

Research Brief | #3

Career Trajectories of Jewish Educators in the United States

Workplace Environments

The Importance of Empowerment,
Collegiality, Supervision,
and Recognition



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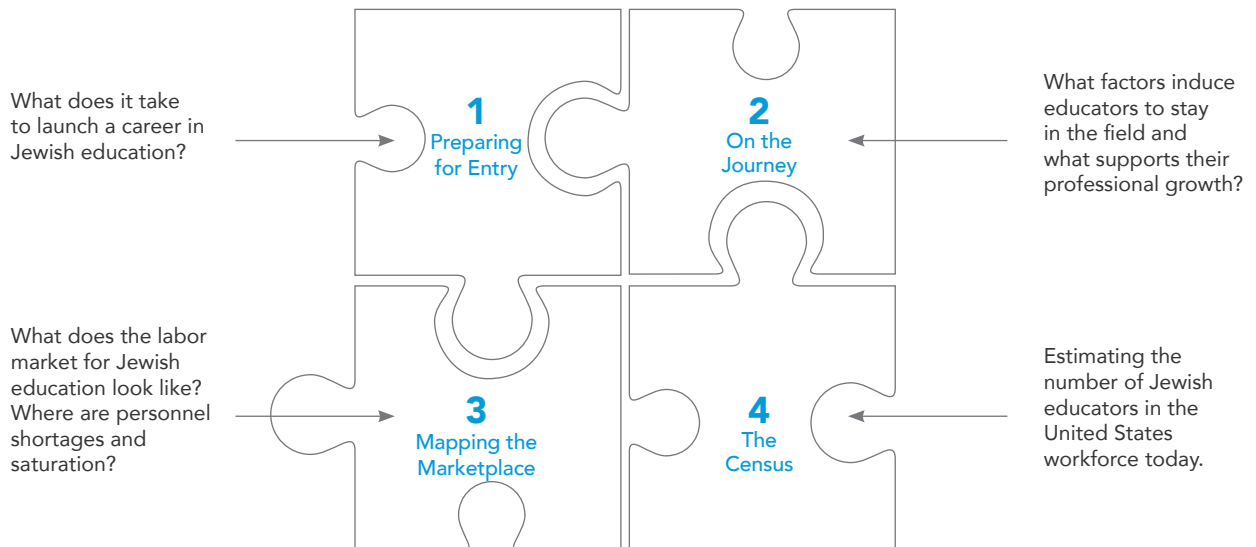
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About this Report

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 third 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

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 the environments educators work within have meaningful effects on educator satisfaction, self-efficacy, as well as on their desire to remain in their jobs and develop careers in Jewish education. This brief, drawn from data collected from almost 1,300 North American Jewish educators as part of the CASJE *On the Journey* study, explores four categories of educator workplace environments: (1) factors that support or hinder professional autonomy and empowerment; (2) relationships with and opportunities for collaboration with colleagues; (3) effective and productive supervision; (4) and respect and recognition for one's work. We examine the extent to which educators experience these conditions and how the presence or absence of them affects how educators perceive and talk about their work. Our key findings are:

- Our survey data confirms statistically significant correlations between positive dimensions of workplace environment and key educator outcomes. In addition, elements of positive workplace environments are highly correlated with one another.
- Most Jewish educators feel they have the autonomy and knowledge to do their jobs effectively. However, fewer feel they have the full resources they need, suggesting that some are lacking the tools and/or support to put their autonomy and knowledge into practice. Further, fewer than half of the respondents say they are well-informed about or have input into organizational decisions that directly impact their work.
- The majority of Jewish educators have positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues, whom they value as talented professionals. Despite this collegial environment, however, many still find it challenging to voice disagreements and dissenting opinions within their organizations.
- Compared to the average across sectors, early childhood educators report more cooperation and sharing of ideas; informal/experiential educators are more likely to see their colleagues as “highly talented professionals;” and more experienced educators report greater satisfaction with the levels of teamwork in their organizations.
- Fewer supplemental school educators than the average see their colleagues as highly talented or feel that they can get help and support from colleagues when they need it. Similarly, somewhat fewer supplemental school educators said that they felt validated or recognized by colleagues.
- While most respondents reported positive and warm relationships with supervisors, it also seems that the supervision experience is not as constructive as it could be for a fair number of educators. Only about half say that their supervisor knows their professional development needs, and less than half reported that their supervisor “serves as an instructional mentor.”
- Jewish educators generally feel valued and respected, though this appreciation more often comes from colleagues than organizations overall.



