

# No Going Back to the Future: The Marketplace for Jewish Educators 18 Months into the COVID-19 Pandemic

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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DR. MICHAEL J. FEUER

## PREPARED BY

ROSOV CONSULTING

Graduate School  
of Education  
& Human Development  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



## BACKGROUND

The *Mapping the Market* (MTM) strand of CASJE's study of the [Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators](#) was conceived with the goal of shedding light on the Jewish education marketplace. MTM planned to document what job opportunities exist in Jewish education, what skills and aptitudes employers across various sectors seek, and the ways in which Jewish educators are prepared for and developed to work effectively in the field.

With the unanticipated arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the early stages of our work on Mapping the Market provided an opportunity to learn how the various sectors of Jewish education were affected by the pandemic. The MTM study was focused on the labor market for Jewish educators, and that investigation helped shed light on the broader landscape for Jewish education: what employers were hoping to achieve in the face of the pandemic, what demand they anticipated for their services, and what help they expected their staff to need in order to succeed. Data gathered in July and August 2020 revealed four phenomena:

1. How the pandemic's uneven impact across the United States exacerbated the extent to which supply of and demand for Jewish educators were colored by local circumstances.
2. How the pandemic accentuated differences between sectors and venues of Jewish education, and how those providing services that parents couldn't do without—childcare and schooling—seemed in much more robust shape compared to those whose services were perceived to be a luxury or whose value was not fully appreciated.
3. How health regulations and the shift to remote learning had created a dynamic whereby employers were more likely to look for full-time than part-time staff.
4. Due to a widely shared sense that children, young adults, and parents had been traumatized by their experiences of the first six months of the pandemic, employers were placing a special premium on finding staff who were responsive to the social and emotional (mental health) needs of participants.

Twelve months on from that original study, the COVID-19 pandemic was continuing to disrupt many areas of day-to-day life in the United States. It had triggered labor shortages in many sectors and a labor market phenomenon, popularly known as the “great resignation,” in which 11.5 million people were found to have quit their jobs between April and June

2021<sup>1</sup>. Against this backdrop, it made sense to return to the individuals with whom we originally spoke in order to explore how the prolonged nature of this crisis has affected another year of Jewish educator recruitment and retention.

## DATA GATHERING

In the first round of data gathering, we spoke with seventy-five individuals responsible for hiring Jewish educators in sectors whose primary function is to provide either formal Jewish education or informal/experiential Jewish education. The sample included heads of day schools, early childhood directors, educational directors at congregations, directors of overnight and day camps, JCC directors, directors of youth-serving organizations, and Hillel directors<sup>2</sup>. Twelve months later, during July through September 2021, we conducted focus groups and individual interviews with thirty-six individuals. Despite our best efforts, we were able to speak with just thirty-two of the people with whom we originally spoke. Most longitudinal studies see some level of participant erosion; we suspect that the level of drop-out we were seeing was unusually severe. Four of the email addresses we previously used now bounced, suggesting that the individuals concerned had left their jobs. Other interviewees explained they just didn't have the time for these conversations. In one vivid instance, a member of our team reported what happened when an early childhood director didn't show up for an interview:

*When I called her, she answered her cell and told me she had been in the classroom all day subbing for teachers, that she had teachers who had no breaks, other teachers who were holding multiple crying children at once because there was nobody else there to do it, and a few other difficulties. She was unwilling to reschedule because she didn't see that the current situation would abate any time soon, though she said she really did want to participate.*

This is the context in which data were gathered for this new phase of our work. Evidently, a sizable proportion of those with whom we first spoke had left their jobs, and many of those who stayed were struggling with the fallout left by those who had left. Reassuringly, though these circumstances meant we spoke with fewer employers than in the first round of data gathering, what we learned was still strongly consistent. To further validate our data, and to supplement the perspective of the employers "on the ground" with whom we did speak, we took two additional steps. First, we interviewed field leaders at organizations in each sector like Hillel International, JCC Association of North America, and Prizmah: Center for Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Quit levels and rates by industry and region, seasonally adjusted. Economic News Release: Job Opening and Labor Turnover. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t04.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Almost all the interviewees worked within the eight communities that had been participating in CASJE's Career Trajectories study. The only exceptions were individuals who work for Foundation for Jewish Camp, youth-serving organizations, or Hillel in ways that serve local communities from a national hub.

