

# Jewish Educational Personnel

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Jewish educators are a critical component in providing quality Jewish educational experience to learners of all ages. Many professionals and lay leaders recognize the important role of the educators and are seeking new and innovative methodologies for investing in their growth, development and status (A Time to Act 1990; Goodman & Schaap 2006a). Among the numerous efforts to improve Jewish education over the last decade, those that were designed to address the needs of the professional educators were grounded in research as part of the implementation process. This general climate encouraged foundations to sponsor, academics to conduct, and policy makers and programmers to utilize research on the professional lives of Jewish educators as a component of their planning process.

The result of these research efforts changed perceptions about the shortage of qualified Jewish educators into an understanding that greater knowledge of the educators' backgrounds, their professional preparation and ongoing professional learning, and the process of recruitment and retention are key elements in addressing the overall concerns of the field. Some of the key questions that these studies addressed included: What do we know about the educators—their demographics, backgrounds, and levels of commitment? Why did they enter the field, and what factors will encourage them to remain—salaries, benefits, respect, status and/or *kavod*? How do we properly prepare them for success through pre-service and in-service professional development programs? What impact does the status of the educator have on the ability of the system to achieve success? The initial findings presented in this chapter compelled and propelled Jewish communal organizations, philanthropists, Jewish educational institutions, educators and lay leaders to take action and to embark on additional research initiatives.

Roberta Louis Goodman was on the research team that conducted the study of Jewish educational personnel as part of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, an experience that changed her career path as a Jewish educator from practitioner in the field to researcher and evaluator. Subsequently she has been both a researcher of and advocate for issues related to personnel in Jewish education. Eli Schaap, as the associate director of CAJE, an organization interested in advocating for Jewish educators, focused much of his work on research aimed at bringing personnel related issues to the forefront of the larger Jewish community. The two researchers have collaborated on a number of key projects over the last five years.

## CONTEXT

Personnel in Jewish education emerged as a priority issue in Jewish communal life as a key component of the Jewish continuity agenda in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Commission on Jewish Education in North America, funded by philanthropist Mort Mandel, recommended raising the quality of personnel as one of its foundational centerpieces for improving Jewish education (A Time to Act 1990).

At the time, little was known about Jewish educators in terms of general characteristics or, more significantly, in terms of why they chose to work in Jewish education, their perception of themselves as professionals with a career, or why they remained in the field of Jewish education. A few studies in the decade prior to the 1990s existed, but they were either too limited in scope (the Aron and Bank

study of supplementary school teachers in 1988) or were so broad and general in the information that they provided (the JESNA and Hebrew University census of Jewish schools in 1985) that they provided limited assistance in the planning process at the local and national levels.

The 1990s, on the other hand, were characterized by a number of studies that examined Jewish educators in the three formal educational settings—congregational schools, day schools, and early childhood programs—in order to help raise the quality of Jewish educators. Led by Mandel, who established the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE) to implement the recommendations proposed in *A Time to Act* (1990), the Lead Community project focused its resources on learning more about the educators in the three lead communities (Atlanta, Baltimore and Milwaukee) in order to help improve Jewish education on a community-wide basis. The CIJE project adapted Lortie's work on public school personnel (1975), which dealt with the nature and content of the teaching occupation, to better understand the sentiments and activities of Jewish educators. The CIJE study ("Policy Brief" 1994) included both a survey and interviews that provided insights into the professional lives of Jewish educators in terms of reasons for entering the field, career path, workplace conditions, satisfaction, professional development, and demographic characteristics. Subsequent studies incorporating similar questions in Cleveland (Tammivaara and Goodman 1996b) and Washington State (Tammivaara and Goodman 1996a) were used as planning tools for those communities.

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century emphasis was placed on conducting studies, including action research, to inform policy, planning, programming, advocacy, and fundraising both nationally and locally. The emerging focus on early childhood Jewish education as a significant gateway for families into Jewish life was connected to several studies, including a national survey of early childhood Jewish educators (Vogelstein & Kaplan 2002), a study in Miami-Dade and Broward counties connected to a project to improve their salaries, benefits, and *kavod* (Goodman & Schaap 2006b) and Denver's planning effort to reach more Jewish families through its early childhood programs, which included examining its personnel (Center for Policy Research 2006a).

Early childhood was not the only delivery system targeted. The Central Agency for Jewish Education in St. Louis conducted a study of the perceptions of congregational educators by its major stakeholders—teachers, directors, rabbis, congregational board members, and federation board members—tied to the Jewish Education Recruitment and Retention Initiative (JERRI) of JESNA as a step toward addressing the status of local educators (Goodman & Schaap 2006a). A third study by Pomson (2000) examined in depth the working lives of graduates from the Jewish educational certification program for day schools, finding that teaching is connected closely to one's personhood.

