



# Pursuing Excellence in Jewish Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of JECEI's Transformative Change Model

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JEWISH EARLY CHILDHOOD  
**JECEI**  
EDUCATION INITIATIVE



# Paper Purpose

This paper is a case study of how a **transformative change effort** affects quality in Jewish ECE and how that **pursuit of quality** results in the **engagement of families in Jewish living and learning** long term.



# Jewish ECE as a Gateway

- Parenthood precipitates major changes (Rosen)
- Families with young children is a crucial time for instilling Jewish identity, engaging parents, seeking communal connections (Vogelstein)
- Only 14% of children are in Jewish ECE
- Parents make choices about Jewish ECE because of quality of school's operation (Ben-Avie)
- Connection between child care quality and children's development (Ben-Avie, Vogelstein)

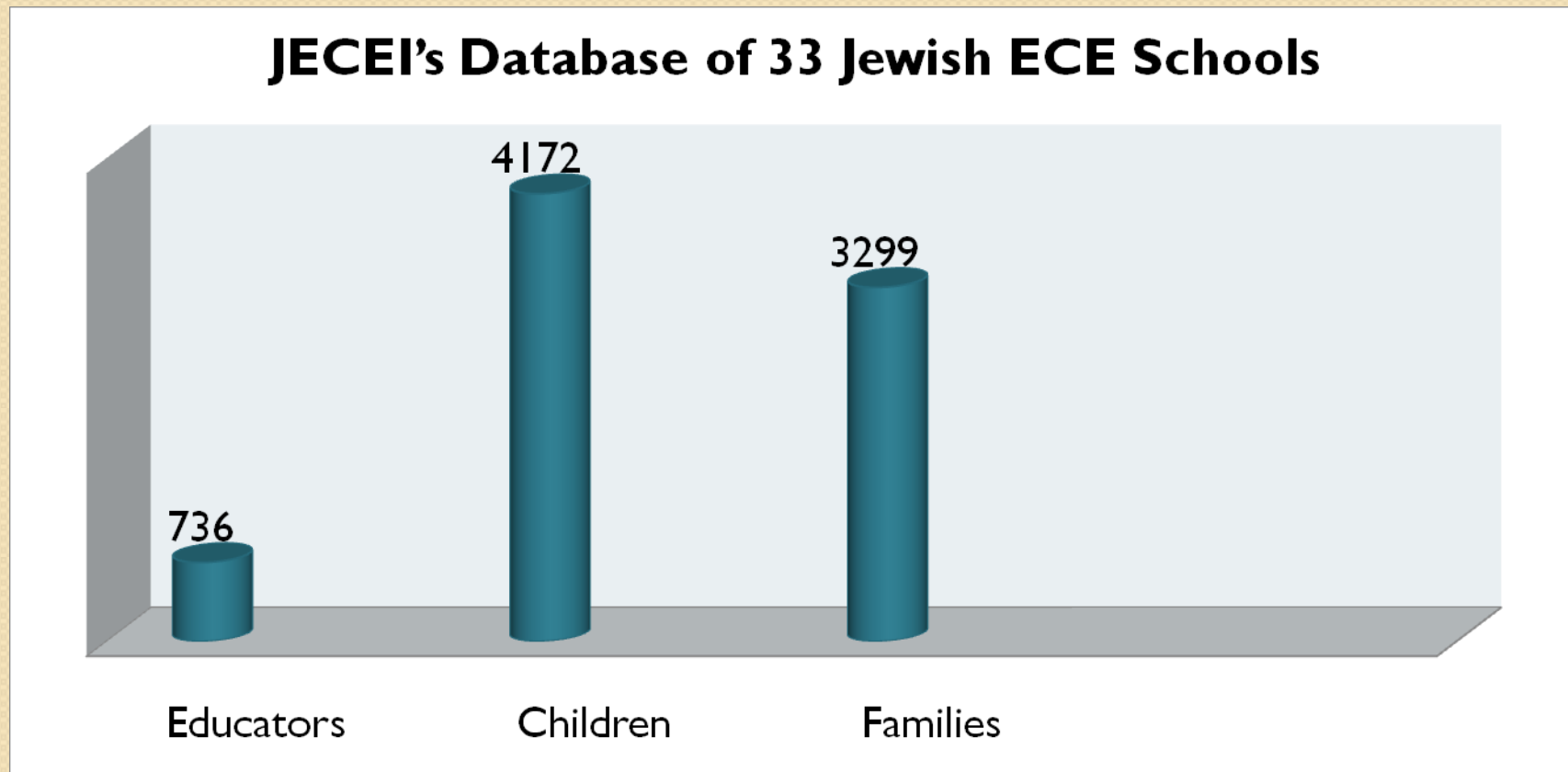


# What is JECEI?

- 2 long-term outcomes from JECEI Logic Model:
  - Expand # of children in quality Jewish ECE
  - Move families toward enriched Jewish life and ongoing Jewish learning
- JECEI focuses on 3 areas:
  - Quality early childhood education