Day Schools who could speak to the “state of the field” from a national perspective. Then, once a draft of the report was complete, we shared it with twelve additional, nationally based, key informants whom we asked to corroborate the conclusions we had reached about the educational venues with which they were most familiar. In a couple of instances, following this feedback, we made some specific modifications to our report as is often the case in a peer-review process.

## STATE OF THE FIELD

### *Jewish Day Schools: Riding the Wave*

Few community organizations rode out the COVID-19 pandemic as effectively as those in the Jewish day school sector. Schools invested time, money, and energy in alternative modes of delivery and in arranging their facilities in safer ways, and these efforts largely paid off in stable or even increased enrollment. In many instances, schools had to adopt new staffing models: they hired more permanent substitutes; they padded their rosters with additional teaching assistants; and they slightly expanded staff in student services, counseling, and learning specialties. These measures allowed more continuity during occasional quarantines or when staff and students had to be organized in pods. The measures also helped schools meet the emotional and academic challenges students were experiencing. That said, while heads of school saw value in maintaining these new models, they recognized that the “extras” added will likely be cut once there is no longer such an acute need.

Overall, even when their enrollment grew, day schools found it easier to recruit staff compared to other venues for Jewish education. The greatest challenges were in the areas of Judaic studies and Hebrew, where positions have long been difficult to fill. With the travel and visa difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, schools that traditionally relied on Israeli teachers who travel to the US for one to two years to teach had to make concessions that don't fully align with their educational commitments, like hiring American-born Hebrew teachers.

While day schools have struggled less with hiring than many other venues, great anxiety still pervades the field. Several heads of school mentioned concerns over what they see as an overall drying of the personnel pipeline, especially coming out of preservice programs. The most promising sources of talent are word of mouth or the inquiries that come from those looking to relocate from elsewhere in the country. Heads are uncomfortable about hiring candidates from nearby schools, given their concerns about the overall state of the pipeline.

While some schools have made creative decisions to enable teachers from remote areas to teach online, generally schools want teachers to be in classrooms with students. As such, they are minimizing the amount of online learning children are doing. When Zoom and online platforms remain in schools, it is for staff meetings and parent-teacher conferences, widely

seen as more efficient and accessible by these means. There's less unanimity, however, about school-community engagement online. Some interviewees laud greater accessibility and participation; others rue the lack of intimacy and real connection at Zoom events.

If at the start of the pandemic, schools doubled down on professional development in areas of technology-supported learning, they are now scaling back, even while the skills teachers built continue to be leveraged (utilizing more technology in classrooms and having more systems and learning resources online). This year, some have reduced professional development demands to give teachers a break. Others are leaving a crisis mode to offer more differentiated professional development. Everyone nevertheless agrees that mental health continues to be one of the biggest issues for staff and students. They are deeply invested in social-emotional learning. Along with the additional learning specialists, counselors, and social workers that schools have hired for these purposes, this focus may be the most lasting shift wrought by the pandemic.

### ***Supplemental Schools: Trying to Hold their Ground with Less***

If the situation across the country's day schools is fairly uniform and generally optimistic, what is happening in supplemental schools could not be more uneven and (often) bleak. This is the only venue where interviewees reported that their own positions as directors were being questioned on financial grounds.