On the continental level, Kelner et al. (2005), working on the assumptions that those individuals working in Jewish institutions are viewed as professionals and that the quality of institutions relies heavily on its personnel, surveyed full-time communal workers including Jewish educators in six communities. This study produced the first major comparisons of full-time Jewish educators in congregational and day school settings, including most day school teachers, to other Jewish communal professionals; early childhood Jewish educators were not included. On a more comprehensive level, the JESNA sponsored study of day and supplementary schools (Ben-Avie & Kress 2006) is aimed at identifying characteristics of these schools (School Registry) and educators' perceptions of the elements of school culture (Quality of Life). This study has the potential for creating educational change and raising the quality of Jewish education on the school, community, and national levels. Finally, the Reform movement is updating an earlier study of its congregational schools, now called "Portraits of Learning," including a section on teachers and education directors (Joseph 1997), in order to aid its planning for the future.

Despite the growth in the type, range, and number of personnel studies, they are limited primarily to Jewish educators in formal educational settings—that is, schools. Missing are significant studies of educators in informal settings, such as camps, youth movements and Israel experiences, and adult Jewish educators. In addition, there is little if any research on central agency for Jewish education staff, rabbis as educators, professors of Jewish education, Jewish studies faculty, and those working in Jewish educational roles in federations, national organizations, and private foundations. Another

significant gap are those Jewish educators who have left the field or those who have considered entering the field but decided not to.

## **WHO ARE THE EDUCATORS?**

Jewish education lacks a census of Jewish educators that would parallel the Jewish population studies, although the JESNA study (Ben-Avie & Kress, 2006) that is currently underway will hopefully fill this void in the near future. Most of the numbers about educators come from local sources, predominantly central agencies for Jewish education, that sometimes collect data on the number of Jewish educators in day schools, supplementary schools, and/or early childhood programs to aid their local planning. One attempt to estimate the number of Jewish educators was based on the 1999/2000 census of students conducted by ADCA (the Association of Directors of Central Agencies) and Schick's census of day school students. Goodman & Schaap (2002) extrapolated the number of educators using known teacher/student ratios. In 2000 they estimated that there were 22,000 day school teachers (including Judaic and general studies), 16,000 early childhood teachers and assistants and 28,000 congregational school teachers. These numbers do not account for those teachers who work in more than one type of setting. There are no similar estimates of the number of informal and adult educators.

The existing studies present information about teachers and administrators such as age, gender, Jewish identification, Jewish and general education, years in a setting, number of jobs in Jewish education, and career perceptions. The next section provides data and issues related to gender, Jewish identification, and Jewish and general education of Jewish educators in day schools, congregational schools, and early childhood programs.

## **GENDER**

Most Jewish educators are female. That pattern is found in day schools, congregational schools and, most severely, early childhood education. Kelner (2005) reports that 77% of the educators in day schools, both teachers and administrators, are female. The St. Louis study of congregational school educators found that 79% of the Jewish educators, including both directors and teachers, are female. In early childhood Jewish education no less than 97% of the directors, teachers and aides are female, based upon the results of three studies, one national and two local (Vogelstein & Kaplan 2002; Goodman & Schaap 2006b; Center for Policy Research 2006a). Despite the preponderance of females, issues remain regarding gender equality in terms of positions, promotions, and salaries, which are related to status, power, and money. Kelner's study of Jewish communal professionals identified a gender gap affecting women's salaries for all positions (2005, p. 37). On a broader level, an issue facing the Jewish community is that of boys and men lacking role models for participation in Jewish life from the youngest ages through adulthood, of which little is known at present.

## **JEWISH IDENTIFICATION**

Implicitly, regardless of the setting or program, Jewish education is expected to expose and convey Jewish knowledge, skills, and values, provide a context in which to experience Judaism and strengthen commitment to Judaism among its learners. While it might be anticipated that not all students in early childhood or day schools are Jewish, for a variety of reasons, what is less obvious is how prevalent non-Jewish staff are in both administration and teaching positions that include teaching about Judaism. The significance of having non-Jewish staff centers on the significance of staff serving as role models for how to live a Jewish life. When non-Jews serve in leadership roles, questions arise about their role in setting the Jewish vision and content for the programs.

