

Research Brief | #2

Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators in the United States

# Professional Development for Jewish Educators

Time to Tap Its Potential



Prepared by  
Rosov Consulting

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of Education  
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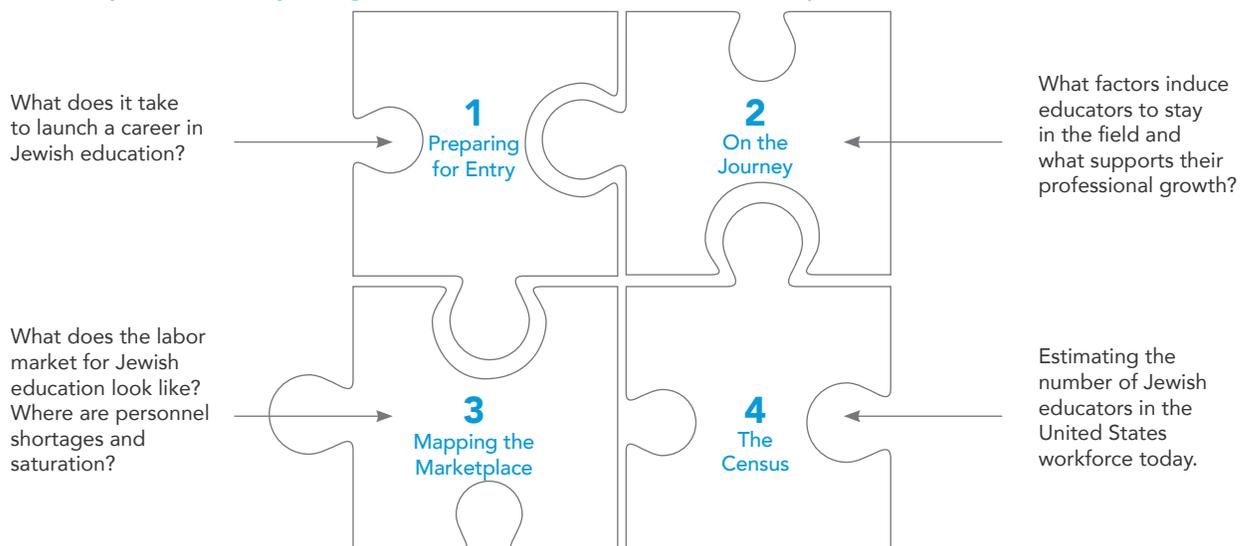
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## About this Report

The Collaborative for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE) is a community of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers dedicated to improving the quality of knowledge that can be used to guide Jewish education and learning. CASJE is committed to developing high quality research that is responsive to critical questions across diverse sectors in Jewish education. CASJE's programmatic and fiduciary home is located at the George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GSEHD).

This brief is second in a series of four that shares findings from *On the Journey*, one of four research strands of the CASJE Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators Study. The larger CASJE study seeks to understand the recruitment, retention and development of Jewish educators in the United States. You can read more about this study at [www.casje.org](http://www.casje.org)

The Career Trajectories Study is organized around four central research questions:



*On the Journey* is designed to elucidate the career pathways of Jewish educators, including their professional growth, compensation, workplace conditions and lived experiences. In 2019 CASJE published the white paper [\*On the Journey: Concepts That Support a Study of the Professional Trajectories of Jewish Educators\*](#), which lays out the framework and key questions that underlie this inquiry and serves as a companion to these research briefs.

# Acknowledgments

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# Summary

An accumulating body of research indicates that well-designed professional development is associated with positive changes in educators' ways of working *and* with improvements in students' learning outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Professional development is also associated with social-emotional benefits for educators, such as higher levels of satisfaction with one's work and deepened identification with a community of fellow practitioners.<sup>2</sup> This brief, drawn from data collected from almost 1,300 North American Jewish educators as part of the "On the Journey" strand of CASJE's Career Trajectories study, explores (1) the access practitioners in the various sectors of Jewish education have to professional development; (2) the kinds of professional development in which they engage; and (3) the consequences for those who experience quality professional development.

