



## THE CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

In December 2012, the CASJE Panel on the Sustainability of Jewish Education met at Stanford University to launch its work. The panel, which brought together a select group of researchers, practitioners and funders, met to build a program of research into the sustainability of Jewish education.

The panel hoped to develop a list of high impact research questions that approached the Jewish educational sector as a system that included funders and institutions (camps, schools, congregations, museums, and the like), alongside consumers and producers of Jewish educational experiences. More than simply approaching this as a question of affordability or efficiency, the panel began with the understanding that the Jewish educational sector is the product of a number of different investments and concerns, and that the question of its ability to continue to serve its community would not be easy to ask.

The panel began with a question about whether or not the ecosystem of Jewish educational experiences that developed over the second half of the 20th century would be capable of serving the Jewish community of the 21st century. This is certainly a question of vision and scope, but it is also a question of resources. The panel focused primarily on this latter dimension, and its members developed a list of 15 questions that each took a slightly different perspective on how best to answer this much larger question (the list of questions follows this memo).

The panel's greatest strength was also its greatest challenge. Namely: we had precious little data to work with. Very little systematic research has looked at the economic dimension of Jewish education, so part of our challenge was how to look at this issue without a solid base of data from which to draw.

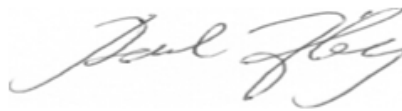
From the December meeting and subsequent conversations emerged a desire to focus on a select set of the 15 questions, and write research briefs about each, outlining the most salient dimensions of each: what **problem** we see the question addressing, what we stand to **learn** from answering the question, and how we think the information we uncover could be **applied** by stakeholders in the field.

What follows is a portfolio of the six research briefs, each one examining in depth a single question. They are intended as a guide for anyone interested in furthering our understanding of the sustainability of Jewish education. Researchers might feel empowered to adapt the questions and pursue investigations of this vital area. Funders may wish to invest in research into this vital aspect of the Jewish community. Finally, community members might desire to inquire about these questions of their leaders. Our intention here is to

begin the conversation, to outline some directions for future research, and to encourage those who care about Jewish education to look carefully at the question of sustainability.

Pirke Avot reminds us that without material support there can be no Torah (3:17). We know a great deal about Torah, but we know precious little about the material support that allows learning to take place. It has been our privilege to facilitate the work of the panel, and it is our hope that its work will be taken up to enhance the Jewish community.

Sincerely,



Ari Y Kelman  
Rachel Friedberg  
CASJE Sustainability Panel Co-chairs.



## THE CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

**To:** CASJE Executive Steering Committee  
**From:** Michael J. Bohnen  
**Re:** Research on the Sustainability of Jewish Education

### **Research Question**

What can be done to increase the number of non-Orthodox parents sending their children to Jewish Day School (“JDS”)?

### **Statement of the Problem**

One of the key drivers of financial sustainability of a JDS is enrollment. Many of our existing schools have the capacity to handle a significant number of additional students for little marginal cost. Since a high percentage of Orthodox families send their children to JDS, the biggest opportunity for increased market penetration is with non-Orthodox families. For purposes of this study, we will assume that the more non-Orthodox children who attend JDS, the stronger the schools will be and the stronger our community will be. (The accuracy of that assumption can be the basis of other research.)

Only about 4% of all non-Orthodox children attend JDS. Even if we include in our market only students in grades 1-8 who are receiving any formal Jewish education, the percentage attending JDS is estimated to be between 12% – 14%. [These numbers should be checked.] We need to understand why parents decide to enroll, or not to enroll, their children in JDS and what can be done to have a positive impact on those decisions.

### **Learning Opportunities**

There are a number of perceived barriers to non-Orthodox enrollment, including (i) JDS involves high tuition and insufficient financial assistance, (ii) JDS is “too Jewish,” and (iii) JDS can’t compete on the basis of academic and programmatic excellence, among others.

