

Research Brief | #4

Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators in the United States

Compensation: The Salaries and Benefits of Jewish Educators



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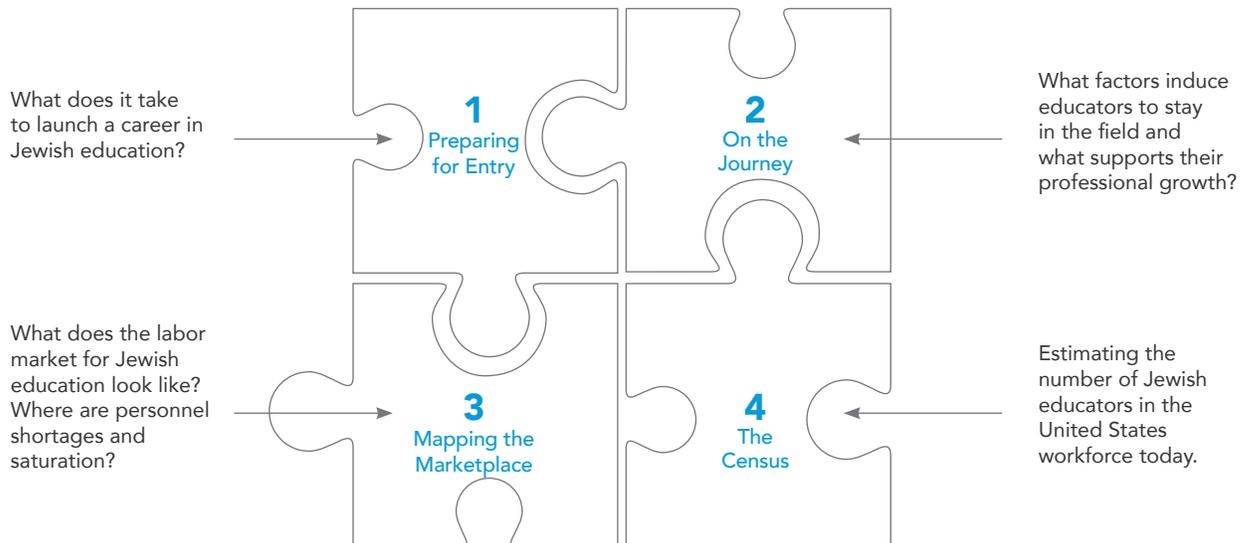
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About this Report

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 fourth of 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

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.

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Summary

Decades of research have demonstrated that compensation is an important factor in discussions about recruiting and retaining educators. This brief, based on data collected from almost 1,300 North American Jewish educators as part of CASJE's *On the Journey* study, explores educator salary and benefits and how these relate to educators' commitments to the field.

Key findings from this sample of Jewish educators include:

- While the mean salary for all full-time respondents is around \$63,000, there are significant patterns of variation among subgroups. For example, the mean salary of full-time supplemental school educators is more than \$70,000 while that of full-time early childhood educators is \$40,000.
- On average, female respondents continue to be paid less than their male peers.
- Early childhood education continues to lag in salary and benefits.
- Respondents with higher salaries have positions that add administrative work to their teaching.
- While a majority of full-time respondents report receiving paid vacation and medical insurance benefits, there are still many others (approximately one-third of these respondents) who report that they do not receive these benefits.
- While overall, compensation does not have a strong relationship with career commitment, those who have left the field or are strongly considering doing so cite salary and benefits as major factors in their decision.

Central Research Questions

The primary questions animating this brief are:

- What financial and other benefits do educators receive?
- To what extent are they satisfied/dissatisfied with their compensation?
- How do they believe their compensation compares to others in their field and in similar fields?
- How do compensation, benefits, and other financial concerns drive job and career choices and perceived options within the field?



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 fifty-two survey respondents and an additional twenty 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) organizations involved in engagement, social justice, and innovation (e.g., Jewish Studio Project, Moishe House, OneTable); (4) communal institutions that may employ someone in an educational 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 the 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 educators, and 10% in innovation/social justice organizations, federated institutions, or working as independent educators. All respondents had been in the field between six and thirty years.

For the analyses in this brief, we include the 725 respondents working full time, as defined by working thirty-five hours or more per week in a Jewish educational setting (unless otherwise indicated), and the 367 working part time (fewer than thirty-five hours per week).¹ The distribution of respondents by sector and venue groups is shown in Exhibit 1, which also indicates the number of full-time and part-time respondents as a percentage of the total number of respondents in that sector/venue. Not surprisingly, a lower rate of full-time educators was found in the supplemental school sample, early childhood education sample, and among independent educators who responded to the survey.

The 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, response rates, and instrumentation can be found in "**On the Journey: Study**

¹ 186 respondents did not provide information about the number of hours they work per week.

Exhibit 1

Number of Respondents for Sector and Venue Groups, Full-Time and Part-Time Respondents

	Number of Full-Time Respondents	Percent of All Respondents in Sector/Venue Who Are Full Time	Number of Part-Time Respondents	Percent of All Respondents in Sector/Venue Who Are Part Time
Sector 1: Day School Venue	319	77%	96	23%
Sector 1: Supplemental School Venue	125	53%	112	47%
Sector 1: Early Childhood Education Venue	89	48%	97	52%
Sector 2: Informal/Experiential Education	95	82%	21	18%
Sector 3: Innovation and Social Justice	37	86%	6	14%
Sector 4: Communal Educators	25	86%	4	14%
Sector 5: Independent Educators	25	48%	27	52%
Other/Missing	10		4	
Total	725		367	

Methodology and Data Collection

Instruments.” We note that the results reported come from a limited sample of self-reported data. We cannot be sure of the extent to which the data reported here are

representative of their communities or Jewish educators in other communities. Therefore, our results are meant to be suggestive of trends but not generalizable.