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 Workplace Environments Matter

Decades of research on educators in Jewish settings, independent schools and public schools demonstrate the importance of the workplace environment for educator satisfaction, self-efficacy and retention. The Educators in Jewish Schools Study (EJSS) found “congruence between educators’ job satisfaction ratings and whether or not they felt their efforts were validated and/or recognized by administrators, colleagues, parents, and students.”¹ In addition, “recognition and/or validation from school administrators and other key audiences”² was one of the most frequently cited factors in day and supplementary school educators’ decisions about whether to remain in the field.³

Tamir’s study of beginning teachers in urban public, urban Catholic, and Jewish day schools found that the “professional culture” of a school is a significant factor in retention and satisfaction levels among novice teachers.⁴ Using frameworks developed by Kardos and her colleagues, he determined that schools with “integrated professional cultures” had the greatest positive impacts for new educators. Such schools have “structures in place to support [teachers’] professional growth through extensive mentoring, collaboration, observations, and feedback from peers and leaders, and by allowing new teachers space to experiment and fail.” In other words, the school cultures that are most likely to lead to positive outcomes are those that emphasize the same elements of workplace environments investigated in this study.

The autonomy inherent in being allowed to “experiment and fail” has been documented as both key to teacher satisfaction, and increasingly lacking in the public education sector. A publication of the National Center for Education Statistics, drawn from a decade of data from the annual Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), stated that “research finds that teacher autonomy is positively associated with teachers’ job satisfaction and teacher retention... Teachers who perceive that they have less autonomy are more likely to leave their positions, either by moving from one school to another or leaving the profession altogether.”⁵ Unfortunately, the authors found, SASS data show that public secondary school teachers’ perception of autonomy in their classrooms decreased significantly between 2003 and 2012.⁶ As our data will show, the situation is not so grim for today’s Jewish educators, most of whom feel they enjoy a fair amount of autonomy.

The desire to exercise autonomy does not mean educators always prefer to work independently. On the contrary, collaboration and teamwork with colleagues is another workplace element that has been shown to create positive environments and outcomes. Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran, in their study of the impacts of teacher collaboration on student achievement in public elementary schools, begin by citing studies that find collaboration among teachers leads to improved efficacy and more positive attitudes towards teaching.⁷ They set out to determine whether such positive impacts on teachers also resulted in benefits for students,

1 Kress, J., and Ben Avi, S. (2007) 19.

2 Kress, J., and Ben Avi, S. (2007) 29.

3 The other most frequently cited factors were work/life balance and “how the school responds to students who are not thriving and the support educators receive for these students,” which, though primarily focused on students, also encompasses the critical element of support for educators.

4 Tamir, E. (2013). 27.

5 Sparks, D. and Malkus, N. (2015) 2.

6 Sparks, D. and Malkus, N. (2015). 4.

7 Goddard, Y, Goddard, R. and Tschannen-Moran, M. (2007); Shachar & Shmulevitz (1997); Brownell et al. (1997). 878.

and found that “teacher collaboration for school improvement was positively related to differences among schools in both mathematics and reading achievement.”⁸ While their data didn’t directly prove causality, they posited that collaboration improves educators’ problem solving abilities, thus increasing their effectiveness in the classroom: “When teachers collaborate, they share experiences and knowledge that can promote learning for instructional improvement. From the perspective of organizational theory, collaboration is a form of lateral coordination that can improve organizational performance...Such learning can help teachers solve educational problems, which in turn has the potential to benefit students academically.”⁹