- A substantial body of literature establishes that professional development matters. It can contribute to expanding educators' professional selves and their practices.
- In the field of education, professional development is widely deemed to be critical. It has greatest value as a means toward continued improvement in a dynamic and challenging field. *Quality* professional development has consistently been found to contribute to educator growth *and* positive learner outcomes.
- CASJE's data show that experiences of professional development, and of professional nurturing through coaching or mentoring, are empirically related to a series of specific, desirable educator outcomes: educators' feelings of self-efficacy, their commitment to their organizations and the Jewish education profession more generally, and their overall job satisfaction.
- Most Jewish educators experience some form of professional development, and they're moderately satisfied with what is available. Yet, access to high quality opportunities for PD frequently depends on the initiative and resources of individual educators; they often have to pay for it themselves, a situation that has prevailed for years.
- Despite decades of critique of the one-shot-workshop, the format still reigns supreme as the most common type of professional development in all sectors of Jewish education, even while other modalities are widely employed. Much of the professional development that educators do experience is not very intensive.
- Educators most value professional development that both develops their knowledge and skills and widens their horizons. These opportunities provide personal attention and at the same time connect educators with colleagues and peers within their institutions and beyond.
- A renewed commitment to professional development in Jewish education should focus on the task of increasing access to already existing high-quality experiences. This task is less about the need to overhaul a poorly prepared workforce. Rather, it is about enabling greater numbers of educators to experience continued professional improvement and benefit from the collateral outcomes associated with those experiences.

1 Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and her colleagues reviewed 35 studies over the last three decades of "professional learning that has proven effective in changing teachers' practices and improving student outcomes" that featured a careful experimental or comparison group design, or analyzed student outcomes with statistical controls for context variables and student characteristics.

2 Borko, H. (2004). Coldwell, M. (2017); Renbarger, R., & Davis, B. K. (2019).



# Data and Methods

This brief reports data gathered as part of CASJE's investigation of "Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators." Quantitative data come specifically from the *On the Journey* survey fielded over January and February 2020 to Jewish educators, defined as professionals "involved in designing and delivering experiences for the purpose of facilitating Jewish learning, engagement, connection, and meaning." Qualitative data come from follow-up interviews and focus groups with a subsample of 52 survey respondents and an additional 20 people who had left the field.

Specifically, study participants were employed in five occupational sectors: (1) formal Jewish education (day schools, early childhood, supplemental schools); (2) informal/experiential settings including both immersive (e.g., camp) and non-immersive (e.g., youth organizations, JCCs); (3) those involved in engagement, social justice, and innovation (e.g., Jewish Studio Project, Moishe House, OneTable); (4) communal organizations that may employ someone in a related role (e.g., scholars in residence at Federations or Jewish educators at Jewish Family Services); and (5) non-organizational networks and online learning (e.g., independent B'nai Mitzvah or Hebrew tutors).

The survey was fielded in eight communities selected to represent a range of sizes of Jewish populations and include diverse geographic regions of the United States. The communities were: Austin, TX, Boston, MA, Chicago, IL, Detroit, MI, Las Vegas, NV,

Miami-Dade, FL, Nassau and Westchester Counties, NY, and San Francisco Bay Area, CA. (For more information about the communities' Jewish educational ecosystems, please see "**On the Journey: Study Methodology and Data Collection Instruments.**")

The total number of survey respondents was 1,278, of which approximately 40% are day school educators, 20% supplemental school educators, 20% early childhood educators, 10% informal/experiential educators, and the remainder in innovation/social justice organizations, federated institutions, or working as independent educators. All respondents had been in the field between 6 and 30 years.

The *On the Journey* survey was designed to explore the relationships between "background" characteristics of individual educators and their work settings, the interventions and workplace conditions that educators may experience in their careers, and the desired outcomes for educators (self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and career commitment) that are of particular interest to stakeholders of this research. Interviews and focus groups were designed to bring both additional richness and nuance to the findings from the survey data.

More information about the sample, methods, and instrumentation can be found in "**On the Journey: Study Methodology and Data Collection Instruments.**"



# Background

## Why Professional Development Matters

In the broader field of education, professional development is widely deemed to be essential. It is, as educator and poet Charity Becker puts it, a means by which we grow into our selves.<sup>3</sup> Or, in the more prosaic terms employed by sociologist of education Judith Warren Little, it is “any activity that is intended partly or primarily to prepare paid staff members for improved performance in present or future roles.”<sup>4</sup> **Professional development—whether embedded through ongoing learning opportunities in the workplace or accessed periodically offsite—strives toward an expansion in educators’ professional selves and practices.**