- ▶ *Not surprisingly, a lower rate of full-time educators was found in the supplemental school sample, early childhood education sample, and among independent educators who responded to the survey.*



Background

Why and How Compensation Matter

Educator pay and compensation are variables that loom large both in decisions about whether to stay in an educational position or career over time and in perspectives on overall job satisfaction. The general education literature reports consistent findings on the relationship between salary and attrition spanning at least back to the early 1980s.² However, the literature says relatively little about the role of financial compensation in the professional trajectory of Jewish educators. Not surprisingly, the little data that exist on Jewish educators (e.g., Educators in Jewish Schools Study) are consistent with their peers in general education in emphasizing the important role that compensation plays in career decisions.

Of course, questions of whether to enter or leave a field are unlikely to hinge on a single variable. When entering a field, an educator may be willing to accept relatively poor compensation in exchange for the

intrinsic rewards that teaching offers.³ In fields such as religious education, a sense of mission can provide a counterbalance to the negative effects of low compensation,⁴ providing such schools with the ability to retain qualified teachers even with low rates of compensation. The sense of mission experienced by religious educators may counteract the negative impact of lower salaries.⁵ Nevertheless, the centrality of compensation cannot be ignored. Results such as these have the potential to justify salary inadequacies for Jewish educators.

► *When entering a field, an educator may be willing to accept relatively poor compensation in exchange for the intrinsic rewards that teaching offers*

2 Borman et al., 2008; Hughes, 2012; Pham et al., 2020; Spring & Taylor, 2021.

3 See Johnson & Birkeland, 2004.

4 See Kress & Ben Avi, 2006; O'Keefe, 2003; Pomson, 2005; Przygocki, 2004.

5 Kress & Ben Avi, 2006; Przygocki, 2004.



The Salaries and Benefits of Jewish Educators

The following sections report on the salaries and benefits received by Jewish educators working in all five sectors (formal education, informal/experiential education, innovation and social justice, communal institutions, and independent/online learning).

Overall Salary Findings

Exhibits 2 and 3 present the frequency of salary ranges for full-time employees in the

formal education sector (i.e., sector 1, which includes day school, supplemental school, and early childhood education venues) as well as the other sectors.

Exhibit 2
Salaries for Full-Time Educators, Sector 1 (Formal Education)

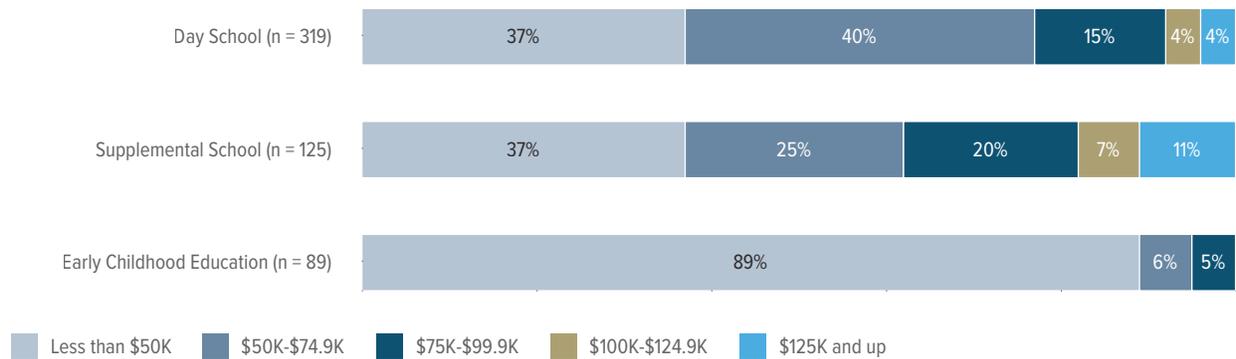
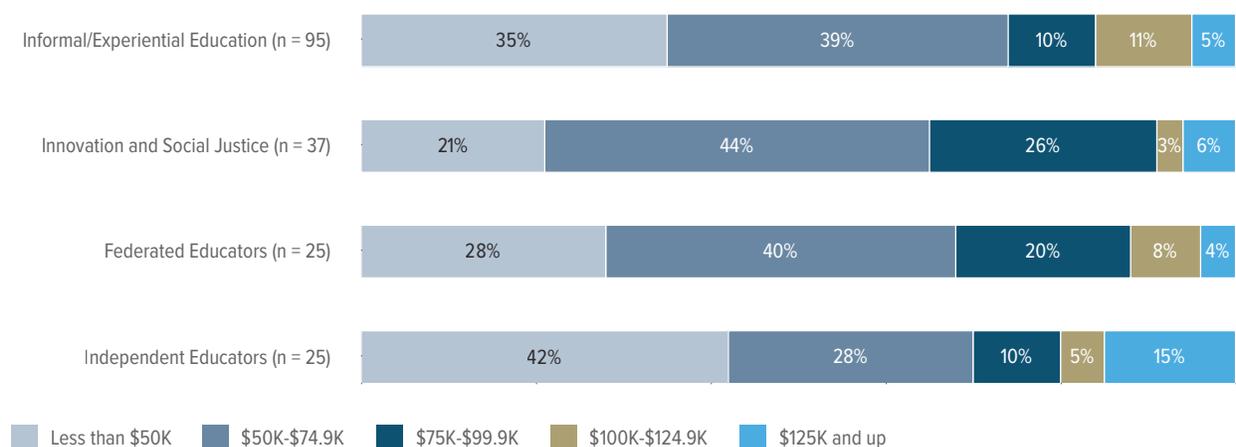


Exhibit 3
Salaries for Full-Time Educators, Sectors 2–5



Exhibits 4 and 5 present the frequency of salary ranges for part-time employees in the formal education sector (sector 1, includes day school, supplemental school, and early childhood education) as well as the other sectors.