While enrollment dropped in most congregational schools in the earlier phases of the pandemic, now it is rebounding, and in some cases, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. But these trends have not been associated with a consistent response in terms of staffing. Some schools are not hiring because teachers who didn't teach over the past year have returned, now that children are vaccinated and schools are in person again. Others are not hiring because, to cope with reduced budgets, directors are employing fewer teachers to teach more classes or combining multiple grades into one class. Other schools are hiring to replace teachers who burned out under the stresses of the last year or to meet rebounding enrollments. There is one constant: wherever directors are trying to hire, they are finding it even more difficult to do so than in the past, especially if they're looking for specialist, part-time, or substitute positions. They're not only finding the talent pipeline to be dry, but they are also experiencing more flakiness and last-minute withdrawals than normal, a theme echoed throughout the sectors and venues. They sense that their challenges are a piece of the hiring challenge facing America as a whole, especially when the pay they offer is not competitive.

*The teachers I'm paying less, I'm having difficulty finding. I have my full-time teacher, Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday. She gets decent pay, that's fine. A virtual class once a*

*month, that's pennies on the dollar. People just won't commit to that. Everyone is still struggling in a pandemic world and won't work now where they would three years ago.*

Under these circumstances, few talk about the specific skillsets they seek in new hires. They're in "warm body" territory. As selective as they'd like to be, they simply need to get someone into the classroom. It's a painful place to be. They're gasping for air while they try to hold their ground.

*I have three to four congregants I could hire, but they're not good enough for me and my wants, and I'm holding out. I'm giving myself three weeks before I go there. I'm still trying to be choosy, even though I'm desperate.*

Unexpectedly, the one area where some are finding oxygen is when it comes to hiring Hebrew teachers. The programs that moved online during the pandemic's earlier stages are having an easier time finding staff if they've chosen to persist with a remote, one-on-one model. They can recruit teachers from anywhere in the country, anywhere in the world. The catch is that the increased number of teaching hours needed to make this model work comes with a heavier price tag than Directors might otherwise want to pay.

Another innovation germinated by the pandemic has seen greater receptiveness to and increased quality of online offerings, especially for teens. Programs can offer interesting social justice speakers, for example, or one-on-one fellowship learning. Directors are trying to fit together more piecemeal approaches with different people to keep teens interested. In the long run, this may have a deleterious effect on their staff rosters and their ability to provide teens with a holistic, community-building experience; but for the moment, this approach is enabling them to create a more concierge-like environment, something for which there's demand.

As with day schools, the focus of professional development has moved on from the use of technology and operating with COVID-19 pandemic protocols. Programs are now focused on social-emotional learning and relationship or community building. Schools expect that teachers will need help dealing with the social, emotional, psychological, and cognitive impacts of the pandemic over the next several years. There has been an explosion of online offerings to help with this challenge, but interviewees are divided about the quality of what's being offered.

For some, though, talk about the emphases of professional development is of secondary importance. Coming out of the pandemic, their primary concern is how to stay in business with smaller budgets and fewer educators willing to commit to this work.

## ***Early Childhood Education: Making Lemonade from Lemons***

A year ago, the situation in early childhood venues looked a lot like that in day schools. Parents absolutely needed the services they offered, and the programs were adapting to find ways of meeting those needs. Today, in respect to staffing challenges, these settings have more in common with congregational schools: they involve a lot of part-time roles, are low paying, and are often not embedded in structures that promise any advancement. Additionally, they are served by a number of older staff, many of whom either retired during the pandemic or took a year off, whether because of health and safety concerns or because of a deep reluctance to transition online. Programs are finding that many of their older and more experienced staff have left the field altogether for better paying options. Absent those older staff, they're finding that newer, inexperienced hires lack older role models who can facilitate their socialization into the work.

In the weeks before the start of the new school year, the greatest challenge in this venue was the push and pull between enrollment and staffing. While overall enrollment had returned to pre-pandemic levels, it was much less stable and predictable than in the past. Parents were waiting longer to make enrollment decisions, and centers were reluctant to start looking for staff if they couldn't be sure they'd be needed, much as was the case in many congregational schools. But directors knew if they waited too long to look for new staff, high-quality people would be very difficult to find.