Are these the main reasons non-Orthodox enrollment is low? Are there other important reasons? Are the perceptions based in reality?

Similarly, there are a number of **perceived** advantages to JDS. What are they? These include (i) JDS includes Jewish studies, (ii) JDS teaches the Hebrew language, (iii) JDS often has smaller classes, (iii) JDS has academic and programmatic superiority, (iv) JDS is imbued with a Jewish values system, (v) JDS has a Jewish student body, and others.

To what extent are these advantages considered by parents who decide not to enroll their children in JDS? To what extent can they overcome the perceived barriers?

What will be the impact of new strategies such as blended or remote learning? Will they be seen as an advantage or a disadvantage?

Of these perceived barriers and advantages, which are the most important to what segments of the non-Orthodox population?

In the case of upper grades and especially high schools, to what extent is the market the student rather than the parent? How do the foregoing factors change when the student becomes part of the decision making process?

### **Application**

By identifying the perceptions of parents that result in their not choosing JDS for their children, we can then determine (a) whether and how the perceptions can best be changed if they are not based in reality; (b) if they are so based, whether and how the reality can be changed; and (c) whether and how the perceived advantages can be better communicated so as to change the decision outcome.

In the case of (a) and (c) above, we need to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing material and person-to-person communication. Who and what are the external influencers that are most important to parents making enrollment decisions?

As to (b) above, we need to quantify the cost of making changes, understanding that resources are limited.



## THE CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

**To:** CASJE Executive Steering Committee  
**From:** Mark Charendoff  
**Re:** Research on the Sustainability of Jewish Education

### **Research Question**

How do Funders envision the landscape of Jewish education?

### **Statement of the Problem**

When thinking about philanthropic opportunities in Jewish education, what lens are funders using? Is it autobiographical? Geographic? Institutional? Demographic? Understanding how funders envision the landscape of Jewish education could prove helpful to all stakeholders because it will help identify funding opportunities that match funders' biases and produce fruitful and durable partnerships.

Funding decisions are not only determined by the quality of a proposal or the ingenuity of an idea. The greatest ideas in the world will go unfunded if they don't align with a funder's unstated and sometimes unarticulated assumptions -- assumptions that drive and shape their funding commitments. A better map of the landscape of Jewish education, drawn according to funders' visions of and for it, will be helpful for both projects looking for funding and for funders looking for projects to support.

### **Learning Opportunities**

Beginning with an investigation into funders' motivations, we stand to learn a great deal about how they go about their work. But instead of focusing on individual motivations, asking about how they envision the landscape of Jewish education will provide some aggregated insight into the scope and scale of possible avenues for giving. Like Steinberg's famous New Yorker cover, mapping the landscape from the perspective of funders will capture a perspective or a sensibility that shapes funding decisions.

Funders often fund autobiographically, and many seem to limit their horizon to their backyard. For some this may be a modern expression of an ancient Jewish imperative of giving priority to the poor of your community. For others, it's practical – they may want to be able to touch and feel the projects they are investing in so that they can better judge their efficacy. For others still there may be a positive community pressure – perhaps they are asked/expected/honored to give locally whereas their contacts outside of their community might be more limited. Finally, there may be the sense of an efficient market – i.e., if it was a worthwhile program, why isn't someone in that local community funding it.

Other funders seem to focus on experiences that they or their children (or grandchildren) have had or are having. Funders that never attended or utilized a Jewish overnight camp may have trouble imagining that as a worthwhile intervention or as a strategy that they could relate to. Still others focus on a particular population whom they believe constitute either a challenge or an opportunity. Embarking on some research will help us to better understand these biases and shed some much-needed light on the imagined landscape of Jewish education. The goal here is not to “correct” or otherwise “change the minds of” funders, but rather to better understand their perspective in order to create better opportunities for funders and those seeking support to find common ground.

