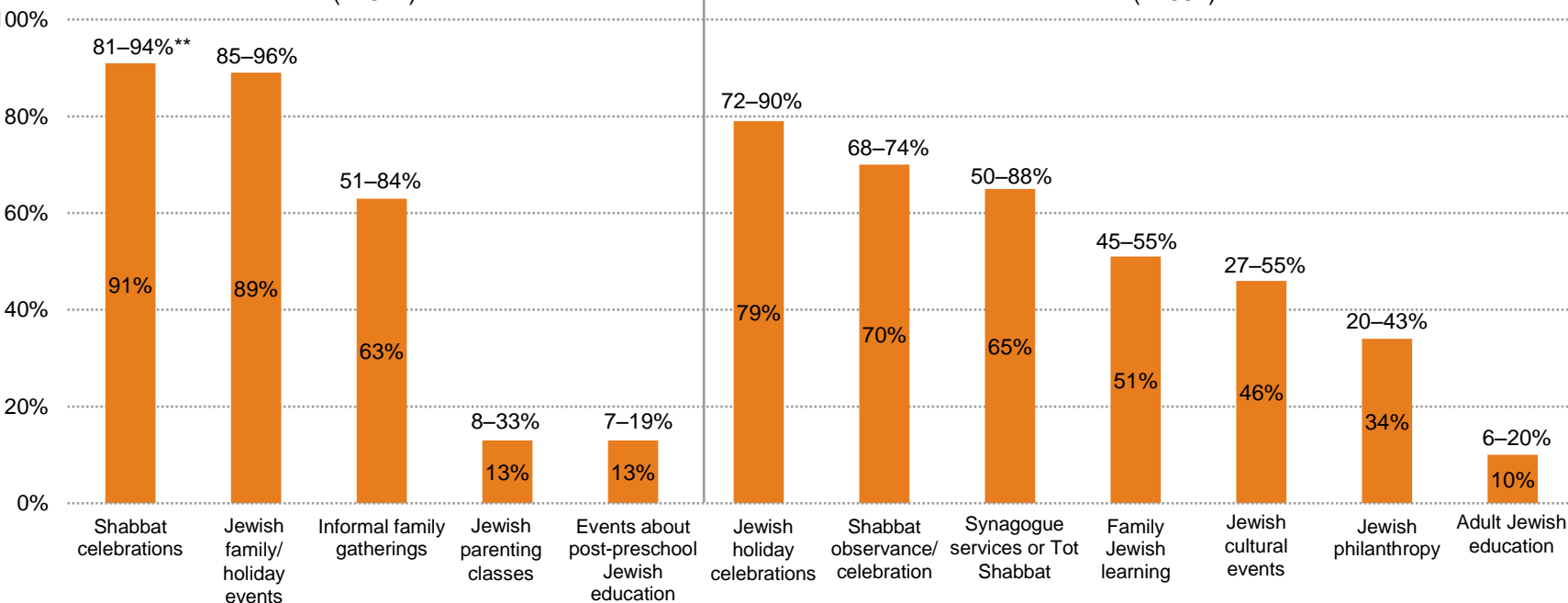
Types of Jewish School Events Attended

(n=327)



Types of Jewish Community Events Attended*

(n=301)



* The graph on the right excludes families that checked the box, "No one in my family identifies as Jewish."

** The numbers within each bar represent the frequency range across the five JRS sites.

There have not yet been large shifts in Jewish family engagement at the schools, however, pockets of higher quality, more intentional programs are an early indicator of progress.

- Schools became more thoughtful and aware of Jewish family engagement as the year progressed and they are actively planning for next year.
- Teachers do not report increased confidence, knowledge or new experiences in building relationships with families.
- Some events made more deliberate connections between the event and Jewish learning in the classroom.
- Events are characterized by a healthy diversity (see box).
- Scheduling remains a logistical challenge. This year, the family calendar was set before the JRS's began their role, making it difficult to add new programs. Timing will never be perfect, though; afternoons are difficult for working parents.

"Overall, our Jewish approach with families is just more streamlined. More programs and more thoughtful."

—Preschool Director

EXAMPLES OF NEW AND/OR IMPROVED JEWISH FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Occasional JRS contributions to the weekly preschool parent e-newsletter
- JRS attends and supports school's Parent Teacher Organization meetings
- JRS is a member of the host institution's Family Engagement Task Force
- Smaller segmented events (e.g., age-group events, father's group and a mother's challah baking evening)
- Shabbat dinner program for parents to host/be hosted
- Small-group Jewish learning
- "Jewish life after preschool" pilot programs
- Assigning new parents a "buddy" family
- Age-group family event based on Rebbe Meir's teaching "Do not look at the jug, but what is in it." (Pirkei Avot 4:27)

Some schools grapple with what Jewish family engagement could be. While challenging, JRS opens a dialogue and new possibilities.