  - Engaging families in Jewish living & learning
  - Shared leadership among professionals, parents, lay leaders

# JECEI RESEARCH & EVALUATION DATA

Database



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- #1 Quality Early Childhood Education
  - #2 Jewish Living and Learning
  - #3 Shared Leadership

 **WHAT JECEI CHANGES:  
OUTCOMES**

# #1 QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: AFFECTS JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Parents view of the Purpose of Jewish ECE in General rather than Jewish Terms

Schools	Strong Social Skills	Competence in Abilities	Sense of Jewish Values
Original JECEI Schools	65%	59%	<b>30%</b>
Wave 2 of JECEI Schools	80%	69%	<b>22%</b>
Wave 3 JECEI Transformational Schools	76%	61%	<b>17%</b>
Wave 3 JECEI Transitional Schools	75%	64%	<b>19%</b>
Project Kavod Comparison Group	75%	64%	<b>19%</b>

# #1 QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: AFFECTS JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Why parents select a Jewish ECE School?

Two most important factors:

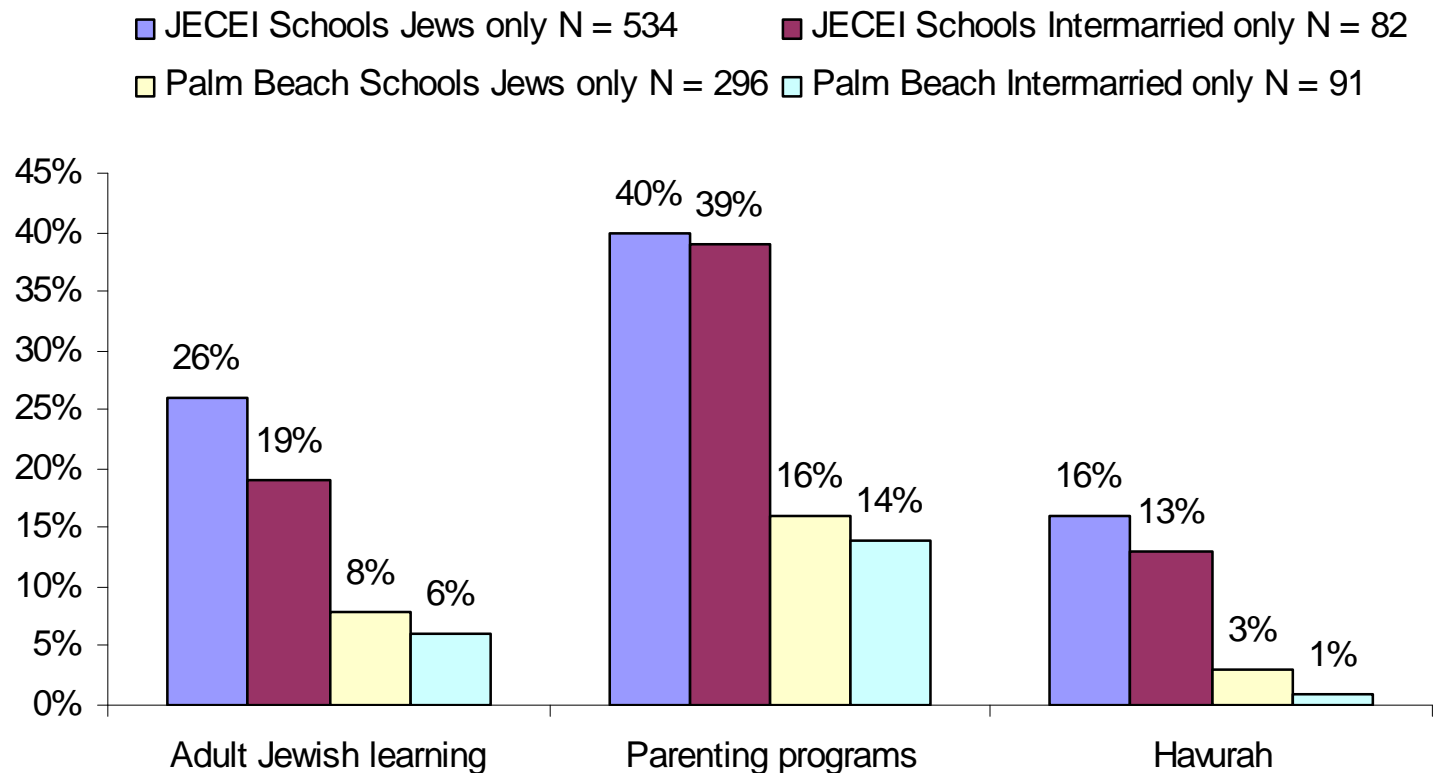
- Quality of the staff and educators (4.88)
- Quality of the child development program (4.77)