## **Application**

The application of this study will generate valuable information for funders looking to broaden their own perspectives. It will also create a usable road map for those seeking funding and those working in the areas of philanthropy and education. For funders, the data could be used to analyze their own giving portfolios across the sector, comparing their perspectives with peers and colleagues. Similarly, it could be used educationally, as a map of potential new areas for extending one’s philanthropy and interests. For those seeking funding, the map could better indicate where potential sources of support are currently giving, and how best to appeal to them.

For the Jewish educational sector at large, the application of such a project can illustrate the areas of strong giving, as well as areas for potential growth and development, and can help the field of philanthropy in Jewish education grow and develop toward a more fruitful, more comprehensive and more productive ecosystem.



## THE CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

**To:** CASJE Executive Steering Committee  
**From:** Sandy Edwards, lead thinker, Toby Rubin, advisor  
**Re:** Research on the Sustainability of Jewish Education

### **Research Question**

What changes in funding will better support the growth and sustainability of Jewish education?

### **Statement of the Problem**

The context for the proposed research is an hypothesis that the current investments in Jewish education are not sufficiently strategic to support the growth and sustainability of Jewish education.

Traditionally much of the funding directed to Jewish education has been programmatic. This funding typically stimulates the development of innovative programs. However, it generally does not provide organizations, schools, camps, synagogues the opportunity to develop their organizational capacity for growth and sustainability. This type of funding also does not necessarily contribute to the sustainability of the field.

One strategic development has been the emergence of intermediary organizations. The fields of Jewish camping and day schools have intermediaries that provide an opportunity for funders to direct funds to specific camp and day school field building efforts.

In Jewish camping, the Foundation for Jewish Camp and JCamp 180 have emerged to provide support to camps. In the day school field a number of intermediaries exist-- PEJE, RAVSAK, Yeshiva University Institute for School University Partnership, Schechter, and ParDes--which provide various kinds of capacity support to day schools. No such intermediary has emerged to support supplementary schools or teen education.

Funding through an intermediary is one approach, but much Jewish education funding is still directed towards individual schools and camps, and much of this funding still tends to be programmatic. As schools and camps develop more organizational capacity, funders will have increasing opportunities to support growth and sustainability. But what about other sectors of Jewish education?

In addition, more general trends that are part of the context of this research with regard to philanthropy include:

- more institutions seeking resources
- resources within the universe of Jewish philanthropists of sufficient size exist to support Jewish education
- decreased interest in funding Jewish organizations among younger donors

- those who fund Jewish causes make decisions to allocate resources elsewhere

## Learning Opportunities

The research findings will be useful to funders who seek to make (more) strategic investments in Jewish education. The research would lead to greater understanding of the possibilities by creating a map of Jewish education funding answering these often posed questions:

- Of major funders in Jewish community, what percentage of their funding is directed towards Jewish education?
- How many funders fund Jewish education?
- Where are Jewish education funders located?
- How many are national or regional/local?
- What are the trends regarding funding directed towards Jewish education:
  - Are younger donors funding less?
  - Are funders moving away from Jewish education funding?
  - Is there a trend towards more strategic funding versus personal interest?
- What are the critical factors that lead a major funder to invest?
- What inspires a philanthropist to become a major funder?
- How are decisions made about the period of committed funds and renewal grants?
- What, if any, relationship does the funder develop beyond the grant with the school/grantee? How, if at all, is it maintained after the grant period (e.g. other supports and resources beyond the dollars)?
- How do funders assess their tolerance for risk and other factors that in making a first grant?
- What factors discourage or dissuade a funder from renewing/continuing an investment?
- If one of the factors is grantee lack of capacity in some key area, do funders provide technical assistance? If so, why and what has been funders' experience? If not, why not?
- What can we learn from similarities and differences among major funders?
  - Role of donor (living, deceased, community based)
  - Amount of grantmaking
  - Collaboration/co-funding



- Strategic or driven by personal interest of Board member or family member

## **Application**

While there is a literature and practice that exists on how foundations can invest in ways that yield more impact,\* it is not clear among funders of Jewish education how aware they are of these practices and how strategic they are in their grant making decisions.