These staffing challenges have opened a window on some of the promising adaptations these venues made in the face of the pandemic, which many now seek to preserve. Having had to operate with smaller adult-child ratios, and to run separated pods, the programs shortened their hours and built in more vacation time for faculty to prevent their burnout. They discovered the benefits of scaling back, and now, as one director explained, the labor marketplace is deterring them from scaling up.

*I don't want to grow my program because I can't find teachers. I don't want to compromise the excellence of the program by just hiring whoever comes my way and having a less-than-best program. I'm very happy we're so small. ... I don't want to grow because I'm scared of what the future is like. There are no teachers. Nobody is choosing this field.*

They've adapted in other ways, too. Some ECE centers (like day schools) found a streamlined drop-off with no parents in the building worked better on a number of levels, though it left directors wondering how best to reengage parents with the school and one another. Several interviewees also mentioned that changes required by the pandemic ended up pushing them to a more self-directed pattern of play/eat/rest which has been positive for the children. And, most often mentioned, they've made increased use of outdoor space, something several directors really like. Use of outdoor space facilitated the

self-pacing mentioned above, but it was challenging for some teachers and may be more challenging for the older teachers already reluctant to continue their work.

Against the backdrop of a labor market that seems to be experiencing a generational reset, these centers are emerging from the pandemic having discovered new ways of working. The adaptations they've made are still a work in progress, but they seem to be viewed as a cause for optimism amid all the stresses.

### ***Day Camp and Overnight Camp: Riding a Rollercoaster***

Over the first eighteen months of the pandemic, the Jewish camping sector has oscillated from one extreme to another. During summer 2020, almost all overnight camps and many day camps did not open in person— an unprecedented event. A year later, these venues had to find ways of accommodating high levels of demand from campers—often higher levels of demand than usual—while abiding by health and safety protocols and while employing a much higher proportion of staff who had never worked at camp before. No wonder one interviewee characterized summer 2021 as the most challenging in camping history; not the worst, she qualified, but certainly the most challenging.

Unlike many other venues for Jewish education, the staffing challenge was not typically one of finding people to fill positions. The adult staff at camps—specialists and the most senior echelons of personnel—were relatively easy to secure this past summer. Many of these people are teachers during the school year who work at camps during their summers. For the most part, they were ready and willing to take whatever the day and overnight camps could offer them, especially if they had missed a summer of earnings the previous year.

The primary staffing challenge was in relation to counselors. This is a population that commonly ages in and out of camp work over the course of a couple of summers. With one cohort having missed out on this experience in 2020, the camps were hard pressed in 2021 to hire counselors with prior camp staffing experience. Those who had played such roles in 2019, now college students, were usually more interested in summer internships or career preparation opportunities, and they were reluctant to be locked inside an infection-free bubble all summer. Additionally, the thousands of college-age Israelis who usually take up positions at camp each summer were finding it very difficult to enter the US, with only a few organizations finding it possible to recruit sufficient numbers. (In something of an outlier case, the JCC Association reported that “Israeli staff **saved** their overnight camps staffing model” by taking up new roles due to the absence of domestic staff [informant’s emphasis].) Overall, staffing shortages meant that camps had to recruit more heavily from a younger, less-experienced population which itself had been traumatized and socially deprived by its own experience of the pandemic. These teens were now being asked, in their roles as counselors, to care for younger children who had endured similar, unsettling experiences

over the previous eighteen months. In overnight camps, these circumstances were exacerbated by the fact that camps did not allow staff to leave for the whole summer as a health and safety precaution. It's not surprising that more counselors than usual did not make it all the way through the summer, and a few camps reported mini-revolts or other forms of dissatisfaction among counselors, both at day and overnight camps.