Johnson, Kraft, and Papay reported similar findings regarding the importance and impact of workplace environments, specifically in high-need schools, for teacher satisfaction and student achievement. As they found, “Teachers are more satisfied and plan to stay longer in schools that have a positive work context, independent of the school’s student demographic characteristics.”¹⁰ Further, the elements of work context that matter most to teachers are not the “clean and well-maintained facilities or access to modern instructional technology” that are more common in well-funded schools, but “the social conditions—the school’s culture, the principal’s leadership, and relationships among colleagues.”¹¹ If teachers feel strong “relational trust” with their supervisors, administrators, and co-workers, both they and their students benefit. Therefore, the researchers conclude, “policy makers who want to retain effective teachers and improve student performance...should pay close attention to the school context as teachers experience it.”¹²

Finally, two articles focus on the positive impacts of support and mentoring for new teachers in particular (as well as their students). Although our research only included educators in the field for at least five years, insights about the role of early-career mentoring are still instructive, as many of the findings regarding the impact of mentorship are relevant for more established educators as well. Ingersoll and Strong examined fifteen studies conducted over three decades on the effects of “support, guidance, and orientation programs” for beginning teachers. They conclude, “Most of the studies reviewed provide empirical support for the claim that support and assistance for beginning teachers have a positive impact on three sets of outcomes: teacher job satisfaction, commitment, and retention; teacher classroom instructional practices; and student achievement.”¹³ Darling-Hammond similarly reported that “A number of studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs improve retention rates for new teachers along with their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and their instructional skills.”¹⁴ She goes on to make the valuable argument that mentoring has meaningful benefits for mentors as well as mentees: “The additional benefit of these programs is the new lease on life for many veteran teachers as well. Expert veterans need ongoing challenges to remain stimulated and excited about staying in the profession. Many say that mentoring and coaching other teachers creates an incentive for them to remain in teaching as they gain from both learning from and sharing with other colleagues.”¹⁵

8 Goddard, Goddard and Tschannen-Moran. 891.

9 Goddard, Goddard and Tschannen-Moran. 892.

10 Johnson, S., Kraft, M. and Papay, J. (2012). 4.

11 Johnson, Kraft, and Papay. 5.

12 Johnson, Kraft, and Papay. 5.

13 Ingersoll, R. and Strong, M. (2011). 1.

14 Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). 9.

15 Darling-Hammond. 10.



The Workplace Environments of Jewish Educators

Our study confirms the relationships between positive workplace environments and key educator outcomes as found in the literature summarized above. In our analysis of the survey data, we calculated composite scores for each respondent according to four dimensions of the workplace environment, that is, factors that encourage: (1) feelings of empowerment, (2) collegiality and teamwork, (3) recognition and feeling valued, and (4) relationships with supervisors. We tracked the relationship between those dimensions and educator outcomes, noting corresponding levels of satisfaction, self-efficacy, and commitment to the Jewish education profession. As shown in Exhibit 1 below, **educators who reported feeling more positive about these four dimensions of their workplaces had higher outcomes scores, experiencing greater job satisfaction, feelings of self-efficacy, and commitment to their workplaces and the field.**

Exhibit 1

Positive Relationship Between Workplace Conditions and Educator Outcomes

	Satisfaction	Self-Efficacy	Commitment to Profession
Empowerment	.535**	.395**	.384**
Teamwork/Collaboration	.508**	.246**	.378**
Recognition/Feeling Valued	.532**	.274**	.369**
Relationship with Supervisor	.475**	.251**	.240**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In addition, all of these dimensions are highly correlated across categories, which is reflected in our interviewees' reflections on how these positive aspects of the workplace environment support and reinforce one another.

Below are detailed findings from our research regarding these four dimensions of the workplace environment, including which specific variables are more or less prevalent in the field, and to what extent and in what ways Jewish educators' experiences differ by

sector and setting. In each section, we first present survey data, followed by insights from our interviews that provide depth and nuance to the quantitative findings, highlight educators' descriptions of their lived experiences in their own words, and surface issues that merit further exploration by field leaders and practitioners.