What kind of capital is necessary to grow and sustain the Jewish education enterprise? In the venture capital world the amount of venture capital being invested is tracked as an indicator of the health of the economy. There is a growing literature in the nonprofit world that similarly identifies the type of capital and the success of investments.

This research can support improved understanding of organizational life stages and the funding landscape to inform funders about opportunities to more strategic in their funding. It can also foster awareness of and the potential for alignment with other funders. Research on tolerance for risk and other factors that encourage, discourage, and/or dissuade making and continuing an investment would enable the field to determine how these factors might become assets in identifying and engaging funders. Identification of technical assistance that adds value to the funding would also benefit organizations at any stage.

\*Christine Lett, William Ryan, and Allen Grossman, “Virtuous Capital: What Foundations Can Learn from Venture Capitalists,” *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, 1997; Clara Miller, “The Equity Capital Gap.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, June 1, 2008.



## THE CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

**To:** CASJE Executive Steering Committee  
**From:** Jeremy J. Fingerman  
**Re:** Research on the Sustainability of Jewish Education  
Consumer-focused Question

### **Research Question**

What are the thresholds or “tipping points” in terms of cost or quality that impact decisions to consume educational opportunities?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Our Jewish community, as our American society at large, has an overabundance of choices and opportunities. The consumer, therefore, has the power to select or not, to participate or not, to determine the value of each experience or not.

Two important dimensions in choosing one product, service or opportunity (or not) seem to be determined by the consumer perception of cost and quality. I believe this to be even more important in the selection of Jewish educational opportunities. How each is positioned against both cost and quality for different target groups determines whether it will win the consumer’s choice and, ultimately enjoy sustained success (or not.)

In the field of Jewish camp, we are particularly sensitive to these two dimensions as we consider ways to significantly increase the number of children who have experienced transformative summers at camp. Previous research confirms that “camp works” in building strong Jewish identity and adult Jewish engagement. We just strive to make it work for even more children.

Specifically, we have been very interested in exploring the viability of creating new models of overnight camp that lower expenses in order to reduce tuition. Our hope is that adjusting the tradeoff between cost and quality we can create a potential program which might attract those for whom the current offerings are seemingly out of reach from a financial basis.

At the other end of the economic spectrum, how is the “perception” of quality impacting our ability to reach even more kids. In part as an answer, we have developed new, high-quality Jewish specialty camps which have attracted new consumers who otherwise would not have chosen a Jewish summer experience. In these cases, families have actually spent more money for these unique educational experiences.

Addressing these issues from a consumer perspective will greatly enhance the ability of our field to develop new targeted offerings with an economically viable and sustainable model, which in turn can be used by other adjacent producers.

### **Learning Opportunities**

We would like to understand the pricing and quality thresholds which influence consumers to choose a specific program. As it relates to Jewish summer camp, we envision a decision matrix for different income levels for both cost and program focus. We would also benefit from understanding if there are certain cost levels which would either interest or alternatively would dissuade a family from trying the overnight camp experience for the first time. As we witness in many other categories, consumers spend for quality experiences. Is there a pricing level below which might signal the offer is of inferior quality? Do decisions differ by regionally, economically, and based on level of prior affiliation/engagement? This research will give insights into consumer behavior and intent, and will allow the field to address new opportunities to serve more Jewish families.

### **Application**

Our field has become much more data-driven in the last five years as more data have become more accessible. Understanding thresholds for cost and value decision-making will help further elucidate how and why decisions are made. Smart operators in our field today across North America will take the learning from this research and apply it to their current business model. We will use this data to formulate, develop, and start new models for possible expansion.

I believe our leaning for the field of Jewish camp will have tremendous applications beyond our field. Understanding the “tipping points” between cost and quality can be applied to other educational choices consumer may make.