Taking stock of what played out, camp directors argue that in the coming years the central challenge for camps is not how to recruit campers but how to recruit and retain young staff, emotionally ready and sufficiently prepared for their work at camp. They fear that in the coming summer, they'll suffer from an echo of there having been no Counselor/Leader in Training (CIT/LIT) opportunities in 2020. These are not local challenges for the camp sector; they may have systemic, even existential, dimensions, as one informant put it, given the extent to which so many educators today got their start at camp (as shown in CASJE's [Preparing for Entry](#) study). The source of an important career pipeline has been compromised. Addressing these challenges will require developing strategies to recruit and prepare young people for camp roles much earlier in the year, if not year-round. It will require better coordination with other Jewish organizations that recruit young people for internships and travel to Israel during the busy summer months. The pandemic has exposed the extent to which different communal bodies are competing for the same human capital.

### ***Youth-Serving Organizations: Rebuilding from the Ground Up***

A year ago, we reported that, for youth-serving organizations, the national had become the new local. With in-person programming wiped out, organizations were feeding content to teens directly from national providers, and they were downsizing or freezing local operations. With the country reopening, and teen participation rebounding, the central task has been to rebuild local capacity. Organizations need boots on the ground, new youth directors, and teen educators. Finding these people has been hard in some parts of the country but not others; the marketplace has become even more uneven than in the past. Interviewees report that it has been easier to hire national staff and staff for roles that can include a remote component. Some speculate whether widespread expectations of remote work have made it harder to recruit candidates for local positions.

To break out of this jam, some organizations have started to recruit (and fundraise) for three-year rather than one-year positions. They're hoping that longer contracts, and the higher wages associated with them, will make the work more appealing. It's a strategy being used in other venues, too. The jury is out in this respect.

In the meantime, certain things are clear. First, teens are hungry for in-person programming; they and their parents want to return to what used to be normal. Second, while the numbers attending in-person programs have rebounded, the providers would like to retain some of

the online programming they developed. They're interested in maximizing the benefits of the national infrastructure they created to deliver content directly to individual teens, but only as a supplement to locally delivered experiences, not a substitute. Third, while some organizations are reporting their highest membership levels in four or five years, others are seeing a continued shift from membership models to multi-access models that allow teens to engage in programs in different ways. Over the last eighteen months, teens have become accustomed to building their own adventures, and it seems that many like it that way. How this dynamic plays out will probably depend on how much organizations had to downsize over the past couple of years.

Last but not least, most pressing and most widespread: organizations need their personnel to better understand and respond to mental health issues and to help teens transition back to in-person activity. One interviewee put it graphically:

*Socialization skills have been at a standstill for many of our youth, and they are being reintegrated into our communities (almost like releasing animals into the wild from captivity). They need coping skills.*

Most organizations rely on outside providers to help with professional development about these matters, but one interviewee reported finding those external providers overwhelmed right now. His own organization is having to build up its own resources for these purposes. This is not a new need, but it is, evidently, a new frontier for many.

### **JCCs: Trying to Put the Pieces Back Together**

The situation in JCCs is peculiarly mixed, perhaps more so than anywhere else, because of the extent to which the JCC business model is reliant on people coming into buildings: to health clubs, pools, and early childhood centers. This is why JCCs were forced to furlough staff earlier and in greater numbers than any other Jewish communal institution.

Early childhood education, one of the main income streams for every JCC, took a major hit. Health and safety protocols meant that many had to close. When they reopened, older staff were reluctant to return, not least because of the pay being offered. As one interviewee reported, employees discovered they could earn \$5.50 more an hour working at the Target across the street.

About two-thirds of JCCs were able to run day camps in 2020, probably the highest proportion of any camping sector to stay open. In 2021, the response from families varied tremendously: about one-third of camps had more campers than in 2019, one-third had about the same, and about a third had fewer. Whatever their enrollment this past summer, all nevertheless faced the same staffing challenges previously highlighted.

While their in-person offerings were completely disrupted, many JCCs have found a new and expanding market for remote offerings. Adult education transitioned to Zoom very quickly in spring 2020 and continues to be very popular. Because JCCs can hire faculty from outside the local community, they have been able to expand their range of offerings. They've discovered, too, that they do not need to cancel sessions for bad weather. With support from JCC Association, some are now also offering arts events remotely on a new platform.