Day schools often employ non-Jews in teaching and administrative roles, particularly in the area of general studies. However, with the growth of day school enrollment and the number of day schools, the supply of qualified Jewish educators has become strained. In 2005, 32% of general studies teachers and 11% of educational administrators, 20% of day school staff overall, were not Jewish, although almost all Judaic content teachers were Jewish (Kelner 2005). The significance of the percentage of non-Jewish general studies teachers varies as some schools prefer to split the curriculum between

Jewish and general studies while others favor an integration of Judaic and general studies. The issue is becoming more apparent and problematic in the upper-tier administrative positions, where many non-Jews have taken positions as head of school or principal, often because they are better qualified to administer a school in terms of credentials and experience than Jewish candidates. While having a non-Jewish head of school is in itself not necessarily a bad thing, it does present serious challenges for how Jewish schools create and sustain a compelling vision of Jewish life that is communicated through its educational system, since leadership is a key factor in this process. If the supply of qualified Jewish educators at all levels of the day school system continues to diminish, the very essence of the Jewish nature of the schools may come into question.

Early childhood Jewish education has the highest percentage of non-Jews serving in educational roles. The national study (Vogelstein & Kaplan 2002) showed that 31% of all early childhood Jewish educators were not Jewish, including 30% of the teachers. In Miami, as part of Project *Kavod*, the early childhood education directors provided information about the number of teachers on their staffs. The unpublished survey indicates that 38% of the teachers in Dade County and 27% in Broward County are not Jewish. The percentage of non-Jewish assistant teachers is 38% in Dade and 30% in Broward. These results are higher than in the “official” study of Jewish educational personnel (Goodman & Schaap 2006b) because a higher percentage of non-Jewish teachers did not respond to the survey. The numbers in Denver (Center for Policy Research 2006a) are similar, with 30% of the teachers and teacher aides not being Jewish. These numbers have changed dramatically since the CIJE study (“Policy Brief” 1994) conducted almost a decade earlier, which showed that 10% of the early childhood teachers were not Jewish, although in one of the three communities the percentage was 21%. As attention is drawn to early childhood Jewish education as a gateway to Jewish life, the preparedness of teachers and the program to foster those connections for the children and their families needs to be addressed.

## **EDUCATION: JEWISH AND GENERAL**

The most desirable profile for a Jewish educator is to have degrees in both education and Judaic studies, as these constitute the two main fields from which Jewish education draws. The CIJE study (“Policy Brief” 1994) identified 19% of the teachers in Jewish schools as having credentials in both areas. An additional 35% had training in education, 12% in Judaic studies, and 34% in neither. More recent studies confirm that Jewish educators continue to lack appropriate credentials regardless of the setting (day school, congregational school, and early childhood), calling into question the preparedness and ability of these personnel to deliver high-quality Jewish education. As a result, there is a clear need for substantive professional growth opportunities in both Jewish learning and pedagogy to assist them in fulfilling their roles.

## **DAY SCHOOL EDUCATORS**

The educational background of day school educators varies by position among administrators, Judaic studies teachers, and general studies teachers, according to the Kelner study (2005). Only 20% of the administrators and 23% of day school teachers received formal preparation in both Judaic studies and Jewish education, which is similar to the CIJE study (“Policy Brief” 1994), where 19% of the educators in the three school settings received training in both areas. A significant number of day school administrators and teachers hold no formal preparation in education. Only 76% of the administrators, 51% of the Judaica teachers, and 57% of the teachers with no Judaic responsibilities specified receiving formal training in education. In terms of Judaic studies, the picture is bleaker, with 32% of administrators, 42% of Judaic studies teachers, and 5% of the teachers with no specified Judaic responsibilities having formal training in Judaic studies. The good news is that approximately 31% of all day school teachers hold graduate degrees in Jewish or general education. Too many, however, lack the benefit of formal learning in education not to mention the preparation in Judaic studies, needed for their positions.

### CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL EDUCATORS

The St. Louis study (Goodman & Schaap 2006a) portrays congregational school educators as secularly well educated, with most having earned a bachelors degree, a noticeable percentage earning formal credentials in education, and demonstrating a commitment to continuing adult Jewish learning and ongoing professional development, especially in pedagogy. Of the teachers 79% have earned a bachelors degree, 14% are enrolled in an undergraduate college program, and the remaining 7%, most of whom are older than 23, do not have a bachelors degree. Over one third of the teachers, 38%, hold a degree in general education. While many lack a degree in education, the study of Philadelphia's congregational teachers suggests that a much higher percentage have exposure to educational theory, with 79% indicating that they took at least one college level course in education (Rosenbaum & Tigay 2002). When we look at the number of teachers with credentials in both Judaic studies and education, the St. Louis study, which appears to be somewhat typical, indicates that only 1% of the teachers have earned credentials in both areas.

What is noticeable is the ongoing commitment to adult Jewish learning among the St. Louis educators (Goodman & Schaap 2006a). Seventy-five percent have participated in formal adult Jewish study, including 30% who have taken college level courses. While these numbers do not speak to either the quantity or quality of the adult Jewish learning experience, they do reflect that these teachers have studied Judaism as adults, are committed to courses, not just sporadic learning opportunities, and are willing to commit to lifelong learning experiences. Combined with the 24% who studied Judaism only as children, almost all, 99%, have received some formal Jewish education. This percentage distinguishes the preparation and commitment to learning of congregational teachers from early childhood educators in particular.