## THE CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

**To:** CASJE Executive Steering Committee  
**From:** Gary L. Gross  
**Re:** Research on the Sustainability of Jewish Education

### **Research Question**

What drives donors to fund Jewish education? What might lead people who do not fund in this area to do so?

### **The Problem**

Over the next several years, there will be a seismic transfer of wealth to the next generation within the Jewish community. What will happen to this wealth? How will the next generation of philanthropists view their role in supporting Jewish institutions, as compared to causes that are not specifically Jewish? The transfer of wealth represents a unique opportunity to impact the Jewish future. If Jewish educational institutions can affect the giving patterns of potential donors even in small ways, there is enormous potential to influence Jewish life in general and Jewish education in particular.

Each year our institutions struggle to meet already strained budgets. This no doubt impacts the quality of the program. Staff members are not well compensated, staff is lean, and costs to participants are high to name only a few of the challenges. Cost is a huge barrier to entry and keeps participants away from programs that we know are effective.

So what drives donors to fund the Jewish enterprise? By undertaking deeper research in this arena, we can better understand how to deepen relationships with current donors and attract new ones. Philanthropic attitudes and behaviors are complex. Research questions could include: What are the seminal relationships that can spark and nurture initial interest (friend, peer, family member, rabbi, or Jewish professional)? Is an individual child's or grandchild's participation in a program the catalyst? Is a donor driven by the desire to influence policy of an institution, or to support the institution's current direction? What role does power or ego play in donor motivations? Are donors interested in giving without active participation in the life of the institution, or is a desire to be involved a necessary precondition? What is the relationship between a donor's willingness to fund programs and the donor's vision of the Jewish community and Jewish life? Is the donor driven to create a partnership with a Jewish professional or other donor? How do generational differences and gender play into Jewish donor motivations? What can we learn about donor fatigue? How has Warren Buffet's Giving Pledge affected Jewish giving, and would a similar initiative with a specific Jewish focus be effective in the Jewish community?

## **Learning Opportunities**

If we understood better why Jewish donors give, we might attract and retain more donors to Jewish educational causes. Lay and professional leadership of Jewish educational institutions would benefit from a deeper understanding of donor motivations, as the findings would help improve their critical work in this arena.

## **Application**

Organizations need to build relationships with donors and involve them in their work. We know that some donors give in direct proportion to their involvement with an institution. Our institutions already have well developed plans and road maps for donors. There has been significant research in these areas. But gaining a deeper understanding of donor motivations in particular will lead to the creation of new programs aimed at donors and could aid institutions through new and increased giving.



## THE CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

**To:** CASJE Executive Steering Committee  
**From:** Jonathan Krasner  
**Re:** Research on the Sustainability of Jewish Education

### **Research Question:**

Do different sectors of the Jewish educational landscape attract different kinds of funders?

### **Statement of Problem:**

Recent statistics about giving to Jewish education-related institutions and causes are relatively hard to come by. According to the most recent report on Jewish philanthropy by the Institute for Jewish Community and Research, which examined the giving patterns of fifty-six of the largest Jewish foundations, with assets totaling almost \$20 billion, about 1.4 billion in grants were made in 2009-10. \$335 million (24%) went to identifiably Jewish causes, and about \$30 million of this total went to Jewish education. This represents about 14% of non-Israel related Jewish giving. The report estimates that about \$11.2 million went to K-12 education, while \$9.5 million was donated to private higher educational institutions. In addition, \$28 million was allocated to what the report called, "Israel advocacy," which included Israel trips for both teens and young adults.

Interestingly, while non-Israel-related education was the recipient of 21% of the grants for non-Israel oriented philanthropy, Israel advocacy, including Israel trips, made up only 8% of Israel-related grants. It seems likely that Israel trips are subsidized primarily by large gifts made by a relative handful of donors.