- Parents at each school have a range of Jewish preferences. On matters of Jewish ritual and practice, values and tradition, some want more and others want less. It is difficult for schools to balance these different needs.
- Schools often struggle in relating to non-Jewish families and, sometimes, when relating to interfaith families. The JRS is often well-positioned to reduce both real and perceived barriers and increase access to supports.
- Some schools have not consistently asked parents what Jewish engagement opportunities they would like to see. As a result, school leaders do not know what kinds of Jewish engagement they ought to offer.

"We have many interfaith families here. I don't think many go to temple or keep kosher. We walk a fine line of being Jewish and not pushing people away."

—Preschool Director

"Jewish education here is values-based.... Parents who want more are invited to go to a synagogue. This place is 'Jewish-lite' for the most part."

—JRS

"We're a school, not a shul...We are exposing [parents] to choices and approaches, not imposing a lifestyle or ritual. It's up to them to choose."

—Preschool Director

"Interfaith families don't go chat with the rabbi. They don't feel comfortable asking what they think are dumb questions. It's different when it comes from the teacher."

—Host Site Director

There has been little progress so far toward increasing family engagement in Jewish life and learning in the broader Bay Area Jewish community.

- A broader community effort, beyond the borders of each school, such as the to-be-developed ECJE Web site for Bay Area families with young children, is likely to facilitate progress towards this goal.
- A primary barrier to increasing Jewish engagement in broader Bay Area Jewish life and learning is that this goal is not within the core mission of preschools; with limited resources, this is not a priority for preschools.
- The one exception seems to be that most schools passively share applications or publicize open house events for post-preschool Jewish education. Not all schools were proactively engaging families in discussions about “what comes next” this year. All report plans to do more of this next year.
- The schools exhibit a palpable sense of competition with other Jewish organizations, especially among the preschools embedded within a host institution. They hesitate to plan broad activities for fear of being perceived as competition or for potentially shifting attendance externally.

“We have a small [holiday party] here, but we don’t do anything bigger because we don’t want to compete. We need to be careful not to step on synagogues’ toes. Next year we hope to co-sponsor more events, such as parent workshops.”

—Preschool Director

Parent Voices

"We are very happy here. Our son comes home singing Jewish songs."

"I haven't experienced much connection to the Jewish community in the Bay Area. It feels as though most, if not all, of Jewish life exists within [school] community."

"If you continue to admit non-Jewish families, please ensure that teachers are prepared to address the topic. Just ignoring the topic creates a deep sentiment in children of not belonging to this environment."

"One of the many things I love here is that it is so naturally Jewish. Secular learning is not separate from Jewish learning—it all flows together beautifully and with so much love."

"The biggest problem isn't the way Jewish events are handled, it is when they are held. Most events are mid-day and make it hard for working parents to attend. Perhaps they are just fostering the most Jewish thing there is...guilt."

"I'd like the school to list community opportunities, a weekly newsletter. Family Shabbat dinners could be more frequent, and havurah opportunities and meal-matching for families might have been great, too."

Parent Voices

"[School] is building a very healthy and positive Jewish foundation for our child."

"I know that there is pressure not to inundate parents, but I think more announcements of other Jewish life and learning opportunities would be appropriate."

"Our years here sparked and re-energized our connection to Judaism. Our daughter goes to day school now and that never would have been on our radar had we not been introduced to that educational path through other families and the teachers at [school]."

"As a non-Jew, I sometimes felt left out because of my lack of knowledge about Jewish holidays and traditions. Other non-Jewish parents express the same concern. I think it would really help to offer a workshop for non-Jewish parents explaining how to help your child be a Shabbat helper, how to pronounce the words in the Hebrew songs, a calendar of holidays and what they are about, and perhaps some suggested reading. This would have gone a long way to helping me feel like I could participate more fully in my daughter's experience. My three-year-old, however, is totally comfortable. She even calls me 'Imma.'"

Findings About the JRS Model

Commitment to JRS, Achievements & Challenges

All JRS schools report commitment to promoting Jewish living and Jewish identity but note that after one year of implementation, it is too early to conclusively gauge the school's long-term commitment to JRS.

- Schools believe that the JRS can facilitate progress toward this goal and they expect to see a more robust program as JRS moves forward from its pilot year.
- School and host institution directors are interested in seeing more concrete programmatic results before they are ready to recommend full program funding. All request more information about the JRS intended outcomes and measures of success to better gauge program progress.
- Despite having signed the memorandum of understanding, not all schools are fully aware of their institution's ongoing funding commitment to JRS.
- Most schools would like to see the JRS activities more tightly aligned and coordinated with the strategic goals of each institution. This is likely to be the lynchpin in securing a budget line to make JRS a sustained effort at schools.
- Some site directors ask whether adaptations to JRS could better position the role within the site's environment, thereby more tightly linking JRS with institutional priorities and resources. For example, congregational preschools ask whether JRS could leverage clergy, smaller schools wonder if JRS might be a smaller role, and larger institutions are considering whether JRS is an institution-wide position or a role for a non-classroom "floating" teacher.