In terms of ongoing professional development, almost all teachers participated in a variety of professional development offerings, with 60% spending six hours or more in sessions or classes each year. Their participation speaks to the ability of congregations and central agencies to make professional development an expectation for this part-time work. The teachers' participation also indicates the potential for professional development to augment the effectiveness of congregational teachers and raise the quality of the congregational educational experience.

In Philadelphia there is a similar commitment to ongoing learning among the congregational school teachers (Rosenbaum & Tigay 2002) who come with strong backgrounds in Judaic studies, with 52% having taken college-courses in Judaica. Two thirds of the teachers surveyed expressed an interest in taking college level courses and another 14% in pursuing a degree in Jewish studies or education, although 70% indicated that a stipend is a necessary component to encourage them to pursue a degree in Jewish education. In both Philadelphia and St. Louis the central agencies for Jewish education—and in the case of Philadelphia, a local college of Jewish studies—actively encourage and support ongoing educator learning. These two communities demonstrate what is possible in terms of congregational school teachers' expectations and participation in ongoing professional development.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD JEWISH EDUCATORS

Even though early childhood Jewish educators have slightly higher levels of secular education than their national counterparts (Center for Policy Research 2006a) compared to other Jewish educators who are either in day schools or congregational schools, they lack general as well as Jewish educational credentials. The three studies of early childhood Jewish teachers show a range in terms of earning a bachelors degree from a high of about two thirds in Denver (Center for Policy Research 2006) and nationally (Vogelstein & Kaplan 2002) to 43% in Miami (Goodman & Schaap 2006b). Not all of these bachelor degrees are in education much less early childhood education. While the Denver study points to the fact that most teachers have taken courses in early childhood education, it should be acknowledged that one can earn a CDA (Child Development Associate), a minimum certification, or fulfill state requirements for instruction in early childhood in many states without taking any university courses for credit. What is not known is whether the qualifications of the early childhood Jewish teachers studied in the past few years represent an increase in general educational qualifica-

tions or, as is the case among early childhood educators throughout the United States, a decline in educational qualifications from previous decades (Herzenberg 2005).

In addition to the lack of general education background, many early childhood Jewish educators have little if any formal Jewish education beyond early adolescence. Of the Jewish teachers in Miami, almost a third received no Jewish education as a child or adult. In the national study (Vogelstein & Kaplan 2002) 45% reported that their highest level of Jewish education was an afternoon Hebrew school. Very few early childhood teachers have participated in formal adult Jewish learning. In Denver 10% reported taking college-level Judaic classes and 25% adult Jewish education courses. While early childhood educators are generally required to participate in professional development as part of the licensing process of their institutions, it does not appear that schools are connecting required hours in professional development to studying Jewish topics.

A new development in many states is the movement to publicly supported educational programs for four-year-olds. As part of this change in the public availability of programs for four-year-olds, states are demanding higher educational levels for those teaching, with a bachelor's degree and credentials in the education of young children becoming the minimum standard, accompanied by increased salaries for those with proper credentials. If early childhood Jewish education does not keep pace in terms of the educational preparation of all personnel, they will lose their ability to remain competitive with these "free alternatives." Jewish early childhood programs will need to better match the salary and benefit levels of these publicly funded programs or risk losing their most qualified staff. At stake will be the ability of Jewish early childhood programs to compete with the publicly funded programs for students and for staff.

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Recruitment and retention of qualified Jewish educational personnel is a serious problem. A high annual turnover rate characterizes Jewish educators in schools. Among the few results available from the Registry of Schools from the JESNA study (Ben-Avie & Kress 2006), it shows that a quarter of instructional staff members in day schools and supplementary schools were new to their positions in 2005/2006, for the most part replacing others and not as the result of new positions. In St. Louis it was estimated that 28% of the congregational teachers were new to their positions (Goodman & Schaap 2006a). These numbers reflect the pressure placed on schools to constantly find quality staff. On a national level 45% of day school directors and 50% of congregational school directors indicated that it is difficult or very difficult to find quality teachers (Ben-Avie & Kress 2006). According to many national studies, the first few years are the most critical for teachers' long-term retention. More focus on retaining educators will alleviate some of the recruitment needs.