*Parents' perceptions of a school's quality predicted, was linked, to increased participation in Jewish living and learning and the impact of those experiences on the families' Jewish behavior and attitudes (Ben-Avie et al, 2011)*



## #2 Engaging Families in Jewish Living and Learning: In-married and Intermarried Families

During this school year parents participated in the following school programs:



## #2 Engaging Families in Jewish Living and Learning: In-married and Intermarried Families

Increases in Non-Engaged Inmarried and Intermarried, Bailis and Shevitz, 2010, p. 20	% Report Increase
Becoming more involved in the Jewish community as a result of enrollment of children at JECEI centers	<b>+70%</b>
Feeling good about being Jewish	<b>+68%</b>
Providing a rhythm to family's day, week, year through Jewish practices such as Shabbat and holidays	<b>+67%</b>
Feeling joy in being Jewish	<b>+64%</b>
Feeling a strong sense of meaning in our lives	<b>+63%</b>
Feeling more comfortable participating in Jewish practice	<b>+63%</b>
Feeling part of the chain of the Jewish people from the distant past and into the future	<b>+61%</b>
My family will join a temple, JCC, or other Jewish group	<b>+53%</b>
Likelihood of child/ren attending Jewish camp in the future	<b>+43%</b>
Likelihood of children attending Hebrew/congregational school	<b>+39%</b>
Likelihood of children attending Jewish day school in future	<b>+26%</b>

## #2 ENGAGING FAMILIES IN JEWISH LIVING AND LEARNING: IN-MARRIED AND INTERMARRIED FAMILIES

Jewish Friends

From Bailis and Shevitz

- Doing Jewish things with other families
  - 81% of families reporting some increase
  - 30% of families reporting a lot of increase
- Increased likelihood of socializing with other Jews
  - 67% of not previously engaged inmarried families
  - 73% of not previously engaged intermarried

### **#3 SHARED LEADERSHIP: INCREASES ENGAGEMENT IN JEWISH LIVING & LEARNING**

#### JECEI Leadership Teams

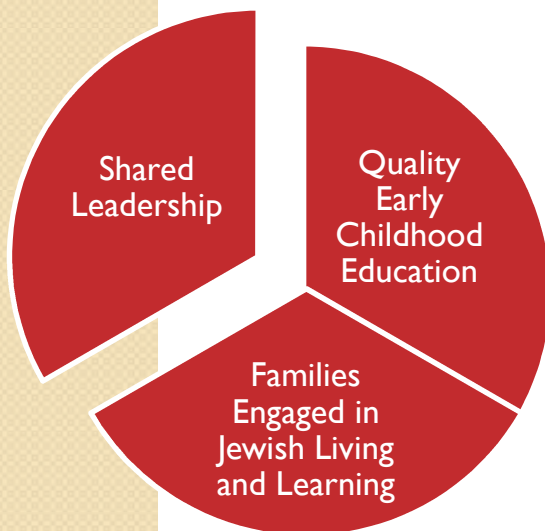
When we look only at parents who say that they are now doing things **“a lot” more** as a result of JECEI, we see a large difference between the leaders and the rest of the parents. **More of the leaders have changed a lot.** On seven of the eight measures, the range of the **differences between** the two groups was between **18% and 26%**” (Bailis and Shevitz 2010, p. 25).