Empowering Factors

Our survey analysis showed that feeling empowered within one's workplace – a combination of such factors as having autonomy, knowledge, resources, and support; feeling informed about and included in organizational decision-making; and feeling that one can share opinions freely – is positively correlated¹⁶ with the three key educator outcomes of satisfaction, self-efficacy, and commitment to the profession. Looking at the individual variables in this category, the large majority of Jewish educators feel that they have the knowledge and autonomy they need to be successful in their jobs. Eight in ten survey respondents agreed¹⁷ that they “know what I need to be successful in my role” and “have enough autonomy to perform my job effectively.” However, only 60% agreed that they “have the resources I need to do my job effectively,” a gap that suggests some educators are lacking the tools and/or support to put their knowledge and autonomy fully into practice. Similarly only 62% said that they “know that leaders will provide support when I encounter challenges at work.”

In addition, having autonomy within one's own classroom or learning environment does not always mean that educators feel empowered to express themselves or influence decisions within their broader organizations. About half are “comfortable sharing potentially unpopular opinions at my organization” and feel that they are “included in decisions that affect my work;” only 40% agree that “at my organization, I am informed well in advance about important decisions, changes, or future plans.” Overall, older and more established educators¹⁸ score higher on empowerment measures than younger and less experienced educators.¹⁹ This may reflect a tendency of organizational leaders to give greater

weight to the contributions of experienced professionals and to trust them more to make sound decisions about their work.

Insights from Interviews

Interviewees' reflections about empowerment and autonomy suggest that these are not merely a “feel-good” element of educational settings, but critical for helping educators commit to their practice, engage in creative expression (e.g., by developing curricula and lesson plans), explore new ideas, and continue to grow professionally. This was expressed by a day school educator who was both surprised and delighted when given the freedom to creatively adjust her curriculum to meet the needs of her students:

They said, you're the teacher, do what you need to. I didn't expect that, but I ran with it. I found new topics, changed the structure, and the students loved it and ended the year beyond my wildest dreams of what I thought they could accomplish. I wasn't expecting that much autonomy. Knowing I have the freedom to do it how I wanted was so freeing, that I could use my creativity and own input.

An important caveat is that being given too much autonomy as a novice educator can actually become negative and stressful, as it is experienced as a lack of guidance and support rather than a welcome freedom. As an early childhood educator shared, having “hands-off” leadership can “*be both great and frustrating at the same time. The fact that you were able to develop the curriculum and lessons that [were] true to who you are was wonderful. [But] the lack of support from administration really took a toll on me as a teacher.*” This difference in priorities may also contribute to the divergence in scores between well-established and newer educators, reflecting not only how educators

16 All correlations reported are .350 and above, and are statistically significant at the .01 level, meaning there is a less than 1% probability that these correlations are a result of random chance.

17 “Agreed” refers to the combined percentages of the top two categories in the 7-point scale used in the survey: “agreed” and “strongly agreed.”

18 A combined category of respondents who defined themselves as “well-established in my field” (56% of respondents) and “have been well established in my field and am winding down” (9%).

19 A combined category of respondents who defined themselves as “getting settled in my field and no longer a beginner” (23% of respondents) and those who have “made a start in a professional field” (5%).

Exhibit 2
Dimensions of Empowering Factors Experienced by Jewish Educators
 (% Agree/Strongly Agree)

	Day School Educators	Supplemental School Educators	Early Childhood Educators	Informal/ Experiential Educators	Total ²⁰
I have enough autonomy to perform my job effectively	80%	82%	85%	77%	81%
I know what I need to be successful in my role	81%	80%	87%	79%	81%
I know that leaders will provide support when I encounter challenges at work	62%	62%	64%	62%	62%
I have the resources to do my job effectively	60%	59%	66%	54%	60%
I am included in decisions that affect my work	48%	46%	49%	49%	49%
I'm comfortable sharing potentially unpopular opinions at my organization	45%	50%	44%	54%	48%
At my organization, I am informed well in advance about important decisions, changes, or future plans	37%	41%	34%	38%	40%

are regarded by others but also their own preferences for autonomy vs. support.