Mean and median salary estimates for both full-time and part-time educators were obtained using the midpoints of the ranges shown in Exhibits 2 through 5. Mean and median estimates are shown in Exhibit 6.

While the median salary of all full-time Jewish educators surveyed is \$63,000, and for all part-time Jewish educators is \$25,500, there is a range across sectors/venues that we will discuss below.

Exhibit 4 Salaries for Part-Time Educators, Sector 1 (Formal Education)

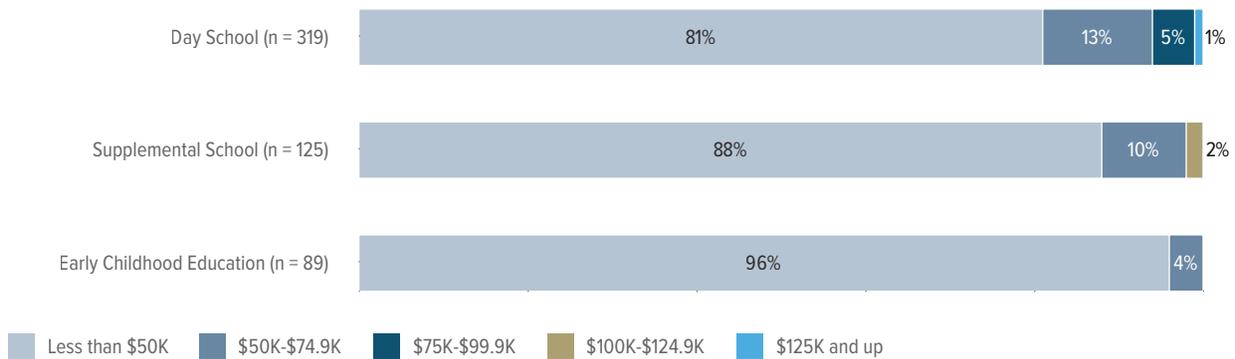


Exhibit 5 Salaries for Part-Time Educators, Sectors 2-5

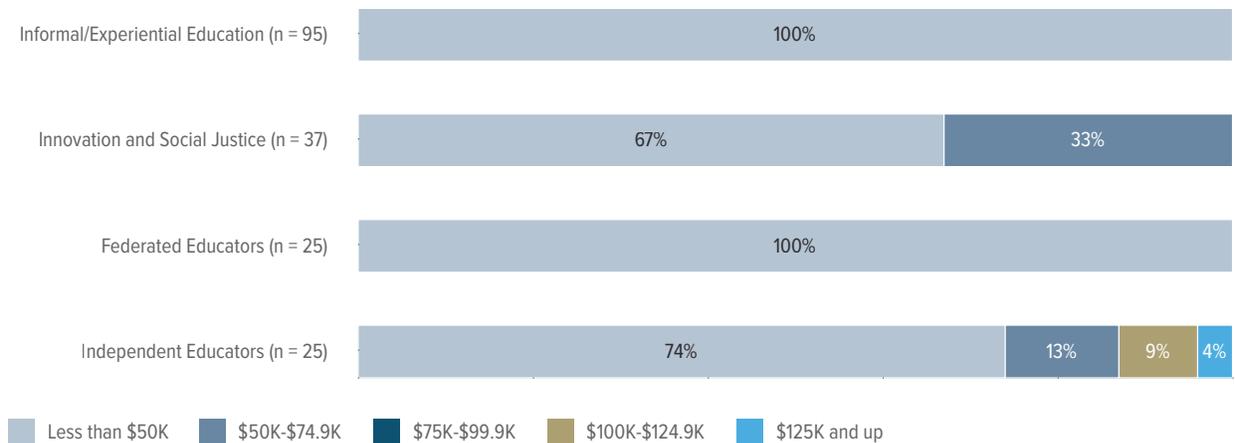


Exhibit 6 Educator Salaries by Sector

	Mean for All Educators	Median for All Educators	Mean for Full-Time Educators	Median for Full-Time Educators	Mean for Part-Time Educators	Median for Part-Time Educators
Day School	\$55,000	\$63,000	\$62,500	\$58,500	\$41,000	\$36,000
Supplemental School	\$52,000	\$37,500	\$72,500	\$63,500	\$34,000	\$15,000
Early Childhood Education	\$34,000	\$37,500	\$40,000	\$37,000	\$30,000	\$12,000
Informal Education	\$53,000	\$37,500	\$66,000	\$59,500	\$32,000	\$28,000
Innovation and Social Justice	\$61,000	\$63,000	\$70,000	\$66,500	\$40,000	\$25,000
Communal Institutions	\$60,000	\$63,000	\$67,500	\$70,000	\$37,500	\$37,500
Independent Educators	\$57,000	\$38,000	\$71,000	\$54,000	\$47,000	\$34,500
All Sectors/Venues	\$51,000	\$38,000	\$63,000	\$56,000	\$36,000	\$25,500

Overall Benefits Findings

Turning to benefits received by Jewish educators in Sectors 1–4 (Sector 5, which represents independent educators, does not apply here), the most common benefits received by full-time educators in our sample are paid vacation (65%), medical insurance (62%), retirement plans (48%), and dental insurance (47%). Few part-time respondents receive benefits; the most common is paid vacation, received by 31%. Nine percent (9%) of full-time and 40% of part-time educators report not receiving any financial benefits at all. See Exhibit 7 for full-time benefits received and Exhibit 8 for part-time benefits received.