Many Jewish educators stay in the field in all three school settings—day, congregational, and early childhood—long enough to make it worthwhile to invest in them. In terms of congregational school teachers, 50% in St. Louis worked in Jewish education five years or more, and in Philadelphia 63% worked six years or more, with nearly 50% teaching in the field for ten years or more. The early childhood Jewish educators in Miami (Goodman & Schaap 2006b) average seven years in their current positions and ten years in the field of Jewish education. In Denver (Center for Policy Research 2006b), early childhood Jewish teachers average 7.2 years working in their schools and 9.9 years working in early childhood Jewish education. Directors averaged only 4.3 years in their current positions in Denver. While Jewish educators on average show some longevity in the field, that is not necessarily true of their employment patterns in a particular school. Figuring out how to retain educators in their workplaces is a major challenge.

Investing in the career of a new teacher is viewed as a major strategy for retaining teachers in education. A major point of departure is often the first few years of teaching (Ingersoll 2001). The Rand Corporation's study of the research on teacher recruitment and retention found "Schools that provided mentor and induction programs especially related to collegial support had lower turnover of beginning teachers" (Guarino, Santebanez, Daley & Brewer 2004, p. x). One St. Louis congregational education director relates how her frustration with teacher turnover led her to develop a mentoring program for new teachers, essentially solving her problem (Goodman & Schaap 2006a). The whole

area of teachers receiving support from directors or supervisors in the curricular guidelines given to them and their interaction with peers is something that needs to be addressed on a deeper level, as it affects both recruitment and retention as well as the quality of education provided (Goodman & Schaap 2006a).

This section on recruitment and retention considers four questions: 1) Where does one find Jewish educators? 2) What motivates an individual to become and remain a Jewish educator? 3) Are Jewish educators career or professionally oriented? 4) Do salaries and benefits matter?

#### **WHERE TO FIND JEWISH EDUCATORS?**

In many respects, the likely candidates to become Jewish educators are well identified—they are individuals who have continued their formal schooling beyond bar/bat mitzvah, participated in a youth group, attended a Jewish overnight or day camp, worked in Jewish education as a teen or college student, taken college-level Judaic or Hebrew courses and/or studied Judaism as an adult (Goodman & Schaap 2006a). In a study of individuals who participated in a recruitment program geared to college students, Schaap (2004) found that those who participated in a year-long Jewishly oriented program post-undergraduate were even more likely to enter a Jewish communal field. In addition, many young and older Jews come with the experience of having worked in Jewish education in one form or another that not only prepares them and shows them the rewards of being a Jewish educator, but also socializes them into living as a Jew within the Jewish community. These individuals have experienced the match among their values, skills, abilities and knowledge, which are key factors in the selection of any career (Goodman 2000). Some may lack an understanding of the possible career paths in Jewish education. Others need encouragement to enter the system either part-time or full-time.

While clearly not all Jews who share these characteristics become Jewish educators, these experiences lay the groundwork for learning about the field of Jewish education, socializing them into Jewish communal life, identifying meaningful and satisfying work, and developing some of the actual skills and knowledge that prepare one to be a Jewish educator.

#### **WHAT MOTIVATES A PERSON TO BECOME AND REMAIN A JEWISH EDUCATOR?**

The opportunity to work with children is a major factor attracting individuals into positions in Jewish education. Whether the study is of day school teachers (Pomson 2001), early childhood educators (Goodman & Schaap 2006b) or congregational school teachers (Goodman & Schaap, 2006a), working with children ranks highest as the reason that people are attracted to their work as Jewish educators. Pomson (2001) also found that serving the Jewish community was a value that brought people to the field. Goodman & Schaap (2006a) found that the ideal of serving the Jewish people was a significant factor in keeping men in the field.

Pomson's work suggests that as teachers become immersed in teaching, other factors unrelated to the act of teaching retain people in the field of Jewish education.

When participants talked about the ongoing satisfactions and challenges in their work as well as their reasons for staying in the profession, they pointed to a set of factors that are neither intrinsic to the act of teaching nor contextual in a traditionally understood sense. Instead, they identified a set of rewards and discomforts that are experienced in deeply personal terms but that derive from within the school community and culture beyond the classroom (Pomson 2001 p. 9).

The factors that emerged were 1) cross-curricula partnerships, 2) a working life shaped by the rhythms of the Jewish year, 3) sharing a special language, 4) becoming a parent, and 5) dealing with parents. He sums up the importance of the factors as “an opportunity to connect and integrate many dimensions of selfhood” (Pomson 2001, p. 18).

In a related vein, Goodman & Schaap in their study of supplementary school teachers in St. Louis (2006a) found that many teachers valued the teaching, as it allowed them to be part of a congregational community, often the one that they belonged to. It provided a route to being involved in the

congregation, known by and connected to others. As a retention strategy, fostering that sense of belonging, of feeling part of a community, can be achieved by building relationships among teachers as well as with parents, and connecting teachers to the larger life of the congregation.