The extent to which educators feel empowered in their roles can be driven by the actions and attitudes of an organization's leaders, specifically whether and how they convey trust in their staff to create positive environments and outcomes for learners without being micromanaged. This trust helps educators feel valued as professionals; they know that they have the freedom to experiment and innovate without being

afraid of the repercussions if they fail. A camp educator described how the CEO, as part of strengthening the camp's engagement and outreach work, *"gave me and my supervisors more freedom to do what I'm good at, what I do best...It starts with the leadership."* A social justice/innovation sector educator also appreciated being *"given freedom to dream big and the chance to follow my ideas," made possible by a "culture of leadership that inspires you to dream big and also gives you the opportunity to follow your dream without limitation."*

²⁰ Total percentages include respondents in the innovation/social justice and federated institution sectors. However, because the number of respondents in these sectors is quite small (42 and 29 respectively), their scores are not presented separately.

Colleagues and Teamwork

Positive relationships with colleagues and feeling part of a productive team are positively correlated with the outcomes of satisfaction and commitment to one’s profession. Most of our survey respondents report high levels of collegiality in their workplaces: 8 in 10 are “pleased with the people I work with,” and three-quarters feel that they are “able to get help and support from my colleagues when I need it” and that “cooperation and sharing of ideas and resources across my organization are encouraged.” In addition, among various

workplace elements “the level of teamwork among my colleagues” scored highest for satisfaction levels, with 80% saying they were very or somewhat satisfied. Established educators expressed the greatest satisfaction; 83% said they were very/somewhat satisfied with teamwork among colleagues, as compared to 76% of less experienced professionals. Almost three-quarters of all respondents view their co-workers as “highly talented professionals.” However, even highly collegial environments do not always have fully open channels of communication, as less than half agreed that “disagreements in my organization are voiced openly and discussed.”

Exhibit 3
Dimensions of Collegiality and Collaboration Experienced by Jewish Educators
 (% Agree/Strongly Agree)

	Day School Educators	Supplemental School Educators	Early Childhood Educators	Informal/ Experiential Educators	Total
I am pleased with the people I work with	82%	77%	80%	83%	81%
I am able to get help and support from my colleagues when I need it	78%	69%	77%	79%	76%
Cooperation and sharing of ideas and resources across my organization are encouraged	76%	71%	81%	77%	76%
My colleagues are highly talented professionals	73%	66%	71%	77%	72%
Disagreements in my organization are voiced openly and discussed	43%	43%	50%	43%	45%

Early childhood educators seem to enjoy somewhat more collegial working environments, as 81% agreed that “cooperation and sharing of ideas and resources across my organization are encouraged,” and 84% are satisfied with the level of teamwork among colleagues, each of these about 4-5% higher than the overall average across sectors. More informal/experiential educators agree that “my colleagues are highly talented professionals” (79% vs. 72% overall). Conversely, supplemental school educators are less likely to feel they can “get help and support from my colleagues when I need it” (69% agree vs. 76% overall), to see their colleagues as highly talented professionals (66% vs. 72%), and to feel satisfied with levels of teamwork among colleagues (77% vs. 80%). This may reflect the fact that the majority of supplemental school educators are part-time and thus have fewer opportunities to interact and collaborate with their colleagues.

Insights from Interviews

A number of interviewees described how in the face of challenges, such as poor educational leadership or frustration over low compensation, colleagues can be a key source of encouragement and happiness in one’s work. Conversely, tension with colleagues was occasionally referenced as a source of workplace dissatisfaction and stress. This issue can be particularly acute for early childhood educators (and some day school educators), who often work in pairs or teams, as one described: *“The more difficult years were usually when I was paired with a partner that I didn’t work well with. If I’m working with someone who’s critical, I can’t enjoy engaging and teaching with the class as much.”*