Exhibit 7 Benefits Received by Full-Time Educators, Sectors 1–4

	All Full-Time Educators	Sector 1			Sector 2	Sector 3	Sector 4
		Day School	Supplemental School	Early Childhood	Informal/ Experiential	Innovation/ Social Justice	Communal Institutions
Paid vacation	65%	59%	53%	65%	86%	84%	100%
Medical insurance/ health care	62%	65%	39%	52%	77%	76%	92%
Dental insurance	47%	53%	23%	33%	60%	65%	84%
Retirement plan [401(k), 403(b)]	48%	56%	29%	28%	55%	49%	88%
Vision insurance	36%	38%	16%	26%	43%	54%	88%
Professional development stipend	38%	31%	46%	24%	51%	43%	72%
Life insurance	28%	28%	13%	24%	33%	38%	68%
Reduced/free tuition for children at school	32%	41%	25%	19%	35%	11%	24%
Short- or long-term disability	27%	29%	19%	12%	36%	24%	52%
Ability to work from home	22%	4%	43%	0%	43%	76%	68%
Paid family leave	18%	13%	21%	11%	25%	35%	56%
Reduced/free congregational membership	16%	5%	36%	20%	22%	8%	4%
Reduced/free program fees	16%	6%	32%	11%	35%	11%	16%
Flex time	15%	6%	20%	3%	27%	43%	44%
None of the above	9%	5%	27%	10%	1%	3%	0%

Exhibit 8
Benefits Received by Part-Time Educators, Sectors 1–2⁶

	All Part-Time Educators	Sector 1			Sector 2
		Day School	Supplemental School	Early Childhood	Informal/Experiential
Paid vacation	31%	53%	14%	30%	19%
Medical insurance/health care	15%	27%	3%	14%	29%
Dental insurance	10%	18%	2%	7%	29%
Retirement plan [401(k), 403(b)]	12%	22%	4%	10%	29%
Vision insurance	9%	17%	1%	6%	19%
Professional development stipend	18%	22%	15%	17%	24%
Life insurance	9%	18%	4%	6%	19%
Reduced/free tuition for children at school	18%	31%	15%	11%	24%
Short- or long-term disability	6%	15%	1%	2%	10%
Ability to work from home	7%	4%	8%	0%	14%
Paid family leave	4%	7%	3%	3%	5%
Reduced/free congregational membership	10%	3%	15%	10%	24%
Reduced/free program fees	8%	7%	8%	7%	19%
Flex time	7%	7%	7%	2%	10%
None of the above	40%	15%	66%	39%	33%

⁶ As per Exhibit 1, there were too few part-time respondents in Sectors 3 and 4 to include here.

Day School and Early Childhood Compensation are Essentially Stagnant

Placing the current findings in context, it is instructive to look at comparative data, both historical and contemporary. The 1998 Teachers Report of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE) focused on day school and supplemental school teachers, including both full-time and part-time educators.⁷ For day school teachers, the mean salary in Torah U'Mesorah (Orthodox) and Solomon Schechter (Conservative) schools was approximately \$19,000, or \$30,000 in today's dollars.⁸ In the Educators in Jewish School Study (EJSS), which reported data collected in 2006, 22% of full-time day school educators reported salaries in the \$40,000–\$49,000 range, with 47% in higher ranges and 32% in lower ranges. Using these salary ranges, the mean full-time day school educator salary for EJSS respondents can be estimated to be approximately \$49,000. Adjusting for the Consumer Price Index, the EJSS day school educators would be making approximately \$63,000 in today's dollars.

The 2019 Leading Edge Employee Experience Survey indicates that the most frequent range of salaries for day school educators is \$50,000–\$59,999, with a mean of approximately \$54,900.⁹ However, this sample included a substantial number of part-time employees and those with purely administrative positions (the latter are not included in the On the Journey sample).

Looking beyond the Jewish context, the National Center for Educational Statistics reports that the average base salary for full-time independent school teachers in 2011–2012 was \$40,200, though this includes only those with “frontline” (teaching-only) jobs.¹⁰

Within our sample, those with teaching-only positions make approximately \$59,000, suggesting that Jewish day school teachers are paid at a higher scale than independent school teachers overall. The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that public school teachers were paid an average of \$61,730 (in 2018–2019), on par with Jewish educators. Adjusting for the value of the dollar, the wages of public school educators are also stagnant (and even a bit lower) compared to those of the past two decades.¹¹ Looking at our sample, these comparisons suggest that, adjusting for inflation, day school educator salaries have not increased over the past fifteen years.

Comparisons with other data sources must be accompanied by several caveats. Our sample excludes educators in the earliest and latest career stages (assumedly making the bottom and top salaries). The comparative data sources do not make this distinction, and it cannot be assumed that the lack of both extremes in our sample would provide adequate balance. In addition, some of the comparative data include both part-time and full-time employees. In these cases, we provide information for comparison from full- and part-time educators in our sample. Comparisons of benefits is particularly tricky, as there are often nuances within categories (for example, we may know that health insurance is offered but not know what, if any, is the employer's contribution).

Comparisons to educators in other sectors are more difficult to come by. The EJSS data for supplemental school educators is not reported in a way that allows for comparison. The Leading Edge survey allows comparisons for early childhood educators and informal educators. For early childhood, the most frequent salary range was less than \$20,000, with a mean of approximately \$32,000. For informal educators, the most frequent salary range was \$40,000–\$49,000, with a mean of

