

Journal of Jewish Education *Update* Spring 2015

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► The *Journal* is delighted that Helena Miller is its new Senior Editor. Helena stepped in this past winter and has done a marvelous job riding the learning curve while managing our two themed issues. Helena is the Director of Research, Evaluation and Community Israel Engagement at United Jewish Israel Appeal. She holds a Ph.D. in Jewish Education from the University of London and is a past recipient of the 2012 Max M. Fisher Prize for Jewish Education in the Diaspora. She is past editor of the NRJE Newsletter, has served as an Associate Editor of the *Journal* and co-edited, along with past NRJE chairs Dr. Lisa Grant (HUC-JIR) and Dr. Alex Pomson (Rosov Consulting), the *International Handbook of Jewish Education* (Springer 2011). Welcome Helena!

► We also welcome the *Journal's* newly constituted group of Associate Editors and Editorial Board:

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- Although somewhat delayed, we have spread the Israel Education papers accepted for publication over the first two issues of Volume 81 (2015). Many thanks to Bethamie Horowitz and Helena Miller for managing that complex task
- Reminder: If you are considering submitting a manuscript for publication in the *Journal*, *please* first consult our Instructions to Authors on the *Journal's* website. If the form and content requirements for submission are not followed your manuscript may be returned.
- Transitions bring many challenges. Thank you to our board members, authors and reviewers for weathering the past few months as we all get up to speed as quickly as possible.

CASJE's Jewish Educational Leadership Research Initiative

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Last fall, the Coalition for Applied Studies in Jewish Education's (CASJE) selected a team led by American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct an inaugural research project in Jewish Educational Leadership. This study focuses on effective leadership practices in Jewish day schools. Effective educational leadership has long-lasting effects on students and staff, but has never been examined systematically in a Jewish school context.

The research seeks to better understand the challenges that educational leaders in Jewish day schools face on a regular basis, and the extent to which they are prepared to confront these challenges and to undertake other key responsibilities. We hope to identify Jewish educational leadership practices that make schools successful—and, in time, to share those findings with Jewish day school communities.

The AIR team includes Dr. Mark Schneider, Dr. Yael Kidron,

Dr. Ariela Greenberg, and Mr. David Blumenthal. The AIR team is supported by Professor Steven Cohen, Professor Jon Levisohn, Dr. Pearl Beck, Mrs. Roanna Shorofsky, and Mrs. Shira Hammerman.

The research project is an ambitious one. It includes both a national survey and an in-depth examination of Jewish educational leadership practices. To date, more than 500 Heads of School and Division Heads in more than 300 Jewish day schools across the United States have received invitations to participate in the national survey. From this survey, we will identify 50 schools for "deep dives", from which we hope to learn much more about effective leadership.

One version of the survey is directed at Heads of School to identify the educational leadership qualities they look for in a

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Research Update from JData: Partnerships and the Power of Data

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J Data (www.jdata.com) is a growing trove of data on the Jewish educational system in North America. The value of these data, however, is realized only when they are analyzed, interpreted, and put to use in the world. Releasing the full power of data depends on the partnership between researchers and practitioners that translates pages of numbers into information that, in turn, animates action.

A case in point is JData's recent work with PEJE—The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education. Last year, PEJE ran a Recruitment and Retention Academy (the forerunner of *Atidenu*, its latest national initiative). Thirty-four participating day schools entered into JData information relevant to their enrollments, recruitment, and retention. These data included both the schools' self-assessment of their practices and key metrics for measuring performance and change over time. Metrics include percent retention, recruitment success rate, enrollment growth, capacity utilization, and tuition revenue as a percent of total expenses. Our analysis linked these two types of information in order to test the extent to which schools with greater practices achieve higher scores on their key metrics. Doing so provided a built-in evaluation for PEJE—as the day schools work with PEJE to increase best practices, do they also fare better in building their enrollments?

The data showed that fewer than one-third of the schools coming into the Academy explicitly and systematically involved faculty in student retention efforts. Almost half of the schools had no systematic procedures for identifying dissatisfied

students and families and three-fourths lacked a system for tracking the impact of retention activities on these families. Attrition rates in the participating schools averaged about 11%. On average, almost one-fourth of a school's capacity went unused in 2013-14. Simply put, almost one-fourth of their seats were unfilled and generated no tuition revenue for the school. All of these numbers can now be tracked over time.

Findings suggested that the greater number of best practices that a day school followed the higher its recruitment success rate. The number of best practices, however, seemed not to have an effect on attrition rates. Our sense is that simply engaging in best practices is not sufficient. Rather, schools need to learn how to engage in these practices in a thoughtful, systematic and effective way.

And here is where the combined power of the partnership comes into play. JData can gather and analyze the data, and explain the patterns and trends they reveal. But it takes a partner like PEJE to take that information and turn it into programs and services that can help day schools make real—and measurable—change for the better.

To learn more, [read the full report here](#).

CASJE's Jewish Educational Leadership Research Initiative

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candidate for a Division Head position, what student outcomes they use to assess progress toward accomplishing the school's mission, and what kinds of challenges they face that may hinder instruction and student success. A second survey is designed for Division Heads and asks about their professional development, satisfaction with different aspects of their job, and their interactions with teachers, students, and parents.

The second – “deep dive” - phase of the study involves the collection of data from teachers, students, division heads, and school heads. This will be done using multiple validated research instruments. The first one is the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED), a 360 degree assessment which focuses on learning-centered leadership behaviors that influence teachers, staff, and most importantly, students. The second measure is the Conditions for Learning Survey for students in grades three and up. It is a measure of the peer

culture, academic challenge, teacher-student relationships, and Jewish climate. Additional important measures are teacher job satisfaction survey and students' performance. By combining different types of data, we will explore what Jewish educational leaders pay most attention to, and how they adapt their leadership to the structures, missions, and contexts of their schools.

To date, we have received enthusiastic responses from Heads of School who see this study as an opportunity to review their school using independent and validated measures. In addition to the publicly available research reports, our research team will provide each of the participating schools with customized reports that highlight areas of strength and areas for priorities and planning that can further grow the capacity of Jewish day schools.

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