Some interviewees saw collaborative environments—which included “vertical” collaboration (with supervisors and leaders) as well as “horizontal” (with peers)—as

strongly linked to the mission and values of the organization. The feeling that “we’re all in this together” working to achieve shared goals was a powerful encouragement and motivator for these educators. A day school educator, who described his school as *“the most collaborative experience professionally I’ve ever seen”* marveled that there is *“so little ego”* among his colleagues: *“the only ego is, can we teach kids Torah better? The school is totally focused on the betterment of the children.”* An early childhood educator relished being in a congregation in which all staff and leadership *“collaborate and co-construct to create an amazing program that we’re really proud of...We’re working really hard to bring a cohesive vision and programming for the whole congregation.”* For this educator, the collaborative and mission-driven environment is a major factor in wanting to stay in this work setting: *“Do I want to leave that? No.”* A campus educator recounted that a pervasive culture of “everyone step[ping] up” throughout the organization made her want to “jump in even more:”

Something that really allowed me to thrive was being on a team that felt like we’re all in it together. I saw everyone really step up—our Executive Director would help us clean the closet—and I wanted to be a part of the team. It made me step up and grow and jump in even more than I already did. That disseminated into the entire organization, the students, even our donors!

Importantly, this educator highlights that the organization’s collegiality includes not only her peers, but the Executive Director as well, who demonstrates this by “stepping up” alongside team members when work needs to be done. Collegiality is more likely to be embedded in an organization’s culture if it is valued and modeled by top leadership, and not just left to employees to create and maintain.

Relationships with Supervisors

Feeling supported is a critical component of a positive work environment for most Jewish educators. Supervisors often provide much of that support, at least when the relationship is functioning as it should. Having a positive relationship with one's supervisor is positively correlated with the outcome of job satisfaction in our survey data. Nearly all respondents (92%) report having a direct supervisor, and for the large majority, that relationship does indeed appear to be supportive and encouraging. Nearly eight in ten agreed that their supervisor "genuinely cares about my well-being," three-quarters that they "value my ideas," and 70% that they "[try] to be aware of my concerns."

However, it also seems that the supervision experience, while positive, is not as constructive as it could be for a fair number of educators. About two-thirds of respondents said that their supervisor "knows how well I'm performing in my work." While this number is large, given how central this particular task is to supervision, one would expect it to be even greater. Further, only 54% agreed that their supervisor "knows my needs for professional development," and about half said that they "provide useful feedback on how well I am performing." Mentoring is another area in which organizations may not be meeting educators' needs, as only 44% strongly agreed/agreed that their supervisor is "an instructional mentor to me." Early childhood educators score 4%–10% higher than the overall average for most of the above statements, suggesting that their supervision experiences, though still not ideal, are more productive than those of many educators in other sectors.²¹

Insights from Interviews

Interviewees highlighted various ways that supervisors and mentors²² provided support, many of which illustrate how positive workplace conditions cluster together. Effective supervisors help educators exercise their autonomy and creativity, work to foster a collegial environment, and make supervisees feel appreciated and valued. A synagogue experiential educator identified times she felt particularly appreciated "*when a supervisor has told board members or clergy (in an email that I am copied on) about something I have been working on,*" and noted that because of her supervisor's support she "*rarely ha[s] to fight for my ideas.*" An educator in the innovation/social justice sector described being able to successfully ideate and launch a new project due to "*a strong leader who served as mentor and muse... There wasn't a script to follow, but a way for me to apply my ideas broadly, and I was not micro-managed.*" A Federation professional reflected on the significant impact of having a supervisor who was deeply invested in expanding her opportunities for professional growth and development.

The most thriving and commitment came when I had a supervisor who was holistically invested in me as an overall professional. [She] didn't just see me as a person here to fit a role and a box, but put me forward for opportunities that might seem outside my purview, and made sure I grew and was around tables I wouldn't otherwise have been at.

As is well-known, supervision, mentoring and support are particularly important for new and early career educators.²³ Although our interviewees were beyond this early stage, looking back, they reflected on how

21 Further information about the mentoring dimensions of these relationships is provided in "Professional Development" brief.

22 As there was no common definition of "supervisor" or "mentor" across interviews, each quote should be understood in its own context regarding the roles and types of support being described.

23 Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001).