## Example of Shared Leadership

I brought up [building a sukkah from scratch] during the JECEI meeting and the teachers thought what a fantastic way to start the year....What a great way to connect to our children and families through a community wide experience.

*a JECEI Leadership Team parent member*



#4 JECEI model of effectiveness increases over time

#5 Educators need support to implement transformative change

#6 Articulating outcomes and principles of quality augments the transformative change process



## **HOW JECEI FACILITATES TRANSFORMATION CHANGE**

## #4 JECEI MODEL OF EFFECTIVENESS INCREASES OVER TIME

Teachers' Understanding and Use of JECEI Components

	All Centers	Newer Centers	Advanced Centers	Difference
Degree to which most teachers follow the JECEI approach	62%	42%	<b>73%</b>	<b>+31%</b>
Degree to which own teaching follows the JECEI approach	65%	54%	<b>72%</b>	<b>+18%</b>
Degree to which more teachers understand the JECEI approach	59%	43%	<b>67%</b>	<b>+24%</b>
Own understanding of the JECEI approach	76%	62%	<b>84%</b>	<b>+22%</b>

## #4 JECEI model of effectiveness increases over time

Creating a paradigm shift to a new reality:

Formula

$D \times V \times F > R$

Dissatisfaction x Vision  
x First Steps >  
Resistance

“There is a growing body of evidence that the effectiveness of the programming in JECEI centers increases over time”

(Shevitz and Bailis, 2010, p. 4)





## #5 Educators need support to implement the JECEI transformation change model

Use or application lags behind knowledge

“higher proportions of teachers understand the Reggio-inspired way of teaching and JECEI’s Jewish lenses than consistently use them in the classroom”

(Shevitz & Bailis, 2010, p. 5)

## #6 ARTICULATING OUTCOMES AND PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY AUGMENTS THE TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE PROCESS

### JECEI 13 Principles of Quality: Concretized the JECEI Approach

JECEI Accreditation Procedure: School Guide 2010 Principles of Quality and Evidence

JECEI Principle of Quality: Small group project work and documentation are part of the curricular process of teachers engaging students in constructing the learning experience.

#### 4.1 Engaging children in constructing the learning process

4.1.3 Teachers use provocations to encourage children's exploration

4.1.4 Teachers use their observation of and/or conversations with children to inform learning experiences

#### 4.3 Documenting children's learning

4.3.1 Teachers regularly engage in the process of observation and documentation as a way of facilitating learning and growth

4.3.5 Teachers document children's exploration of Judaism and Jewish life

4.3.9 Teachers use documentation as a vehicle for communicating with parents about their child's learning experience. JECEI 13 principles of quality



# Implications for Jewish ECE and Change Initiatives

## **Outcomes**

- Excellence in Jewish Early Childhood Education matters: it is the path to increasing Jewish engagement.
- Jewish early childhood education can be the gateway to Jewish engagement, both personally and communally, for intermarried and in-married families that funders seek.
- Change initiatives can help Jewish early childhood schools go from good to great with important results and benefits for all.



# Implications for Jewish ECE and Change Initiatives

## **Key Factors for Facilitating Transformative Change**

- Professionals partnering with parents in decision making around Jewish living and learning makes a difference in the lives of the parents doing the planning, the other parents, the school, and host institution.
- Vision combined with indicators or benchmarks is a powerful combination for raising quality, transforming an institution.
- Creating sustainable educational change – the stickiness factor - a) takes time, b) focuses on the whole institution, and c) requires support for teachers who grasp new approaches to translate them into the classroom.