Unfortunately, the report does not further break down these numbers. However, if one looks at the mission statements and allocations of the most prominent foundations that have devoted considerable funds to Jewish education, it becomes clear that different sectors of the Jewish educational landscape attract different types of donors. Most large foundations have a clearly defined mission and/or prescribed set of interests, which guides their funding priorities and decision-making. This is certainly true of foundations concerned with Jewish education. A good example is the Avi Chai Foundation. With an endowment of about \$500 million that it has vowed to spend down by 2020, the Avi Chai Foundation's objectives in North America are clearly stated in its mission statement: "To encourage those of the Jewish faith towards greater commitment to Jewish observance and lifestyle by increasing their understanding, appreciation and practice of Jewish traditions, customs and laws; and, to encourage mutual understanding and sensitivity among Jews of different religious backgrounds and commitments to observance." According to Avi Chai documents these objectives have been concretized into three overarching goals -- "fostering Jewish literacy, religious purposefulness, and Jewish peoplehood" -- which have been addressed almost exclusively through grants to support day school education and overnight camping.

Another example of a large foundation with a clear mission that guides allocation decision making is the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation, which identifies three primary funding interests: Jewish youth engagement; public education; and enhancing the quality of life in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Its Jewish oriented funding is further circumscribed by its stated commitments to inclusivity, Israel and Tikkun Olam. As such, the foundation's grants have been earmarked to organizations that focus on Israel education or advocacy, service learning, and LGBT inclusivity. Likewise, the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life presents a clear and cogent statement of interests, focusing on the revitalization "of Jewish identity through educational and cultural initiatives that reach out to all Jews, with an emphasis on those who are on the margins of Jewish life, as well as to advocate for and support Hebrew and Jewish literacy among the general population." As such, the foundation has helped sponsor initiatives such as Birthright, BBYO, the Curriculum Initiative, and the Hebrew Language Academy Charter School.

None of this information is particularly unusual or surprising. What is notable is the paucity of data about how these foundation resources are distributed across the Jewish education landscape. Impressionistically, it appears that initiatives targeting youth and emerging adults, Israel tourism, Israel studies on university campuses, and service learning currently appear to be "hot." But until we have a comprehensive mapping of the philanthropic scene it is difficult to separate hype from reality.

### **Learning Opportunities:**

For the purposes of this proposal the term map is being used expansively to mean "a diagram or collection of data showing the spatial arrangement or distribution of something over an area." In order for a map of Jewish educational philanthropy to be of maximal utility it would ideally be multidimensional (e.g., geographic, demographic, sectoral [i.e., camping, day school, informal, etc.]), diagramming data both spatially and relationally. One could also envision a set of maps differentiated by variety of key variables (e.g., mission, target population, etc.)

A multidimensional map of the landscape of Jewish educational philanthropy would be an invaluable tool in assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of various educational strategies and initiatives. In recent years, many foundations have become adept at program assessment utilizing evidence based performance metrics. However, with assessment focused primarily on the micro rather than the macro-level it has been difficult if not impossible to gauge how funder-driven initiatives (individually or in tandem with other projects) are affecting the overall health of various sectors. Nor has it been possible to measure the comparative cost effectiveness of particular funding strategies, foci and individual programs.

### **Applications:**

A comprehensive and periodically updated map of Jewish educational philanthropy would be an important contribution for a number of reasons. First, from a research

standpoint, tracking change over time would allow us to identify trends and gain greater insight into the history and sociology of North American Jewish education. On a more practical level, it would facilitate a holistic approach to community needs assessment and strategic planning. Identifying underserved (and over-served) sectors could inform future funding decisions. No doubt, foundations will continue to earmark funds to favored causes and pet projects, as is their right. This is an inevitable consequence of the decline of centralized modes of philanthropic giving, as exemplified by the traditional federation system. Nevertheless, it is hoped that funders' decisions will be influenced by data driven analyses of community needs.

In conclusion, mapping the landscape of Jewish educational philanthropy would be of enormous benefit to a variety of researchers and stakeholders, for the purposes of current assessment and future strategic planning, particularly with the ascent of mega-donors and the threat of declining resources.