For a while, family education worked well on Zoom, too. But now there is fatigue, and the great challenge is to get people back into the building and rebuild community. At the moment, it seems as if communities have been fragmented, even atomized, with members retreating into their homes. Broadly, this is reflected in a decline in those paying membership, with membership levels, which had reached about two-thirds of pre-COVID levels, dipping even further. It also helps explain an uptick in PJ Library subscriptions; PJ Library is the kind of experience people can explore from home. The task now is to put the pieces back together, and the challenge is to do so when job searches for engagement positions are not generating the kind of interest they once did or when some frontline absences (among lifeguards, for example) are affecting JCC operations. The new dynamics of the job market are complicating the work of rebuilding.

### ***Hillel: More of the Same but Different***

By contrast to the turbulence within other venues, Hillel's response to and experience of the pandemic has been remarkably smooth. This is quite an achievement given that, like the campuses where they're based, local Hillels have had to switch to remote delivery of services. While Hillel International did make staffing cutbacks, local Hillels largely did not. Those local teams were in as much, if not more, demand than ever. And while those teams had to learn new ways of working (with Hillel rolling out a long-planned platform, Hillel at Home, for these purposes), they did not have to acquire entirely new skillsets. Pastoral and interpersonal competencies have long been key to the work of Hillel staff at the campus level.

Eighteen months into the pandemic and contemplating the start of a new academic year, our interviewees at Hillel reported how the scale of their hiring was similar to previous years; on average, they carry out slightly more than 250 searches a season. Starting the new academic year, they had completed a similar number, although this year they still had a further forty-two slots open. This seems in part a consequence of some expansion, but also because of certain changes in the marketplace.

Candidates, it seems, have been pickier than in the past. Reflecting the uncertainties and insecurities of the present moment, some candidates have been unwilling to move unless they're moving "home," either where they grew up or where they have extensive networks, a development that puts smaller communities at a disadvantage. There is little appetite for

upheaval or to move to an entirely new place. Similarly, it has taken a lot more effort to get people to apply for positions. Hillel staff have had to spend much more time coaching and discussing positions with potential candidates before those candidates throw their hats into the ring.

These changes may have been prompted by the uncertainties of the pandemic: the need to make sure there is a support network nearby in the event of a lockdown, wanting to be sure that work-from-home options exist. The changes may be caused by confusion about the many varied safety protocols at different campuses. More fundamentally, Hillel may also be seeing the consequences of a generational change as Gen Z enters the workplace. Candidates are much “less willing to play the game. Much more, ‘this is what I am, who I am, take it or leave it ... I’m either going to get what I want or I’m going to walk away.’”

The pandemic’s influence is more readily seen in an uptick in rabbis interested in positions on campus. In the past, campus rabbis looked to leave campus for synagogue contracts, the next stop on a much-traveled career path. Recently, traffic has been headed in the opposite direction with pulpit rabbis showing evidence of pastoral burnout. There’s been much more interest in a Hillel position at the conclusion of a first synagogue job, and the soft, interpersonal skills these former congregational rabbis bring are especially welcome at this time.

These developments do not represent an upheaval, rather more a case of variations on a long-running, continually evolving theme. Hillel staff has been long invested in what they call “relationship-based acquisition work,” a strategy designed to better understand people’s needs (both candidates and those hiring). Now, with so much uncertainty in the labor market, they’re able to lean into these strengths.

## SHARED REALITIES

While the situation faced by the different venues described here are often staggeringly different, a point to which we will return, this review makes it possible to see common challenges and shared realities that transcend those differences. The pervasiveness of these issues indicates that they are not a uniquely Jewish problem; they are part of the socioeconomic reality of America today.

### ***The Great Resignation - Burnout and Leadership Retirements***

*I heard from a few directors who say, I love camp, I even loved being with the kids this summer, but after so many years I can’t do this anymore... I heard it from people at different points in their tenure, people who still love the kids and Jewish day camp, but this summer did them in, and they’re out. –Day Camp Director*

Many people who have been close to retirement pulled the trigger over the past eighteen months. These people may have stayed on for some years, but the deep difficulties and intense changes in instruction, and the general stress and tension that most people have experienced, condensed the time in which people have been leaving the field entirely. Many venues are witnessing generational turnover.