7 Gamoran et al., 1998.

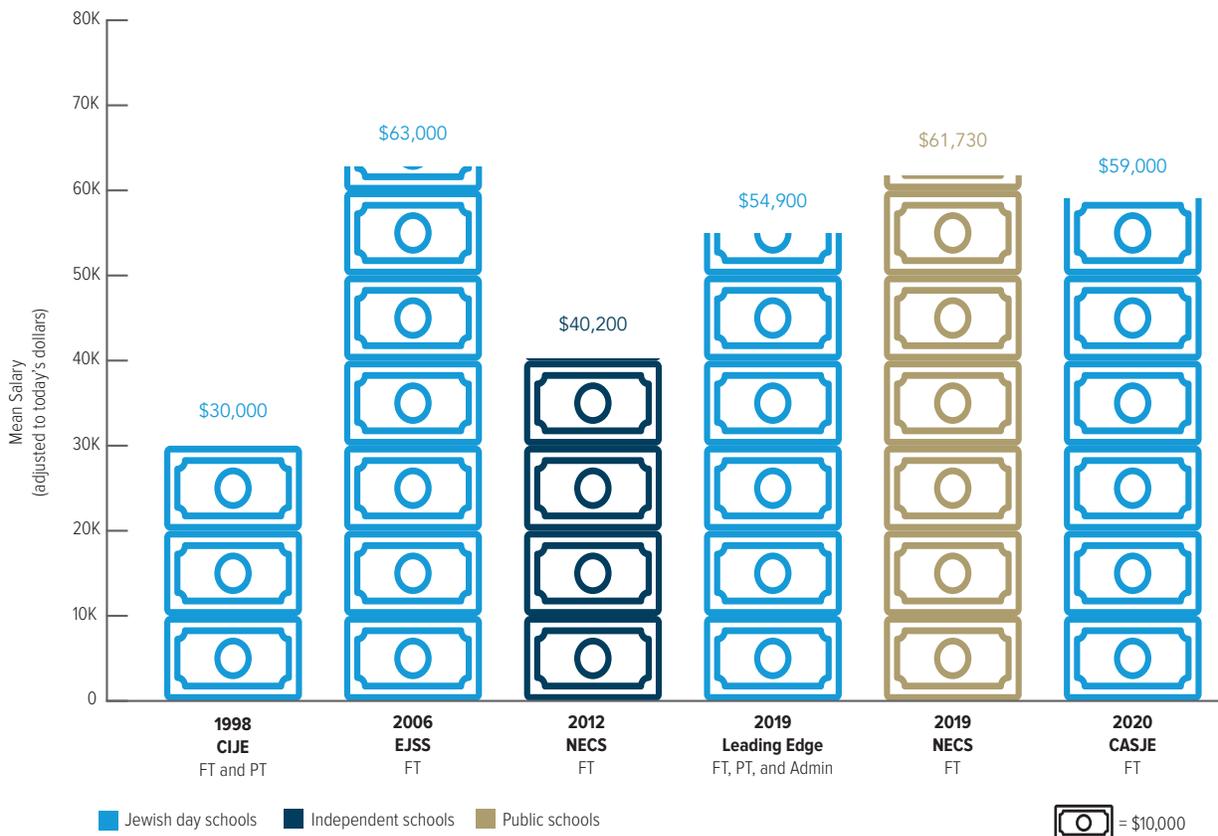
8 The salary of teachers in “Other Jewish” day schools was approximately \$16,000.

9 Leading Edge, 2019.

10 National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, 2016.

11 National Center for Education Statistics, 2019.

Exhibit 9 Compensation Over Time — Comparisons of Salaries Across Educational Contexts



approximately \$40,000. In the Leading Edge survey, however, early childhood and informal educator numbers include large numbers of part-time educators.

In terms of benefits, some comparative data are available for full-time educators. Full-time respondents to the CIJE survey (representing the day school, supplemental school, and early childhood venues) indicate that 48% received health benefits and 45% received a pension. For full-time EJSS respondents (day school and supplemental school combined), 48% received health benefits and 49% received retirement benefits. While venue-by-venue comparisons are not possible (due to the overwhelming number of part-time educators in the CIJE and EJSS samples), there are indications that benefits

for supplemental school and early childhood educators remain low.

Outside of the Jewish context, additional information is available for early childhood educators. McClean, Whitebook, and Roh reported that for 2017 the full-time equivalent early childhood educator mean salary was approximately \$22,000, though this includes extrapolations from part-time educators.¹² The US Department of Education found the 2015 mean salary to be approximately \$29,000, though this too included part-time educators. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a 2020 median salary in 2020 of approximately \$32,000, but it is unclear if their sample included only full-time educators.¹³ For comparison's sake, when both part- and full-time educators are included in the analyses,

¹² McClean, Whitebook, and Roh, 2019.

¹³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021.

the mean salary for early childhood educators in our sample is \$34,000. Again, caution is needed in making comparisons, because the relative proportion of full- to part-time employees in the comparative samples is not accounted.¹⁴

Comparisons for the informal education category are further complicated by the diversity of venues that fall under this heading. The Leading Edge (2019) survey found the median salary to be \$48,000. The JCC Association of North America reports that those with the title “Jewish Educator” earn an average of \$55,500, while Youth Directors make between \$41,4000 and \$47,400, depending on the age of the youth with whom they work. JCC Early Childhood Lead Teachers’ average salary is \$32,700. The American Camp Association reports that camp directors (who would have been screened out of our sample if they do not perform frontline

duties), receive a median salary of \$60,000; salaries for directors of “religious” camps are \$51,000.¹⁵ For associate/assistant directors, the median salary is \$48,000. For all camps, nearly all directors and associate/assistant directors received paid vacation, while close to 90% received health insurance.¹⁶ In 2019, “Youth Ministers” earned an average of \$34,200, though the sample includes part-time employees, and salaries vary widely by denomination; 49% received health benefits.¹⁷

Jewish Educators are Generally Dissatisfied with Salary and Benefits

Salary and benefits rank toward the bottom of respondents’ reported levels of satisfaction with various job components. As shown in Exhibits 10 and 11, only 11% are “very satisfied” with their salary, and 33% are

Exhibit 10
Satisfaction with Salary, Sectors 1–2 (n = 928)

	Overall	Day School	Supplemental School	Early Childhood	Informal/Experiential
Somewhat satisfied	33%	30%	33%	26%	38%
Very satisfied	11%	12%	13%	10%	11%