Exhibit 4
Supervision Experiences of Jewish Educators
 (% Agree/Strongly Agree)

	Day School Educators	Supplemental School Educators	Early Childhood Educators	Informal/ Experiential Educators	Total
My supervisor genuinely cares about my well-being	81%	78%	76%	76%	79%
My supervisor values my ideas	76%	71%	71%	74%	74%
My supervisor tries to be aware of my concerns	72%	67%	71%	62%	70%
My supervisor knows how well I'm performing my work	64%	70%	72%	66%	68%
My supervisor takes time to praise me	55%	58%	66%	56%	59%
My supervisor knows my needs for professional development	51%	54%	64%	53%	54%
My supervisor provides useful feedback on how well I am performing	49%	50%	61%	46%	52%
My supervisor is an instructional mentor to me	43%	39%	52%	46%	44%

challenging the first several years as an educator can be. Those who had benefited from regular supervision or mentoring felt this was critical to their initial success and growth as educators. Conversely, those that did not receive such support often cited the early years as the most difficult in their career, with a number wishing they had been given mentorship opportunities during that stage.

At the opposite end of the career arc, some veteran educators noted that they

were not getting as much out of being supervised within their institutions as they had earlier in their career and wished for more opportunities for outside mentorship, as one experiential educator vividly expressed:

I feel often like I've hit a ceiling with my supervisors and managers; they generally think I have good ideas and don't need much "supervision," but that doesn't mean I don't crave an investment in my career, professional counsel, advice that

challenges and pushes me to be better. An outside mentor (or a mentor within my organization who is not my supervisor) would be a big deal.

This is an important reminder that while new teachers are certainly in most need of mentoring and support as they learn the ropes, if the goal is for educators to keep growing and developing throughout their careers, providing ongoing opportunities for mentorship is a valuable investment. Furthermore, it is one that will likely pay extra dividends as these educators learn how to be effective mentors themselves.

Recognition and Feeling Valued

Being valued and appreciated for one's work is positively correlated with the outcomes of satisfaction and commitment to one's profession. The educators in our study generally do feel valued and respected. Overall, nearly eight in ten educators said that they are "treated with respect on a day-to-day basis," a statement that could encompass respect from leadership, colleagues, students, parents and/or community members. Other data, however, suggest that this appreciation comes more often from their colleagues than their organizations as a whole. Eight in ten of respondents agreed that they "feel valued as a professional by my colleagues," and nearly three-quarters that "my efforts are validated and/or recognized by my colleagues." On the other hand, only 63% of all educators—and 59% of early childhood educators—agree or strongly agree that "my opinion is valued at my organization, and only 55% overall that they "receive appropriate recognition for good work at my organization." Interestingly, supplemental school educators score slightly higher than average on these measures, but slightly lower when it comes to recognition and validation by colleagues, perhaps

reflecting the generally weaker ties among colleagues in this sector (as mentioned above).

Insights from Interviews

For the most part, interviewees did not emphasize public "recognition" per se as central to their work lives. Because many educators are highly motivated by their intrinsic love of teaching and learning, the kinds of public acknowledgment that are often associated with being "recognized" for one's achievements may be less salient for them than for some other professionals. They instead focused on times when they felt particularly proud of their work and/or "valued and supported" by colleagues, supervisors, and leadership. As one supplemental school educator shared, *"I know the education staff really appreciate me. The Director tells me all the time. I feel that from them."*

An educator working in the innovation/social justice sector identified a number of ways that organizations can make employees feel *"seen, heard, respected, and valued"* including *"fostering work cultures that include and integrate every educator in ways that make them feel valuable, and developing systems for feedback, self-reflection, mentorship, and growth opportunities."* This educator went on to emphasize that developing a culture of recognition and respect starts with the actions of leadership: *"In many cases, the culture begins at the top, so cultivating leaders at the institutional level who want to—and know how to—build on these values is very important."*

Although recognition from colleagues and organizational leaders is highly valued, appreciation from students and families is especially prized by some educators as the true "reward" for their efforts. A day school educator joyfully reflected, *"I don't know of any other career where I can be made to feel like a rock star just by passing by the*

Exhibit 5
Dimensions of Respect and Recognition Experienced by Jewish Educators
 (% Agree/Strongly Agree)