As Guskey and Huberman clarify in a classic introduction to the topic, promoting the importance of professional development does not imply that practitioners today are doing an inadequate job.<sup>5</sup> More profoundly, it signals that education is a dynamic, professional field. As the professional knowledge base expands, so must educators keep abreast of emerging knowledge and be prepared to use this knowledge to refine their conceptual and craft skills. In dynamic fields, even the best prepared practitioners cannot be expected to fulfill the missions with which they’re charged without continued exposure to new ideas and to new ways of doing things. That’s why fields as diverse as medicine, engineering, and accountancy mandate practitioners to engage in continuous professional development.<sup>6</sup>

The work of education is challenging and complex; it takes many years to master.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of pre-service preparation is to develop well-started novices not finished products. Pre-service preparation only begins

to prepare educators to be effective in the role—and many Jewish educators do not even receive pre-service education. Much of the learning necessarily happens on the job, over the span of many years, and high-quality professional development supports that trajectory. Ongoing professional learning needs to be part of the work of Jewish educators.

An extensive educational literature makes clear what constitutes sound practice in professional development.<sup>8</sup> Synthesizing that work with an eye to establishing best practices for Jewish education, Dorph enumerates **six qualities that contribute to “effective professional development,”** experiences capable of changing thinking and practices:

1. Takes place within educators’ regular workday or work week;
2. Continues over time with sessions building on each other;
3. Models active learning;
4. Fosters a collegial, collaborative environment;
5. Focuses on building educators’ pedagogical content knowledge;
6. Includes learning in and from practice.<sup>9</sup>

As Dorph clarifies, the first two principles speak to the structural characteristics of professional development; the next two involve the norms, social contexts, and processes of learning; and the last two relate to the elements of the curriculum or the content of what is being taught.

3 Becker, C. (2018).

4 Little, J. W. (1987). p. 491.

5 Guskey, T. R., & Huberman, M. (1995).

6 Johnson, W. W. (2014); Grant, J. (2017); Behar-Horenstein, L. S., Prikhidko, A., & Kolb, H. R. (2018); Murphy, B. (2017).

7 Feiman Nemser, S. (2001).

8 Hawley, W. D., & Valli, L. (1999); Johnson, S. M. (2012); Hill, H. C., Beisiegel, M., & Jacob, R. (2013).

9 Dorph, G. Z. (2011). Dorph acknowledges that her list is similar to a number of other lists that capture an emerging “consensus.” For a more recent example, see Darling-Hammond et al. (2017).

An accumulating body of research indicates that, when the practices enumerated above are employed, **professional development is associated with positive changes in educators' ways of working and improvements in student learning outcomes** as evidenced, through randomized control trials and quasi-experimental studies, in student achievement levels on standardized achievement tests, math scores, and language proficiency tests.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, besides being associated with the sustained and improved efficacy of the practitioner, **professional development is also associated with social-emotional benefits for educators**, such as higher levels of satisfaction with one's work and deepened identification with a community of fellow practitioners.<sup>11</sup> In sectors characterized by high levels of burnout, low professional status, and poor compensation, these collateral benefits make a significant difference to maintaining the commitment of practitioners to difficult work.<sup>12</sup>

## A Slow Train Coming?

At the close of the last century, drawing on data from the 1996 Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE) survey of Jewish educators in five American communities, a group of eminent scholars urged policy planners and institutional leaders "to rethink (or think for the first time!) about the importance of professional development for teachers."<sup>13</sup> The CIJE study had found a workforce made up of highly motivated individuals who took their work seriously but who were not well prepared for their jobs, both in their formal Judaic backgrounds and in their educational training. What the field needed, these scholars argued, was not an influx of new, knowledgeable, and well-prepared faculty—something that was unlikely to happen—but rather "professional development of a *serious and intensive sort*" for those already in the field (emphasis in the original).

Ten years later, the Educators in Jewish Schools Study (EJSS) found a somewhat improved situation. Almost all of the respondents to the EJSS survey indicated they experienced some form of professional development. More than half of day school respondents and more than one-quarter of supplementary school respondents reported participating in professional development activities that lasted more than one day. Half of all responding teachers and two-thirds of full-timers received compensation for the time they spent in professional development. Altogether this looked like progress, and yet summing up what they found, the report's authors concluded, "professional development for Jewish educators is...not yet normative, supported fully, nor utilized effectively."<sup>14</sup>

### **What is the situation today? Have Jewish educational organizations finally internalized the value of professional development?**

In one interesting indication, Leading Edge has not included data about access to or participation in professional development in any of its annual reports on Jewish organizational culture. This omission seems to suggest that PD is still not perceived as an important element in making an organization "a great place to work."<sup>15</sup> Is this a case of a slow train coming?