Exhibit 11
Satisfaction with Benefits, Sectors 1–2 (n = 742)

	Overall	Day School	Supplemental School	Early Childhood	Informal/Experiential
Somewhat satisfied	20%	31%	12%	18%	30%
Very satisfied	25%	20%	19%	19%	22%

14 Vogelstein and Kaplan (2002) put ECE “full-time teacher” salaries at \$19,400, or roughly \$28,300 in 2020 dollars. One might conclude that gains were made; however Vogelstein and Kaplan’s numbers are for “10 month contracts,” and our data included salaries in year-round (12 months) settings. More importantly, our sample includes around 20% of “mixed role” individuals (with both administrative and teaching responsibilities, while Vogelstein and Kaplan’s include about 2%, which likely accounts for the salary differential. As such, our data suggest that ECE salaries have remained essentially stagnant over time.

15 The inclusion of private, for-profit camps brought up the overall average.

16 JCC Association of North America, 2018.

17 Lawrence, 2019.

“somewhat satisfied;”¹⁸ for benefits, these numbers are 25% and 20%, respectively.¹⁹

Those full-time respondents who are the primary breadwinners²⁰ in their household report higher compensation and greater satisfaction with their compensation at statistically significant levels.²¹ No statistically significant differences were found in the number of, or satisfaction with, the number of benefits received by those who are primary breadwinners and those who are not.

Supplemental school educators are statistically significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with their benefits than either day school or informal educators. Informal educators, in contrast, receive statistically significantly more benefits than any other group. Statistically significantly higher salaries were reported by those working in the field for a longer time, though the time spent and one’s current organization was not statistically significantly related (possibly because people will enter organizations at different pay levels and points in their careers). Satisfaction with one’s pay was not statistically related to the length of time working in the field.

For Full-Time Educators, Salary Lags for those with Teaching-Only Responsibilities, Women, and those in Early Childhood

Teaching-Only vs. Mixed Role Differences

Not surprisingly, those with roles that include administrative/supervisory work in addition to teaching report statistically significantly higher salaries than those without an administrative/supervisory component to their work.²² These differences can be quite pronounced (see Exhibit 12).

In supplemental school and informal education, the mixed-role group receives a statistically significantly higher number of benefits than did those with teaching-only jobs. Exhibit 13 provides a more detailed breakdown of the four most common benefits for each role by sector/venue. Again, stark differences are apparent, particularly for

Exhibit 12
Mean Difference in Compensation for Those with Mixed Roles and Those with Teaching-Only Roles, By Venue

Day School	+ \$21,800
Supplemental School	+ \$17,000
Early Childhood Education	+ \$12,700
Informal/Experiential Education	+ \$34,700

18 These findings are consistent with those of the Leading Edge (2019) survey, which reported that only 40% of respondents feel that they are “fairly compensated for the work I do.” For day school educators responding to the EJSS (2006) study, only approximately 25% of respondents reported that “There are opportunities for me to develop an economically rewarding professional career.” However, differences between our sample and EJSS samples make comparisons less meaningful, as noted previously.

19 Numbers of respondents in Sectors 3 and 4 were too small to include in Exhibits 7 and 8.

20 Note that breadwinners are disproportionately male but are represented equally across sectors and have been in the Jewish workforce for a comparable number of years as non-breadwinners.

21 Here and throughout the document, all statistical differences reported are at the $p < .05$ level or lower.

22 The proportion of respondents in each role varied by sector/venue. Those with teaching-only roles accounted for 83% of day school respondents, 50% of supplemental school, 81% of early childhood educators, and 39% of informal/experiential educators. Sectors 3–5 are omitted due to small numbers of respondents.

Exhibit 13

Benefits for Teaching-Only and Mixed-Roles by Sector/Venue

	Day School		Supplemental School		Early Childhood Education		Informal/Experiential		Overall	
	Teaching	Mixed	Teaching	Mixed	Teaching	Mixed	Teaching	Mixed	Teaching	Mixed
Paid vacation	57%	68%	21%	84%	60%	81%	81%	90%	56%	83%
Medical insurance/health care	65%	64%	15%	62%	53%	50%	70%	81%	57%	70%
Dental insurance	54%	49%	10%	35%	39%	13%	57%	63%	46%	50%
Retirement plan [401(k), 403(b)]	56%	56%	8%	49%	29%	31%	49%	60%	45%	54%
No benefits	5%	6%	49%	5%	11%	6%	0	2%	11%	4%

supplemental school educators. No statistically significant differences were found in satisfaction with salary or benefits based on the nature of the respondent’s role.

Gender Differences

We examined gender differences and found that, overall, men in our sample are more highly paid than women at statistically significant levels (see Exhibit 14). This is consistent with findings from the Leading Edge survey. In our sample, the statistically significant gender difference was present for day school, supplemental school, and informal education (in early childhood, only one male respondent was included, so no analyses were run for gender), and for both teacher-only and mixed roles. In supplemental school only, male respondents were statistically significantly more satisfied with their compensation than were female respondents. No gender statistically significant differences were found for the number of benefits or the reported satisfaction with benefits.

We also looked at the intersection of role and gender. For day school respondents, statistically significant gender differences in compensation level were found only for teachers. No statistically significant salary differences were found for gender

Exhibit 14

Mean and Median Salary, Full-Time Employees, by Gender, Overall Sample

	Mean	Median
Male	\$82,900	\$76,000
Female	\$57,800	\$51,500

for those in day schools with mixed roles. For supplemental school and informal/experiential educators, men were paid higher than women regardless of the nature of their work (teaching or mixed roles) at statistically significant levels. (Again, early childhood education was excluded due to small numbers of men.)