"Year 2 needs to be such an out-of-the ballpark, phenomenal success that [JRS] becomes a non-negotiable program."

—Preschool Director

"We haven't even come close to the potential of what this program could be, ultimately, in terms of how we are impacting families, children and teachers."

—Host Site Director

The most frequently reported achievement of the JRS model is the support from JRS staff.

- All types of interview respondents report that JRS staff bring legitimacy to the program with their knowledge of the ECJE field, their commitment to see JRS succeed, their long-standing, trusted relationships with the preschools, and their ongoing support and availability to the JRS schools and educators.
- JRS's report that the Community of Practice and *Y'mei Iyyun* (learning days) are high-quality, engaging experiences. In fact, some directors have heard such great feedback that they are interested in attending next year. However, JRS's would like longer Community of Practice meetings and request more focus on tactical resources and skill-building that they can bring back to their schools.
- JRS's highly value the one-on-one coaching, which has been especially helpful as they learn to navigate this role.

EXAMPLES OF CONTENT DISCUSSED IN THE JRS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETINGS

- School identity
- Connecting with families
- "Focus on Excellence" ECJE tool
- ECJE Leadership
- Reflections on the JRS role
- Sharing of best practices

"[JRS staff] is so great to work with; she really gets it. The JRS goals sounded too hard for us at the beginning—too overachieving for our school. But we broke it down into something doable."

—JRS

"[JRS staff] are fabulous—they're always there. The Community of Practice is really supportive. The professional development is great. I couldn't have asked for more support."

—JRS

Challenges

- A certain degree of ambiguity is expected for any new initiative, especially one with multiple stakeholders across various sites. The main JRS activities and roles were not clear across all sites. Few sites regularly reminded teachers and parents about their school's JRS resource. Some directors are not sure how they can best support their JRS's. Preschool and host site directors do not fully understand what is expected of them, both programmatically and in terms of outcomes.
- As with many pilot programs, it took longer than expected for JRS to take off. The JRS's need time to get a sense of their role in their school. Teachers and school administrators need time to understand what this program means for them.
- The dual mentor-teacher role brought unexpected logistical challenges around out-of-classroom time and securing substitute teachers. This was especially difficult for the JRS teachers in the younger classrooms. Yet, not all schools fully utilized available funding for substitute teachers.
- Many preschool and host site directors report that they would have liked increased information about what should be happening in their school and what is happening across the five JRS sites. They are interested in program outcomes, activities across sites, supports to utilize the professional development funding, and learning and sharing best practices.

"How often is the training taking place? Who runs it? What does it look like? I'd like more communication, a sense of anticipated outcomes. That way I can begin to gauge whether we're moving in the right direction or not."

—Host Site Director

"It took too long to ramp up this year. I want the events next fall to hit the same high mark that we had in the spring."

—Host Site Director

"If we're going to spend this money, I want to know we're doing everything we can do—from the top—to make it as successful as possible."

—Host Site Director

JRS Voices

"We need to explicitly clarify roles so other teachers know I am accountable for the JRS goals. [Preschool director] needs to hold others accountable."

"For this to really work, the director needs to support the JRS."

"Mentoring is new to me—I feel like I am a natural leader—people see me as that, but this is a new role, even though I am a head teacher and do some supervision. I'd like mentoring professional development. We got a book, but I want some real learning experience."

"It was really tough figuring out how to get into the other teachers' classrooms because of our scheduling. And it was hard to get a chunk of quality time within a classroom. Even when I had a sub in my own classroom, it was difficult to have more than 30 minutes with a teacher."

"I'd like more consistency between the Community of Practice and the realities of the school."

"I want to be able to put a classroom birthday party in a Jewish context. Right now I am creating this on my own."

"I would like more high-level Jewish education and conversations about what 'Jewish family education' looks like currently. I'd like longer workshops on how to provide information for families and for children."

Recommendations

Recommendations

This start-up year has been an opportunity to experiment. As JRS moves into Year 2, now is the time to reflect on learnings and make early-course adjustments going forward.



CAPACITY BUILDING: Continue building JRS's capacity to serve as in-house mentors for teachers and resources to families.