CASJE's study of the career trajectory of Jewish educators provides an opportunity to explore (1) the opportunities practitioners in the various sectors of Jewish education have to access professional development; (2) the kinds of professional development they engage in; and (3) the consequences for those who do experience quality professional development. This is an opportunity to assess the extent to which the field of Jewish education has moved forward since the forceful articulation of the imperative for professional development for Jewish education in North America more than twenty years ago.

<sup>10</sup> See note 1.

<sup>11</sup> Borko, H. (2004). Coldwell, M. (2017); Renbarger, R., & Davis, B. K. (2019).

<sup>12</sup> Chen, T. Y., Chang, P. L., & Yeh, C. W. (2004); Krogstad, U., Hofoss, D., Veenstra, M., & Hjortdahl, P. (2006).

<sup>13</sup> Holtz, B. W., Gamoran, A., Dorph, G. Z., Goldring, E., & Robinson, B. (1999).

<sup>14</sup> Kress, J., & Ben Avi, S. (2007) p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Leading Edge (2019).

# Professional Development for Jewish Educators

Most respondents in CASJE’s investigation of “Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators” experience some form of professional development and are moderately satisfied with what’s available. Yet, access to these opportunities frequently depends on the initiative of individual educators; and, if it takes the form of an off-site course, they often have to pay for it themselves, a situation that has prevailed for years.

## Available but Often Unattainable

Across the various sectors of Jewish education, about three-quarters (76%) of survey respondents report having opportunities for professional development. Surprisingly, perhaps, these responses do not vary significantly in relation to size of community where respondents are located. Sixty-one percent (61%) say that they’re satisfied with their opportunities for professional growth. The highest proportion of those who are satisfied (72%) work in federated institutions, and the lowest proportion (54%) work in supplementary schools or in innovation and social justice institutions. Overall, only 55%

strongly agree or agree that “my organization provides me sufficient opportunities for professional development” and that “I have opportunities to develop new skills at my organization.” In these last two respects, there is little variation across sectors. It seems, in fact, that **a number of respondents must look outside of their organizations for these opportunities**, and with almost two-thirds (64%) of full-timers and 84% of part-timers not receiving any form of professional development stipend, **they must invariably do so at their own expense.**

*At my previous position, I was left to find and pay for my own professional development. I already obtained my bachelor’s degree prior to my*

Exhibit 1  
Key Professional Development–Related Statistics from Survey



*employment. And yearly professional development required by EEC was up to us, the employees, to opt in and pay for ourselves. I found partial grants through the state to help pay for my master's degree, however I still needed to pay for a majority of it on my own. [Early Childhood educator]*

Generally, the proportion of Jewish educators participating in professional development and receiving financial support has slipped since the EJSS ten years ago. EJSS reported that 92% of respondents (day school, supplementary school, and early childhood educators) participated in some form of PD, with 51% receiving compensation for time spent in this professional activity. The relatively lower numbers reported by respondents to our survey who report receiving some form of PD stipend—27% in the venues directly comparable to those investigated by EJSS—lend support to a widely expressed complaint that when budgets tighten, professional development is one of the first budget lines to be cut.

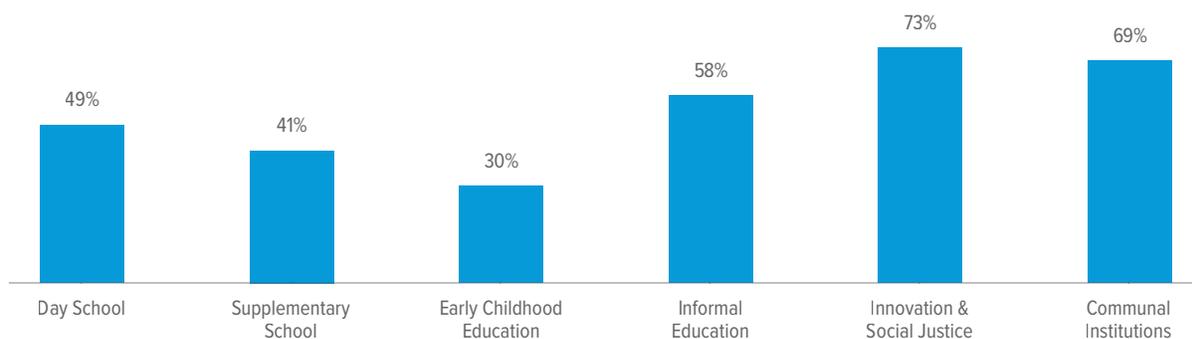
Looking beyond their own organizations, nearly two-thirds of respondents say that they have professional networks/organizations to

turn to for resources and support; 41% often make use of Jewish professional networks, and 36% look to networks outside of the Jewish field. In general, supplemental schools lag behind other venues in providing professional development and networking opportunities, and newer educators across all sectors are less likely to be aware of opportunities than educators who are more established.