Early Childhood Differences

Although no statistically significant differences were found between the number of benefits received by educators at supplemental schools and day schools, early childhood educators received statistically significantly fewer benefits than either of those. While satisfaction with one’s salary did not statistically vary among sectors, within formal education, early childhood educators were significantly less satisfied than either day school or supplemental school teachers.

Early childhood salaries were statistically significantly lower than those in all other groups. In addition, supplemental school salaries were found to be statistically significantly higher than those of day school educators. Informal educators were compensated at a rate between that of, but not statistically different from, supplemental school and day school educators. The relatively high levels of compensation for full-time supplemental school and informal educators can be explained by the fact that large proportions of the full-time educators in these setting have jobs that include some administrative work.²³

Community Size

There are no statistically significant differences in our sample for salary and benefits based on community size. Educators in large communities are more satisfied with their benefits than those in extra-large communities and are more satisfied with their benefits than those in either extra-large or medium communities, all at statistically significant levels. Community-by-community information is reported in Exhibit 15. Since the response rates vary widely among communities,

however, inferences that can be drawn from these judgments are limited. San Francisco has the highest mean salary, followed by Nassau-Westchester and Boston. Austin, Las Vegas, and Miami-Dade have the lowest mean salary. When cost of living adjustments are taken into account, the salaries cluster more tightly, as shown in Exhibit 15.

A Complicated Relationship Between Compensation and Retention

Satisfaction with one’s salary and benefits (but not actual salary and number of benefits) was positively related (at statistically significant levels) to one’s commitment to remain in Jewish education. When taken together with other variables as part of regression analyses, neither salary nor the number of benefits are statistically related to satisfaction, career commitment, and sense of self-efficacy.

Among the small number of respondents (21) who said they were considering leaving the field, compensation was by far the most frequent reason given for wanting

Exhibit 15 Mean Salary by Community, Adjusted for Cost of Living		
	Mean	Adjusted
Austin	\$57,000	\$89,500
Boston	\$72,500	\$81,500
Chicago	\$64,000	\$78,500
Detroit	\$56,500	\$81,500
Miami-Dade	\$53,000	\$68,000
Nassau-Westchester	\$72,500	\$72,500 ²³
San Francisco	\$79,000	\$85,500
Las Vegas	\$52,500	\$76,000

23 Half of full-time informal respondents have jobs that include both frontline and administrative work, as do 42% of supplemental school respondents. In contrast, in both the day school and ECE categories, only 14% of full-time respondents have administrative duties.

24 Note that the adjustment was calculated using a cost of living indexed to New York City. Because the New York sites in the sample were from outside of the five boroughs, it is likely that the standardized number, which was calculated using a figure that included the five boroughs, would be considerably higher if cost of living information were available for the New York City region outside of the five boroughs.

to do so (52% selected this as the main reason). Compensation was also the most common reason for wanting to leave one's organization, selected by 39% of the thirty-nine respondents who were considering this.

In interviews, educators provided illuminating details about how salary and benefits contribute to their overall job satisfaction and feelings of professional self-worth. As a number explained, they have no illusions about compensation in the field and certainly didn't choose to become Jewish educators for material gain. Consistent with findings in both general²⁵ and Jewish education,²⁶ concerns about compensation may be counterbalanced by a sense of mission or favorable workplace conditions.

However, the pay levels not only leave some struggling financially (especially part-time employees, many of whom limit their hours by necessity and not by choice), they also send a message to educators that they are not respected by their organizations and communities. Jewish educators are aware that their peers in other fields and in public education are better compensated. Some mentioned that they believe compensation in other private schools may be lower, but that other private schools often offer better working conditions or other benefits that make up for this, including more time off, more flexible schedules, and/or more quality professional development. These perceptions are compounded by the lack of transparency in many organizations regarding salary decisions, which can leave educators feeling even more dissatisfied as they wonder why they aren't prioritized as highly as their colleagues (or a new school auditorium).

While many Jewish educators are willing to accept low compensation in exchange for passion-inspired work, decisions about remaining in a specific job or in field more generally are also influenced by factors such as the cost of living in their region, the extent to which they are the sole or main

breadwinner of their families, and the lack of adequate benefits in their organizations. Several interviewees said that they would be more likely to remain if they had professional development and/or benefits equal to those of public school teachers, particularly healthcare and childcare, two of the expenses that burden Jewish educators the most. Male educators may be less willing to accept low pay in their organizations or the field in general. Overall, it seems that low compensation in itself is not usually the sole deciding factor for remaining or leaving, but when other factors interfere with the intrinsic rewards of the work—such as a toxic boss or a general feeling of exploitation in a position—the pay becomes less tolerable (for more on this, see “Workplace Environments” brief). Finally, younger educators who do not yet have families express both a desire to stay in the field and some serious doubts about whether it is possible to do so and also get married and have children. When faced with the inadequacy of one's salary to cover the high cost of day care or Jewish schooling, having a child can become a “breaking point” when those whose commitments are wavering decide to leave the field for good.

Three representative excerpts from interviews are included here:

Full time in Jewish education is not a bad living, but not great. What I get is flexibility. We offer vacation, but not benefits because it's not full time ... [and they are] expecting you have a spouse offering that. But the flexibility is there. So if you can't pay the money, offer the other incentives. [Innovation/Social Justice educator]

I'm incredibly dedicated to Jewish ed, if I wasn't, I'd be out of here. I just got this promotion, an increased responsibility, and I got my contract, and it is exactly the same as last year. I thought it was a mistake, but they said they just didn't have the funds. And of course, I said, ok,

25 See Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Liu et al., 2004.

26 Kress & Ben Avi, 2006.

I'll accept that. But it's a blow to hear from other people. [Day School teacher]

The only reason I hadn't considered [Jewish education] as a career is because I didn't think I could live a comfortable life. I need to be able to pay my kids yeshivah tuitions, give them bar mitzvahs. You don't need to be crazy rich to live in the community, but what you need is not a small number. There are so many people who would love [to work in Jewish education] but wonder how they would pay the mortgage. [Informal educator]

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- ▶ *Consistent with findings in both general and Jewish education, concerns about compensation may be counterbalanced by a sense of mission or favorable workplace conditions.*
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Implications for the Field

Many of these findings reinforce the adage that “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” The broadest implication of these findings is that despite decades of concern about compensation in Jewish education, little has changed. This is particularly true in early childhood education, where the mean salary for full-time educators remains at just \$40,000. In all venues, taking on administrative duties opens the door to somewhat higher salaries and improved benefits. However, this means that those educators with the most experience will have strong incentive to reduce their direct contact with learners.