Senior leadership across venues and sectors have also experienced burnout. Day school, congregational school, and camp heads are retiring or quitting their jobs at unusually high rates. It is likely that the ripple effects of these departures will be felt on lower-level staffing and hiring, in particular on the training, work socialization, and supervision of younger and newer employees.

### ***The Mental Health Epidemic***

*[In terms of professional development] the first thing to pop in my head is mental health stuff, both for the teachers themselves and for the children going forward, and to think about how this has all affected kids and what we'll need to know for kids moving forward ... for kids who have been in lockdown for two years when they're only four! That's something we could really use. –ECE Director*

Mental health issues are everywhere. Campers and students, parents, staff of all levels and ages, and senior leadership have all been inhabiting a scary and chaotic world for a long time now. It is a politically polarized world, too, which complicates how people handle the challenges of the past two years. There are burnt out directors leading traumatized staff trying to help traumatized children whose parents have been at the end of their own ropes for a year or more. This is a cry that resounded in every sector and in every venue, and few have the wherewithal to respond adequately.

### ***The Diminished Pipeline***

*It's always been word of mouth; someone leaves on maternity and doesn't go back full time. But that's dried up, people aren't looking right now. People with kids don't know what's happening with their kids, and older people are less willing to come out, so there's a lot less of those kinds of recommendations. Even that small resource has dried up in the past year. –ECE Director*

The intersection of broader societal phenomena and the challenges that face Jewish organizations are most visible when people express concerns about the diminished talent pipeline. After all, Jewish organizations are competing in a larger labor market not just with one another. In all the sectors and venues we explored, leaders acknowledge that pay is too low for their organizations to be competitive or that part-time work is no longer sufficiently

desirable for the people they seek to recruit. This has been a long-running concern in early childhood and congregational education. In our conversations, we also heard about this phenomenon from day school heads who have relied heavily on teaching assistants and substitutes during COVID, and it seems to be a growing concern for those looking to hire camp counselors, both in day and overnight camps. The disruption caused by two “unusual” summers in the camping industry have accelerated the questioning of longstanding assumptions about camps’ capacities to attract talent.

### ***The Promise of Technology***

*We are keeping a few things on Zoom, we have a new program for seniors in our madrichim program, if they’ve done the whole program they can be in a capstone program that will be on Zoom. For convenience, tachlis things like board meetings can be on Zoom. It’s just a better way for overprogrammed kids. –Congregational School Director*

The increased technological literacy achieved over the past eighteen months is widely seen as a resource that could be harnessed for good even when most programs are back in person. At the same time, educational providers of all kinds are still strongly interested in minimizing screen time and maximizing in-person connections.

The relational dimensions of education, so important for children especially, have been highly compromised by “Zoom school.” Minimizing screen time after so many months glued to devices is prized. What is new is an appreciation of technology’s collateral benefits, and the infrastructural and supplemental role technology can play for educational organizations. Virtual staff meetings, parent meetings, and one-on-one or small-group Hebrew instruction have all proved to be highly desirable for providers and consumers and are likely to continue in multiple sectors. Hebrew instruction may be one of the sites of greatest positive disruption. Every congregational school director with whom we spoke reported that they switched to online Hebrew instruction, largely, though not exclusively, employing a one-on-one model. This switch has been so successful most are changing their model permanently. Given how hard it has been to find Hebrew instructors in Jewish educational sites of all kinds since long before the pandemic, this could be a change of great significance.