In terms of the duration of educator's professional development, respondents most commonly report participating in experiences that lasted less than four hours, with about three quarters doing so at least once during an average year. **Just over half of full-time respondents attended at least one professional development experience of a full day or longer during an average year; the proportion is much lower among part-timers.** These patterns are similar to those reported in research on professional development in American public schools that most teachers receive PD of short duration (less than eight hours on a topic, usually in afterschool workshops) and that, during the No Child Left Behind Era, there was an increase in this short-term approach and a decline in access to more sustained

## Exhibit 2

Proportion of Educators (Full- and Part-Time) Experiencing 8 Hours or More of PD During an Average Year



professional learning approaches.<sup>16</sup> The sectors of Jewish education differ in the frequency with which respondents participate in these more intensive forms of professional development: fewer than a third of full-timers and part-timers in early childhood education report doing so during an average year, while about three-quarters of those in the innovation and social justice sector do.

With so many Jewish educators lacking opportunities to experience intensive professional development, it is not surprising that some interviewees mentioned “exceptional”—effectively outlier—supervisors who called their attention and/or opened doors to PD opportunities, or they expressed envy of their peers outside the Jewish space where they perceive professional development to be more readily available. Here’s how a former day school teacher described it:

*I think this is a problem in Jewish education. I did a program at Brandeis a few years ago to get a certificate in teacher leadership. That’s pretty much the furthest [you can go]... well, not true... you could be an interventionist... When you see everything laid out in the public school system, and all this free PD, and some of it is online so you can do it whenever, and they encourage you to do it. It’s unbelievable! [Former Day School teacher]*

## The Continuing Reign of the One-Shot Workshop Despite Worthwhile Alternatives

**Despite decades of critique, the one-shot-workshop still reigns supreme as the most common form of professional development in Jewish education even while other modalities are quite widely employed.** Specifically, the types of PD

experiences that educators participated in most frequently during the past three years were: content-oriented workshops or lectures (79% participated), professional conferences (68%), collaborative learning projects with colleagues (55%), coaching/observation from a mentor/supervisor (49%) and reading and discussing professional literature (47%). These patterns are remarkably consistent across the various sectors and venues, with a couple of exceptions: supplementary school and early childhood educators are less likely to have experienced coaching or observation from a mentor/supervisor than those in other sectors; they’re also less likely (as are day-school teachers) to have attended a professional conference. The dominant mode of professional development in these three venues especially, as in other sectors, is undoubtedly the content-oriented workshop or lecture.

While this situation prevails, interviewees across all sectors and venues make clear what forms of professional development frontline educators most value. They highlighted how mentorship—professional development in its most personalized form—can serve as a uniquely valuable professional growth opportunity, particularly, and often primarily, for those newer to the field. In some instances, mentors served as aides to reflection and inquiry.<sup>17</sup>

*I was able to have a mentor teacher to talk with and have ideas to bounce off of, and that was a safe port I could go to if I had questions. [Day School teacher]*

In other instances, the mentor’s role seems to have been more like that of in-house advocate or champion:

*When I first came into this role, my boss was the director of leadership development, and that was the most incredible position to come into with her in place, because she automatically took on a mentor role with me. She brought*

<sup>16</sup> See, Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L., & Adamson, F. (2010).

<sup>17</sup> These are features of “effective professional development” recommended by Campbell & Malkus (2011).

*me into conversations I wouldn't have been in that gave me a broader view of the organization. She built [an] onramp in many ways to the work I'm doing now.* [Campus professional]

Interviewees call out other experiences some of which are consistent with features highlighted by the literature on “effective professional development” and some of which are not. They point to cohort experiences that fostered a sense of collegiality and collaboration, learning alongside and from fellow professionals in their sector.<sup>18</sup>

*The most meaningful PD opportunities have been thoughtfully-designed retreats or conferences. The most impactful ones have been those which have been smaller, more intimate, customized and afforded opportunities for networking and personal connection between participants.* [Social Justice/Innovation educator]

They highlight those opportunities to experiment with different pedagogic methodologies within scaffolded frameworks that allowed them “to learn in and from practice,” as Dorph puts it,<sup>19</sup> and as a congregational school interviewee described it, “to step back and reflect on the experience to better understand what participants were going through...Through professional development and coaching, I was empowered to make the best decisions for my students to accomplish the goals set forth in the curriculum.”