Another important factor from the CAJE Schusterman study (Schaap & Goodman 2004) and earlier work that included the Lainer Interns for Jewish Education, two programs aimed at recruiting high school and college students into Jewish education (Goodman 2000), emerged in terms of identifying likely educators—namely, that of influentials. Most of the participants had significant influentials, either family members or others who were involved in Jewish education or communal life as professionals (63%) or volunteers (77%) in Jewish communal life exposing them to the value of contributing to Jewish communal life.

### **IS JEWISH EDUCATION VIEWED AS A CAREER?**

Many Jewish educators consider themselves as having a career in Jewish education regardless of the setting, how many hours they work, or even if they are Jewish. The Miami data on early childhood Jewish educators showed that 83% of the Jews and 50% of the non-Jews—overall 75% of all the early childhood Jewish educators (Goodman & Schaap 2006b)—considered themselves as having a career. In some way, the amount of time that one is employed, full-time versus part-time, may be one significant factor affecting a person's view of whether or not Jewish education is a career. Given that most of the early childhood educators in Miami worked full-time (thirty-three hours a week or more), the high percentage of early childhood Jewish educators who consider themselves as having a career is not surprising, although the number of non-Jews who held this view was not anticipated. The Miami data on early childhood educators show that two-thirds entered the field as a second career. Other studies need to explore whether most Jewish educators enter the field as a second rather than first career, as it has implications for recruitment, continuing professional learning, and retention strategies.

Whether or not those working in Jewish education consider themselves as having a career, it does seem that Jewish educators are treated as if they were professionals and view themselves as professionals. Kelner (2005) asserts that “American Jewry has chosen a professionalized model for organizing Jewish life” (Kelner 2005, p. vii), including Jewish education, although, he primarily studied communal workers who are employed full-time. Most Jewish educators, especially those in congregational education, are employed part-time, although day school and early childhood education provide many opportunities for full-time employment. To some extent, the option of working full-time is connected to perceptions of professionalism. Most Jewish educators, part-time or full-time, are treated as professionals and view themselves as professionals. In the Philadelphia 2002 study of day school and congregational school educators (Rosenbaum & Tigay 2002), 63% of the congregational educators considered themselves to be professional educators, as compared to 33% who viewed themselves as avocational teachers. The authors speculate that since 56% of the congregational school teachers work full-time in addition to teaching in a congregational school, these teachers probably “apply the model of professionalism to their part-time work as well” (p. 197).

### **DO SALARY AND BENEFITS MATTER?**

Perhaps the question of greatest concern is whether salaries and benefits from other sources make a difference in terms of who enters and remains in the field of Jewish education. Are Jewish educators able to work in the field because they are supported by well-paid Jewish spouses? Does the part-time pay for congregational school teachers matter? Overwhelmingly, on all accounts, the answer seems to be that salaries and benefits for Jewish educators do matter.

Day schools are a good example of how higher salary and benefit packages can raise satisfaction levels while lower, more modest salaries create dissatisfaction. Day school directors, along with clergy, are the two categories of communal Jewish staff members who are most highly satisfied with their salaries and benefits (Kelner 2005). In recent years, with the addition of new day schools and the growth of others along with the shortage of people who can fill those positions, packages have grown faster than the cost of living, as competition increases among the schools. A number of heads



of schools have come from outside the Jewish community or switched from other professions to take these positions, another indication of their desirability. Yet during the same period of time, teachers experienced only modest increases in compensation, and their dissatisfaction level rates them among the least satisfied Jewish communal professionals (Kelner, 2005). Ingersoll (2001), who studied both public and private schools K–12, notes that while job satisfaction is often high among private school teachers, job turnover is also high, a factor that he attributes to low teacher compensation. Simply stated, “some teachers in small private schools depart because they cannot afford to remain” (Ingersoll 2001 p. 527).

Even though the average salary for an early childhood teacher is approximately \$19,400 (Vogelstein & Kaplan 2002), most consider the income an important part of their livelihood. In Miami 90% indicated that it was a significant source of income, and for 28% it was the primary source, with nearly half (49%) of the educators reporting total family incomes of \$45,000 or less. In Denver the situation was similar, with about half (48%) of the teachers and nearly 70% of the assistants reporting a total household income of less than \$50,000 (Center for Policy Research 2006a). Educators in both Miami and Denver expressed dissatisfaction with their financial status, with 60% of the Miami educators sharing that they considered leaving the field because of their salaries (Goodman & Schaap 2006b).