### ***The Unevenness of the Landscape***

*We don’t actually know what we’re doing because every day, especially here in this state, things change. I know other states have similar levels of stages, but we’re currently getting back to the highest stage, and I just don’t know what that means for religious school next year. –Congregational School Director*

While highlighting what have surfaced as commonplaces across venues and sectors, it is still important to underline our sense (derived from talking with educational leaders in eight different communities across the United States) of how stark the differences have been associated with where these leaders are located. There are very real cultural differences between different regions in the United States, and these differences have been manifest in the COVID-19 pandemic responses on the part of government, private bodies, and individuals. The difficult decisions facing directors and heads around vaccination and masking requirements, and the patchwork of municipal, state, and federal policies around COVID-19 safety measures (not to mention specific local cultural milieus), mean that leadership in different places must confront wildly varying pressures and stresses. To take one example, overnight camps that require full vaccination for all staff but are in areas where vaccine resistance is high have found it especially difficult to hire local support personnel. Contextual factors of this kind resonate through educational venues in slightly different ways.

The larger *Mapping the Market* study underlined the extent to which the landscape of Jewish education in the United States has broken apart into what was characterized as different continents. This smaller study makes plain the extent to which the fortunes of individual venues of Jewish education are associated not just with the sector in which they're situated but with local circumstances and cultures. The landscape of Jewish education and the marketplace for Jewish educators are both increasingly fragmented and increasingly uneven. For these reasons, it is becoming ever more difficult to formulate a national response to the current moment. It will not be possible to go back to the future—to visions for the field of Jewish education from just two years ago.

## APPENDIX: QUALITATIVE DATA GATHERING SAMPLING OVERVIEW

This year, we reached out to all of the respondents from summer 2020. Data collection took place in August-October 2021. In addition, we spoke with six professionals at national organizations (Hillel International, JCC Association, and Foundation for Jewish Camp) to enhance our understanding of their landscapes. After conducting our analytical work and developing our findings, we reached out to twelve additional contributors to ensure our findings reflect their perception of the field’s state.

The following tables outline the number of focus group and interview participants by organization type and community.

Organization Type	Number of Participants
Day School Heads of School	8
Congregational/Hebrew School Directors	12
Early Childhood Education Directors	5
Overnight Camp Directors	3
Day Camp Directors	2
Youth-Serving Organization Directors	5
Campus (Hillel) Directors	2
JCC Leadership	2

Community	Number of Participants
Austin	2
Boston	2
Chicago	8
Detroit	5
Las Vegas	-
Miami	1
Nassau-Westchester	9
San Francisco Bay Area	6
Representatives of National Organizations	6

**Additional Contributors (N=12)**

- BBYO
- Foundation for Jewish Camp
- Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
- Hillel
- JCC Association
- NCSY
- Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools
- Union for Reform Judaism

## CASJE Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators Study Project Leadership

Principal Investigator: Michael J. Feuer, PhD, Dean of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University

Research Directors: Wendy Rosov, PhD and Alex Pomson, PhD, Rosov Consulting  
Ariela Greenberg, PhD, The Greenberg Team

CASJE Managing Director: Arielle Levites, PhD, The George Washington University

Technical Advisory Board:  
Rabbi Rafi Cashman, PhD - Netivot HaTorah Day School  
Dan Goldhaber, PhD - University of Washington  
Miriam Heller Stern, PhD - Hebrew Union College  
Susan Moore Johnson, PhD - Harvard University  
Susanna Loeb, PhD - Brown University  
Richard Murnane, PhD - Harvard University  
Rona Novick, PhD - Yeshiva University  
Miriam Raider-Roth, PhD - University of Cincinnati

The **Collaborative for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE)** is an evolving community of researchers, practitioners, and philanthropic leaders dedicated to improving the quality of knowledge that can be used to guide the work of Jewish education. CASJE supports research shaped by the wisdom of practice, practice guided by research, and philanthropy informed by a sound base of evidence.

The **George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GSEHD)** advances knowledge through meaningful research that improves the policy and practice of education. Together, more than 1,600 faculty, researchers and graduate students make up the GSEHD community of scholars. Founded in 1909, GSEHD continues to take on the challenges of the 21st century, guided by the belief that education is the single greatest contributor to economic success and social progress.

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