Focus group participants who work as early childhood educators emphasized valuing experiences that model active learning and that they can reproduce with their own learners:<sup>20</sup> “I have come to learn that PD that is hands on and gives you actual tools to work with is the best.” They value experiences that enable them to extend their pedagogic repertoires: “Meaningful good PD to me, would be out of the box activities. Things that are fresh.”

Other interviewees indicate that they also gained a lot from experiences that took them out of their workplaces and delivered distilled, ready-packed wisdom they could take back to work with them. This, as we have seen, is not a format generally recommended by the literature on sound practice in professional development.

*I have found part day conferences to be particularly effective, where we had didactic opportunities, hearing from speakers within these groups/populations and facilitated smaller group discussions. Also, somewhat shorter professional development trainings that focus on hands-on lesson planning and curriculum planning have been very useful.* [Social Justice/Innovation professional]

In terms of topics and formats, many Jewish educators seek training in areas that aren't specifically Jewish, such as pedagogy, experiential and project-based learning, social-emotional development in childhood and adolescence, and inclusion of special needs and marginalized populations. Educators value development opportunities that provide practical tools and techniques that they can readily use in the classroom. This doesn't imply that these “take-aways” are elementary or unsophisticated—a number of interviewees recounted discovering creative new curricula, lessons, or projects through professional development opportunities that they then successfully implemented with eager learners. Finally, educators appreciate being able to develop their knowledge and skills while connecting with colleagues and peers, suggesting that combining professional development with networking opportunities can offer a “multiplier effect” in terms of positive outcomes.

In their own words, Jewish educators express these preferences as follows:

18 These are features of “effective professional development” underscored by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017).

19 Dorph, G. Z. (2011).

20 These are additional features of “effective professional development” underscored by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017).

*[Give] people the opportunities for connection and support. Even if monetarily, you won't make what you'll make elsewhere, but if you're given support, whether it's a mentor, or a chance to collaborate with other teachers in your school, or your setting, and chances for PD to be able to connect with educators of that same age group in other places, [those are] resources that should not be discounted. [Day School teacher]*

*Going to a variety of different types of PD has really allowed me to figure out what works best for me. I have come to learn that PD that is hands on and gives you actual tools to work with is the best. I like to learn new and creative ways to work with children that may need "extra." By extra I mean... extra movement, extra space, extra understanding. I find that many of my colleagues... myself included need a refresher on child development and new strategies for the classroom. [Early Childhood educator]*

## The Positive Outcomes of Professional Development, for Educators

As noted above, effective professional development has been associated with positive changes in educator practices and improvements in student learning outcomes. Our dataset does not include "student" data and therefore does not provide an opportunity to connect educators' experience of professional development with outcomes exhibited by learners. **As shown below, our data do however reveal the extent to which experiences of professional development and professional support through coaching or mentoring are related to specific, desired educator outcomes: educators' feelings of self-efficacy, their commitment to their**

**organizations, their dedication to the Jewish education profession, and their overall job satisfaction.** These educator outcomes have, in turn, been associated with positive outcomes among students and young people in general.<sup>21</sup>

### Self-Efficacy

Alongside specific background characteristics (more Jewish experiences growing up and being more established in one's career) and other workplace conditions (especially greater feelings of autonomy and empowerment), **higher levels of professional self-efficacy—as expressed by survey respondents—are weakly associated with having more professional development experiences and more extensive professional networks ( $r_s = .1$ ).** The construct "self-efficacy" includes the following survey items: feeling that one is good at one's job, feeling that one's work makes a difference, being able to solve problems on the job, feeling prepared for the job, being able to set and meet professional goals, and having the requisite Jewish and general knowledge needed to succeed.

Interviewees described in their own words how such relationships function—how, that is, experiences of professional development and individualized personal support enhanced their sense of being able to fulfill their calling or simply do their work more effectively:

*I feel really lucky that I was at as synagogue and in a community that had resources to give me PD and education to be the best youth professional to help me understand what a youth director and a youth engagement professional, a mentor, an educator means. I don't feel a lot of youth professionals have these kinds of opportunities, and I'm grateful for the privilege I had working. [Informal educator]*

*The professional development/coaching allowed for us to...take a step back*

21 Klassen, R. M., & Tze, V. M. (2014); Atteberry, A., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2017); Arens, A. K., & Morin, A. J. (2016).