The role of benefits in recruiting and retaining early childhood Jewish educators needs to be further developed, as substantiated by the CAJE 2006 study in Miami. Too often early childhood Jewish educators are not aware of what benefits are available to them or not able to afford them. While 76% of the programs in Miami have some form of major medical insurance available for their teachers, the enrollment restrictions and co-payments make it difficult for the teachers to avail themselves of this benefit. Thus, only 29% participate in the employer’s major medical insurance. While others are covered through spouses, parents or other employers, 11% of early childhood Jewish educators in Miami indicate not having any medical insurance. For the retirement program, only 9% participate. In most cases the benefits plans are too costly relative to salaries, leading the teachers to not participate in the plans for medical insurance or pension even when offered. One benefit that directly affects recruitment is tuition support for educators’ children to attend the school or summer camp or receive child care where they work. Many educators take their first position in early childhood (19%) when one of their children is in the program. “Overall, 45% indicated that their child(ren) attending a particular program was an important factor in their selection of a workplace” (Goodman & Schaap, 2006b, pp. 14–15).

While most congregational school teachers are part-time, salary matters for most, both for the individual and the school, based on the St. Louis experience (Goodman & Schaap 2006a). For some it was an incentive to teach rather than stay home. It changed the level of professionalism and the demands that the educator could place on the teachers in one school where they went from being volunteers to paid faculty. For others it is a significant part of their personal and household income.

Forty-two percent indicated it was an important source, and for 4% it was the main source. Overall, 59% of the teachers have family incomes of \$75,000 or less. Adjusting for the 14% of undergraduate college students ages 18–23, another 45% of the teachers fall into this economic bracket (Goodman & Schaap 2006a, page 32).

Salary also affects feelings about career. Almost half, 44% of those who consider themselves as having a career in Jewish education, indicated that increased salary was one of the most important factors that would improve their job. Another aspect of the salary levels is that approximately 22% of those teaching in congregational schools work in other segments of the Jewish community either part-time or full-time. In some way it appears that teaching is part of the way that they construct both a professional identity and reasonable incomes while serving the Jewish community.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Knowledge about Jewish educators will guide and inform efforts to raise the qualifications and quality of personnel and ultimately the quality of Jewish education. Several implications and policy recommendations emerge from the existing studies of Jewish educational personnel.

- **Money matters**—Investment in salaries and benefits makes a significant difference in the tenure of most Jewish educators. Whether part-time or full-time, regardless of the setting, salaries and benefits stand out as a critical, if not the most important, factor in terms of educator retention in the field. Certain benefits, such as tuition reduction for school or camp attendance, both attract educators and help keep them in certain positions.
- **Professional development**—Serious professional development must become an integral component of the professionalization of the field. Many Jewish educators come without qualifications in either Judaic studies or education. Investing in the professional education of Jewish educators impacts the quality of Jewish education for many years, as most educators think of their involvement as a long-term career commitment.
- **The culture of institutions**—The institutional cultures that provide personal as well as professional support for Jewish educators must become a focus of community attention. Important issues such as *kavod* (respect and status), workplace conditions, meaningful curricular assistance, and clear school and institutional vision will significantly diminish the turnover rate of educators at all levels of the system.
- **Recruitment strategies**—Experience clearly indicates the backgrounds of people who are most likely to become Jewish educators. Designing initiatives that target groups and individuals who match the characteristics of successful Jewish educators—engagement in Jewish life, Jewish educational background, participation in youth group, camp, or Israel programs, and experience working in Jewish educational institutions—will benefit the community for years to come. Recruitment programs should target both first- and second-career individuals.

## FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

Current studies have expanded our understanding of Jewish educators in the three formal educational settings—days schools, congregational schools, and early childhood centers. But there is much more to be learned. Further research on issues relating to recruitment, retention, and professional learning will have direct impact on the quality of Jewish learning in the schools. Among the more important research questions and topics are:

- What is the connection between different types of professional development programs and excellence in the educational setting?
- What are the factors that affect educator longevity in an institution? In the field?
- What is the profile of Jewish educators in informal settings (camp, youth group, Israel experiences, retreats or trips, etc.), adult education, Judaic studies and Hebrew studies faculty, central agencies for Jewish education, and national organizations? How do they compare to one another and to formal Jewish educators?
- What factors link the career paths of Jewish educators across both formal and informal educational experiences?
- A longitudinal study of Jewish educator's experiences in the field, including tracking their career paths, will inform future initiatives for recruitment and retention of educators.
- What factors attract people to choose a second career in Jewish education and/or Jewish communal life? Are there certain experiences, such as participating in intensive Jewish study, fulfilling lay leadership roles in Jewish education, or traveling to Israel, that provide opportunities for future recruitment?
- What are the factors that contribute to educators successfully transitioning from the classroom to administrative roles?