In our sample, day school educator salaries continue to stagnate. In terms of “actual” (adjusted) dollars, these educators are making approximately the same as they did a decade ago. These educators, however, do seem to be better compensated than independent school teachers in general.²⁷ Early childhood educators’ compensation continues to lag behind that in other sectors. Likewise, though the gender gap in compensation has been previously documented, and has gotten even more attention in recent years, women still are paid less on average than men.

Stagnant wages are of particular concern given the current economic context. Issues such as student debt and tuition costs for colleges and private schools have become part of a national debate. The trend toward increasing wealth over the course of generations has ended; millennial Jews are, in general, less wealthy than their parents. Jewish educators can be hit from both sides, paying off the debts accrued in achieving the degree of education needed for their work and at the same time providing a rich—and expensive—Jewish life and education for their own families.

This brief is being written over a year into the onset of seismic societal shifts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there are data still emerging about the impact of the pandemic on staffing patterns of Jewish educational settings, early trends suggest that, with the possible exclusion of day schools, trends will move toward leaner programs, with the overall number of staff reduced.²⁸ At the same time, the demand for both physical and mental healthcare is rising as a result of the pandemic, adding urgency to the issue of health benefits. The persistence of the gender gap in wages is another problematic instance of a perennial and pervasive problem. The past several years have brought renewed attention to this issue, with studies continuing to document the gender-based wage gap.²⁹ In an effort to promote salary transparency, hundreds of Jewish communal professionals (anonymously) shared their compensation information on a public spreadsheet.³⁰ Our results confirm the continued urgency of addressing this issue.

At the same time, there are some areas of strength suggested by these findings. The past decade has seen efforts to professionalize work in supplemental and informal education. This has included the development of positions that allow for full-time employment in venues generally characterized by large numbers of part-time educators. Our findings suggest that a full-time job in these areas is as financially plausible as it is in the day school venue (though we admit this sets a low bar). We can speculate that the relatively strong positions of supplemental school and informal educators are related to communal/systemic interventions that have taken place over the past decade or so. In supplemental schools, efforts have been made to increase the number of full-time positions. Informal

27 National Center for Education Statistics, 2012.

28 Rosov Consulting, 2020; Wertheimer & Pomson, 2021.

29 See Epstein & Jacobs, 2019.

30 Klebe et al., 2020.

education has been the target of funding initiatives and both in-service and pre-service training. Our data suggest that career pathways in these areas are at least as strong (in terms of compensation) as those in other arenas of Jewish education. However, when it comes to benefits, supplemental school educators lag.

The association of salary and retention remains ambiguous. When taken in conjunction with other variables, the role of compensation in decisions about whether or not to remain in the field may loom large psychologically (as is apparent in the narratives provided in interviews) but not statistically. This discrepancy may be explained, in part, by the nature of the sample. This sample includes those who have been in the field for at least five years. It is possible that these respondents have come to terms with the low salary within the context of other, more positive, aspects of their work. Also, it is possible that those most dissatisfied with their compensation already left the field and, therefore, would appear in our interview sample and not our survey sample.

For those who are generally committed to the field, dissatisfaction with compensation appears to be counterbalanced by workplace conditions (as reported in the “Workplace Environments” brief) and a sense of mission (as reported in the “Professional Development” brief). Compensation looms large, however, to those most considering leaving their workplace or the field, and to those who have already left the field. Poor compensation appears to “hurt” educators directly, in terms of concerns over not being able to make ends meet, and indirectly as a proxy for lack of respect for their work. That Jewish educators do not seem to be worse off than their peers in secular education offers little consolation.

Questions for Discussion or Further Exploration

For Educational Leaders and Policy Makers

- How can levels of compensation for educators match the value that the Jewish community espouses for Jewish education?
- How might the field of Jewish early childhood education benefit from the same efforts at structural professionalization—particularly the creation of full-time positions—that seem to have benefited supplemental and informal educators?
- What career paths can be developed to maintain qualified educators in frontline positions, rather than incentivizing shifts to administration?

For Future Study

- As noted, the post-COVID Jewish educational landscape is uncertain. What, if any, elements of online instruction will become part of the “new normal?” Will pandemic-related economic hardships result in reduced capacity on the part of some organizations, or decreased ability for those in the community to pay for education at those organizations? The ramifications for staffing and compensation are an open question that will need to be explored as the pandemic’s aftermath becomes clearer.
- Questions of race have become more salient in the Jewish communal conversation. Further study can be done to explore possible differences in compensation due to race.

- This study looked at individuals within communities; specific organizations were not identified. Comparing the compensation patterns within organizations (and perhaps comparing organizations with better/worse track records of teacher retention) can add an additional layer of understanding to the exploration of the connections between compensation and retention.
- Relatively small response rates from the innovation and social justice, federation/communal educator, and independent educator sectors limited our ability to comment on these areas. Further research should be done to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of compensation within these sectors.

▶ *The broadest implication of these findings is that despite decades of concern about compensation in Jewish education, little has changed.*

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