*and reflect on the experience to better understand what our participants would be going through. We were also shown different ways to have students engage with the material...Through professional development and coaching, I was empowered to make the best decisions for my students to accomplish the goals set forth in the curriculum.*  
[Supplementary School educator]

## Commitment to One's Organization and to the Field

Older respondents, those more established in their careers, and those with greater motivation are more loyal to their employers and committed to their organizational goals, as well as to the broader profession of Jewish education. Additionally, **commitments of these kinds are strongest among educators who have greater autonomy ( $r = .4$ ), more professional networks and support ( $r = .25$ ), and have participated in more professional development experiences ( $r = .2$ ),** as well as positive overall workplace conditions. Professional development is again positively associated with this desired outcome.

Educators' narratives nuance survey data regarding factors that increase professional commitment, emphasizing the importance of PD experiences that allow them to keep learning and growing, engage in collaborative and positive relationships with colleagues, gain support and mentoring from supervisors and others, and feeling they are valued and invested in by their organization. Interviewees recount these dimensions of professional development in the following ways:

*I really feel like when you invest in people, not just financially, though that's also important, you make that educator feel like they're part of the community, so you have them buy in that they're contribution is not just an 8-3 or 9-5 from*

*September to June. You let them know what they add to the community, and why you think they're important. These are the things we see in you and we want to strengthen those things and help you work on whatever you want to work on and improve your practice.* [Day School teacher]

*In my school we do quite a bit of professional development. Our director provides almost 24 hours over the course of the year. The larger Jewish community in my area offers several opportunities for professional development through class and community-wide conferences that happen once or twice a year. All of these opportunities refresh my thinking and give me new exciting ideas for the classroom.*  
[Early Childhood educator]

## Satisfaction

Finally, professional development is positively related to job satisfaction. In our survey analysis, job satisfaction was measured in terms of satisfaction with a mix of dimensions, including compensation, benefits, level of teamwork among colleagues, workload, physical workspace, opportunities for professional growth, and opportunities for promotion. Educators who work full time, those who were strongly motivated to enter the field, and those who are more established in their careers reported greater satisfaction scores. In addition, with respect to workplace conditions, **overall job satisfaction was most highly correlated with autonomy and teamwork ( $r = .5$ ), moderately correlated with professional support ( $r = .4$ ), and weakly correlated with the number of professional development opportunities experienced ( $r = .1$ ).**

Interview data indicate that the intrinsic rewards associated with work as an educator—the joy in seeing children and people of all ages learn and grow—are

of most help in compensating for low salaries, lack of benefits, and/or ceilings on professional advancement. Nevertheless, being given meaningful opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and participate in quality professional development, as well as being supported by supervisors and school leadership, also contributes to being happy with one's work. When so many others don't receive such support, knowing that resources are being invested in you can make a great difference to your state of mind at work.

*Professional development helps. I am all into trying to be better and better as a teacher and a person. When the school brings that in...it helps you keep growing and be happy. You feel more supported when you are given the tools to move on. [Day School teacher]*

*Being seen as a whole person, being asked questions about things I'm interested in, and not just a job description that you need to be able to step into... something that that really allowed me to thrive was actually being on a team finally, a team that felt like we're all in it together... It made me step up and grow and jump in even more than I already did... And they invested in me and my professional growth. That was so different [from my last job], where I'd had to fight for professional growth... My mental health was worse in that first job. I used to call my grandmother crying about how hard the job was. But this job was so different. Now, even in the challenging parts of this job, I'm still growing and can still thrive. [Campus professional]*

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- ▶ *Our data reveal the extent to which experiences of professional development and professional support through coaching or mentoring are related to specific, desired educator outcomes: educators' feelings of self-efficacy, their commitment to their organizations, their dedication to the Jewish education profession, and their overall job satisfaction.*
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# Implications for Practice

## Making the Available Attainable

Professional development consistently contributes to positive educator outcomes, and specifically, as we have seen, to higher levels of educator self-efficacy, career commitment, and job satisfaction. **And yet, not even half of survey respondents seem to have recently experienced professional development in its most intensive forms.**