- Ensure that Community of Practice meetings include a balance of theory and practice. Present and discuss existing Jewish classroom and family engagement resources that each JRS can integrate into their school. Build in time to generate ideas and discuss challenges and opportunities the JRS's face.
- Focus one-on-one supports to build JRS knowledge and confidence to serve as in-house mentors and resources to families.
- Consider modeling the concierge approach to JRS's by leading family outreach activities.

"I don't feel from my end that [JRS] is coming from a JRS workshop with content. [JRS] has lots of strategic ideas. There should be tactical things [JRS] should be doing..."

—Preschool Director

Recommendations (continued)



COMMUNICATION: Increase the flow of communication to clarify expectations and ensure a shared understanding of the JRS rationale, activities, roles and responsibilities.

- Work with preschool directors and host site directors to ensure they understand JRS goals, activities and intended outcomes and regularly share progress and updates with them. Ensure that the JRS meets regularly with the school director, and clarify roles between the preschool director, the JRS and the JRS staff.
- Regularly remind preschool staff about supports available from their JRS. Clarify the purpose and expectation around classroom observations and reflection.
- Build in “JRS time” at staff meetings, a dedicated opportunity for the JRS’s or other teachers to share reflections and ideas with the entire school.
- Develop a plan for directors to learn from each other.
- Ensure that each JRS is present to parents—at school, during events, and in school communications to families.

“I’d love for JRS to share best practices and resources across communities. We put together a curriculum for teaching Shabbat blessings at home and we would love to share this.”

—Preschool Director

Recommendations (continued)



PLAN: Develop a work plan for each JRS school with activities, timelines and outcomes.

- As schools take increasing responsibility for funding the costs of JRS, it becomes increasingly important that the JRS work plan and priorities are aligned with both JRS outcomes as well as school and host site strategic priorities. Share this plan with host institutions.



MONITOR PROGRESS:

- Continue regular check-ins to revisit each school's goals, activities and plans. Celebrate successes and troubleshoot challenges.
- Require written progress reports to track change over time. Program documentation is important to make the case for ongoing funding support and to preserve institutional memory.



WEB SITE: Prioritize the development and community-wide rollout of the ECJE Web site to facilitate Jewish family engagement in the broader Jewish community.



NEEDS ASSESSMENT: Ensure that each site conducts a needs assessment with families to identify areas of interest to parents.

"In the Jewish world we are constantly reinventing the wheel and we don't do a good job of sharing resources. It's hard to think about the bigger picture, but it's important to be a part of bigger community initiatives."

—Preschool Director

Looking Forward: Questions to Consider

As we observe differences in JRS implementation across the 5 sites, we raise the question:

What is the essence of the JRS model, structurally and programmatically?

1. Could there be variations or permutations of the JRS model across the organizational configurations of Jewish preschools?
2. To what degree are the overall JRS outcomes, as expressed in the JRS Logic Model, also the school outcomes? Where might and should they differ?
3. Is the JRS model primarily about a person? A set of activities? A function that could be across multiple job descriptions?
4. Might the JRS role expand or contract in size depending upon different school size?
5. How might JRS in a congregational setting maximally utilize educational clergy?
6. In community agencies focused on Jewish engagement, such as a JCC, how, if at all, could JRS integrate across multiple departments?
7. How might the JRS model leverage and complement other ECJE resources and programs, such as the new Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute (JECLEI) or The Certificate Program in Jewish Early Childhood Education through Gratz College?

Appendix A: Data Collection Methods

Key Informant Interviews (20):

- JRS teachers (4)
- JRS school directors (5)
- Educators in JRS schools (5)
- ECEI/JRS staff (2)
- Host institutions directors (4)

Site Visits to each of the 5 JRS schools in May 2012

Parent Survey:

BTW administered the survey through an online tool (Qualtrics) and offered incentives for participation. Out of a pool of 613 families, 335 responded—a 55% overall response rate, ranging from 46–62% across the sites.

Materials Review:

BTW reviewed applications to JRS, Memos of Understanding, JRS resumes, JRS work plans, semi-annual grant reports submitted to JJF from ECEI, Community of Practice agendas, ECJE research and other relevant articles.

Appendix B: Evaluation Strengths & Limitations

STRENGTHS

- Strong survey response rates across all schools, with a 55% response rate overall. This is important to validate results and prevent skewed responses, especially given the range in preschool sizes.
- In-person site visits to all 5 sites. Most interviews were conducted in person, on site.

LIMITATIONS

- All interview and survey data are self-reported by key stakeholders. This represents the particular perspectives of a given respondent and is not verified through other means. However, this evaluation bases findings only on commonly mentioned responses across multiple informants.
- This is a relatively small evaluation focused around two discrete questions, yet there is much additional information to learn from a pilot initiative.
- This evaluation assesses contribution toward outcomes rather than attribution. It is not possible in this evaluation to determine the degree to which results are due solely to the efforts of the JRS pilot.