	Day School Educators	Supplemental School Educators	Early Childhood Educators	Informal/ Experiential Educators	Total
I am treated with respect on a day-to-day basis	77%	79%	82%	79%	79%
I feel valued as a professional by my colleagues	79%	78%	80%	79%	79%
My efforts are validated and/or recognized by my colleagues	73%	69%	74%	76%	73%
My opinion is valued at my organization	62%	66%	59%	63%	63%
I receive appropriate recognition for good work at my organization	52%	59%	54%	55%	55%

first-grade classroom and all the kids start waving and yelling to me. That gives me a lot of fulfillment.” An informal educator recalled that her synagogue used to have a staff appreciation dinner, and noted that such events *“go a long way to making people feel you see them, and telling people that you see what they’re doing and that it’s good work.”* And a camp educator described how *“amazing”* it feels to receive positive emails from long-time campers and families that provide a valuable boost to morale:

You sometimes run through your cycles, get bogged in the work, but to see how much people appreciate it is wonderful.



Implications for the Field

The educators we surveyed and interviewed highly value being empowered and supported to succeed in their roles, feeling part of collegial and encouraging teams, and receiving respect and appreciation from co-workers, leaders, students, and families. To the extent that these conditions become the norm in more Jewish educational settings, this will have significant benefits for educators, students, and the Jewish community. Our findings suggest a number of areas that call for further reflection and exploration. For example, we know that educators at different stages of their careers prioritize different workplace features. When starting out, they usually require more intensive support, but once they've found their feet, they seek more autonomy. But we also heard that educators at all stages, no matter how seasoned they are, value guidance from mentors. Schools and organizations, therefore, should work to determine the right balance of autonomy and support for educators at various stages in their careers and to develop strategies to ensure they are providing this balance to educators across the career span.

We also found a potentially concerning discrepancy between the strong sense of collegiality and teamwork felt by most Jewish educators, and the fact that many nevertheless feel discomfort voicing disagreement or sharing unpopular ideas within their organizations. We need to better understand what accounts for this contradiction, and how Jewish educational institutions can change their cultures to address it.

Questions for Educational Leaders and Policymakers

Below are a number of questions that will be important for organizational leaders and policymakers to consider in order to improve workplace conditions for Jewish educators across all sectors:

1. What opportunities and scaffolding need to be developed for educators to both exercise creativity and autonomy within their classrooms and learning spaces, and also feel they have input into broader decision-making in their institutions?
2. What resources do educators feel they are lacking in order to "do their job effectively," and how can these resources be provided to them?
3. Given that supplemental school educators score lower on several key measures of teamwork and collegiality than other sectors, how can these elements be strengthened particularly for these educators? What might be learned from early childhood education programs that often share the same synagogue settings?
4. How can schools assess their workplace culture/school culture regarding open communication? How do schools enable educators to feel comfortable broaching difficult conversations among themselves and with leadership? How do schools foster a culture of critical collegiality?

5. What does effective supervision of educators look like, and what are the components of effective mentorship of novice educators? How are experiences within Jewish educational settings similar to or different from other private and public educational settings in this regard?
6. How can supervision for educators be made more constructive so that more educators feel they are receiving valuable guidance and mentoring from their supervisors? What kind of training, if any, do professionals in supervisory roles receive, and what additional kinds of professional development would be most valuable?
7. What strengths exist among early childhood supervisors that lead to higher scores in that sector, and how might those be emulated in other sectors? Similarly, how are more informal/experiential educators able to find mentors than educators in other sectors, and what lessons might this hold for the field?
8. In addition to continuing and increasing mentoring and induction programs for new teachers, what programs could be developed to help mid-career and veteran teachers find mentors outside of their organizations, or serve as mentors for others? How might greater comfort among educators with online communication (as a result of the pandemic) be leveraged to create more opportunities to connect educators with mentors beyond their local communities?
9. How can schools and organizations create more opportunities for educators to be recognized and appreciated for their work by leadership, students and families? What can leaders learn from practices in other educational settings and analog fields?

► *Schools and organizations should work to determine the right balance of autonomy and support for educators at various stages in their careers and to develop strategies to ensure they are providing this balance to educators across the career span.*

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