Unlike when CIJE data were reported more than twenty years ago, it is no longer the case that there are insufficient opportunities for Jewish educators to experience high quality professional development.<sup>22</sup> The *Mapping the Market* strand of CASJE’s “Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators” study details 31 organizations offering 79 different nationally accessible professional development opportunities across the sectors of Jewish education. Case studies of strong instances of such programs have also been produced as part of the Jim Joseph Foundation’s Professional Development Initiative.<sup>23</sup> Those studies make clear how high quality professional development does not conform to just one template: it can be constituted as a one-week bootcamp comprised of participants from diverse sectors of Jewish education; it can be embedded on-site at practitioners’ own workplaces as part of a job-alike learning-cohort; and it can take the form of an extended, degree-granting program of learning. While the literature on “effective professional development” generally privileges one format over all others—that of

sustained, workplace-integrated professional learning in the company of colleagues—this is not the primary framework for professional development readily available to Jewish educators.

CIJE’s work prompted the launch of programs modeled on “consensus” principles of what constitutes effective professional development.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it is surely no coincidence that when some of the educators we interviewed described professional development experiences that had made a profound difference to their career trajectories, they called out features in their programs that meet such standards. As we have indicated, they pointed to scaffolded opportunities at their workplaces that enabled them to learn in and from practice, experiences that built their learning over time, and those that made possible collegial and collaborative learning with job-alike peers.

The challenge today is not that such programs don’t exist; as the *Mapping the Market* strand of the “Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators” study shows, a plethora of programs are available to support the professional learning and growth of Jewish educators, a point forcefully made by Yares in a recent review of the field.<sup>25</sup> Those programs may not be equally effective, and they may not all meet “consensus” standards for high-quality professional development, but more than a minority of them describe their offerings and their learning principles in ways that echo those standards (see Appendix H in *Mapping the Market*). The challenge, rather, is that most educators are still not enabled

<sup>22</sup> See, also, Dorph (2011) for vignettes of a small sample of programs.

<sup>23</sup> Cases produced by Rosov Consulting can be found here: [Sheva Center Leadership Institute; Building a Field by Bringing Theory to Practice: M2’s “The Architecture of Immersive Experiences; Forged by Jewish Historical Experience: The Study of Jewish History as a Crucible for Jewish Professional Learning.](#)

<sup>24</sup> Dorph, G. Z. (2011).

<sup>25</sup> Yares, L. (2019).

or encouraged to access these experiences. In fact, educators today seem to have less opportunity to do so than even 10 years ago, compared with findings from EJSS.

**The case for professional development need not be rooted in arguments about remediation or the need to overhaul a poorly prepared workforce; our data shows that Jewish educators lack access to high quality professional learning and the collateral benefits associated with these experiences.** And today this case is no longer of importance only to schools (day schools, supplementary schools and early childhood centers), it relates to all of the sectors and settings in which Jewish education takes place.

We believe there are grounds for optimism. The last efflorescence of attention to professional development in Jewish education gave birth to new practices and programs. Renewed attention to this field can result in a further positive shift. The need today is not to create more programs or to develop new paradigms; it is to enable greater numbers of Jewish educators to participate in experiences that will enable them to grow, that will encourage them to commit their futures to their field, and ultimately benefit those they educate. There is evidence now of how experiences of quality professional development in Jewish education are associated with highly desirable outcomes among Jewish educators.

## Questions for Discussion or Further Exploration

### For Practitioners

- What professional development experiences made the greatest difference to your job satisfaction, sense of efficacy, and career commitment? What features of these programs contributed to those outcomes?

- What actions can you take to increase your access to more, and more intense forms, of professional development?

### For Institutional Leaders

- What positive outcomes associated with professional development are of most interest to you? What programs that you're aware of provide opportunities to realize these outcomes?
- What are the most cost-effective ways of increasing opportunities for your staff to experience intense forms of high-quality professional development? What trade-offs would be needed to increase the availability of such opportunities?
- How can you better articulate the benefits of professional development to attract funding for these purposes?

### For Policy Makers and Funders

- What steps can you take to enable more practitioners to access intense forms of high-quality professional development?

### For Researchers

- A great deal of research has already established the contribution of high-quality professional development to educators' efficacy and commitment. As we have indicated, this research is confirmed in large part by our study of the career trajectories of Jewish educators. What now might research, specifically focusing on professional development in Jewish settings and with Jewish educators, contribute?
- While concerned primarily with the career trajectories of Jewish educators, this study has documented the professional development experiences of Jewish educators who work in a wide variety of sectors besides those that are school based. What more can be learned through concentrated attention on professional development in these other sectors for Jewish education?

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