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Systemic change on the national, communal and institutional levels is required to attract, support, and retain outstanding Jewish educational personnel. Quality educators are essential in creating compelling Jewish educational visions for learners of all ages. In order to recruit and retain

qualified educators, every aspect of the culture must become responsive to the needs and concerns of the educators, including levels of compensation, benefits, expectations and support for ongoing professional development, including degree and credential acquisition. Only then will the Jewish community feel comfortable and confident that it has done its best to prepare and support personnel who can deliver an excellent quality of Jewish education to all learners. Among the multitude of initiatives that should be at the top of the agenda are:

- With strong communal support, salaries and benefits must be increased significantly if we are to attract and retain quality personnel.
- Opportunities for quality and meaningful professional development for all Jewish educators in the areas of pedagogy and Jewish content must be offered at times and in venues where the educators will participate.
- Induction and mentoring programs for new teachers and Jewish educators in new positions must become standard in the Jewish community.
- Significant financial assistance must be provided for Jewish educators to obtain degrees and/or licenses in Judaic studies and in education to meet the standard of being credentialed in both.

## CONCLUSION

While more studies of Jewish educators exist now than when *What We Know about Jewish Education* first appeared, gaps remain in what we know about Jewish educational personnel. Most recent studies focus predominantly on formal educators, leaving out the entire field of informal Jewish education. With the support of JESNA, a major national study is underway that will provide extensive data on the educators in day and congregational schools; however, early childhood educators, informal educators, and adult educators were not included in the study process. As part of their own planning process, several local communities are conducting studies of Jewish educators as an important step in making policy decisions designed to raise the quality of Jewish education. Without better data on both the local and national levels that crosses all venues of Jewish education, opportunities to create change that will impact the quality of the educational process will be severely limited. Despite this gap, it is clear that increased salaries and benefits, quality professional development, and increased standards for Jewish educators emphasizing degrees and licensure will raise the quality of Jewish educators and the field of Jewish education.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The range, variety, and number of personnel studies increased during the first decade of the 21st century, with most focusing on formal Jewish educators working with children.
- Significant numbers of Jewish educators view themselves as career-oriented professionals committed to advancing the quality of Jewish education in their settings.
- Salaries and benefits matter for educators in all three formal educational settings—day schools, congregational schools, and early childhood Jewish educational programs.
- Serious challenges have emerged as a result of an increasing number of non-Jews becoming teachers and educational leaders in early childhood Jewish education and in day schools, as they have direct responsibility for conveying Jewish content and cultivating a vision of Jewish life.
- The standard of having Jewish educators with credentials in both Judaic studies and education has not been achieved.
- Continuing professional development in pedagogy and Judaic studies (adult learning) is slowly becoming the norm for congregational school educators in a small number of communities.
- Early childhood Jewish educators fall far below day school and congregational school educators in terms of educational background, both Jewish and general, and compensation.
- With approximately 25% of all Jewish educators in day schools and congregations new to their positions each year, there is a significant need to establish effective recruitment and retention programs.

- As the majority of Jewish educators consider themselves professionals engaged in a meaningful long-term career, investment in their professional growth and development will have a positive impact on the quality of Jewish education.
- Most Jewish educators share a common background that makes them well suited for their roles: formal Jewish education as a child, teen and adult, participation in youth group and Jewish camp, travel to Israel, college-level Jewish studies classes, and employment in Jewish education as a teen or college student.
- The opportunity to work with children is the major reason that school personnel initially take positions in Jewish education.

## LARGER CONTEXT

Jewish education is critical to the vitality and continuity of Jewish life. This means that the more Jewish education, the stronger the likelihood of one's connection to Jewish life. A strong educational system depends to a great extent on having a cadre of top-level Jewish educators (Bidol-Padva et al. 2007). Insights into the issues related to Jewish educational professionals are important to raising the quality of the field.

The studies of Jewish educators have helped provide a better understanding of who they are as a group. They have informed policies and program development that have helped to strengthen the qualifications and effectiveness of personnel. Yet these studies tend to be sporadic, often difficult to compare and they do not provide a complete picture of how many educators there are, much less a consistent and detailed characterization of all educators in both formal and informal education. The field would benefit from its own "National Jewish Educators Study" every five or ten years in order to provide a more complete picture, including a comparison to the overall Jewish population. Professional development programs for Jewish educators need to be evaluated for their impact on the quality of the education provided and how they affect the recruitment and retention of Jewish educators. More significantly, what is lacking is research that directly connects personnel studies and professional development programs to the quality of Jewish education. The current JESNA study of Jewish educators that connects their actions and attitudes to the culture of their institutions and educational change will be a powerful way of linking personnel studies to raising the quality of Jewish education, striving for excellence.

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work of Dan Lortie in his portrayal of teachers in the public schools in the 1970s. Many of the questions in that study are utilized today in a wide range of studies of Jewish educators.

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