

Jewish Student Union Expansion 2010–2011 Evaluation Findings

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Introduction

Overview

The Jewish Student Union (JSU) aims to serve as a catalyst for Jewish teens to take ownership of their Jewish future. JSU carries out its work through an in-school educational experience for Jewish teens in public schools in the United States. JSU's student-run clubs, which meet before, during or after school, provide an opportunity for teens to connect and build a community with fellow Jewish students, learn about Jewish history and Israel, and gain access to the Jewish community outside of their high school.

Founded in 2002 as a program of the Orthodox Union (OU), JSU has grown rapidly over the past decade. All JSU clubs were initially staffed by OU-supplied NCSY volunteers. JSU has since developed the JSU-employee-model, which employs full-time advisor-educators who are JSU employees with no formal affiliation with the OU. Advisors assist teens in creating and leading clubs, build relationships with other Jewish professionals and organizations, and develop resources for regional efforts with the end goal of deepening teens' understanding of and connection to Judaism and Israel and engaging teens in existing Jewish activities and organizations.

In the 2010–2011 program year, the JSU-employee-model was in implementation in four regions: Chicago, South Florida, Westchester/Connecticut and Denver, with potential for expansion to other regions in the future (NCSY volunteer-staffed clubs are still in operation in other regions). JSU staff and lead funders articulated a theory of change for the expansion of the JSU-employee-model (see page 3) and the program is working towards achieving both programmatic and organizational outcomes.

JSU Expansion Theory of Change

PURPOSE: To serve as a catalyst for teens to take ownership of their Jewish future.

PROBLEMS

- Most Jewish teens do not have ready access to:
 - fun, safe and engaging spaces to explore what being Jewish means to them, in their own terms
 - fun, safe and engaging spaces to learn about and develop personal connections with Israel
 - opportunities to connect Jewishly with Jewish peers
 - compelling Jewish role models
- There are not sufficient compelling Jewish educational opportunities that engage teens
- Organizations serving Jewish teens do not collaborate effectively and do not reach as many teens as are interested in exploring their Jewish identity
- Some Jewish teens do not see Jewish involvement as cool or fun
- Public schools are often not seen as places for teens to explore and connect Jewishly

STRATEGIES

Program Level

- Build JSU clubs in public high schools
- Forge mentoring relationships between students and JSU staff
- Develop partnerships between JSU and organizations in the Jewish community
- Facilitate connections between students and opportunities in the greater Jewish community
- Develop partnerships with faculty and school leadership

Organizational Level

- Identify regions appropriate for JSU clubs
- Launch JSU clubs in new geographic regions
- Implement staff training, recruitment and retention efforts
- Strengthen JSU's infrastructure to support expansion regions

TARGET CONSTITUENCIES

- Public high school students
- Public schools with a significant number of Jewish students
- Jewish organizations

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Program Level

- More Jewish teens:
 - participating in JSU clubs
 - with greater understanding of Judaism and Jewish life
 - with strengthened connection to, more knowledge about and comfort discussing Israel
 - making choices informed by their JSU experiences
 - active in Jewish activities
- Wider circles of Jewish friends among JSU participants
- Stronger relationships between JSU and public schools
- Created connections between JSU advisors and Jewish organizations and professionals

Organizational Level

- Increased number of active JSU clubs
- Increased JSU staff capacity
- Improved JSU infrastructure and capacity to support expansion regions
- Developed a plan for a viable organizational model that can sustain expansion
- Stronger local infrastructure

MID-TERM OUTCOMES

Program Level

- Continuation of short-term outcomes
- Deep, lasting relationships between JSU teens and partner organizations
- More former JSU teens in ongoing and immersive Jewish experiences during and after high school
- Enhanced Jewish community within participating public schools

Organizational Level

- Increased number of active JSU clubs
- Fully developed JSU staff capacity
- Solidified JSU infrastructure and capacity to support expansion regions
- Fully staffed and financially viable operations in expansion regions
- Produced a compendium of best practices for building and supporting program capacity and growth

ULTIMATE IMPACT: JSU has bridged the gap between a parent-imposed Jewish childhood ("you are Jewish") to a proud self-chosen Jewish adulthood ("I am Jewish"), with thousands of JSU alumni living as proud Jewish adults.

JSU Expansion Evaluation

In 2010, three national and regional funders engaged BTW *informing change* (BTW) to assess the programmatic and organizational growth of the JSU-employee-model program.

BTW's evaluation will answer five distinct questions over the next two years.

1. How and to what extent has JSU enhanced participants' understanding of what it means to them to be Jewish, developed their connection to Israel and engaged them in the greater Jewish community?
2. To what extent is JSU reaching Jewish teens and what are the characteristics of those teens?
3. How and to what extent are JSU expansion regions (Chicago, South Florida, Westchester/Connecticut and Denver) building organizational capacity and sustainability?
4. How and to what extent is JSU building organizational capacity, infrastructure and sustainability at the national level to support regional expansion?
5. What lessons have been learned about the expansion process that can inform future adaptation?

This year's evaluation of the 2010-2011 program year is largely descriptive and establishes a baseline for measuring progress.

- This report covers the time period from September 2010 through June 2011.
- The JSU Theory of Change identifies outcomes for the time period 2010–2013, as well as interim benchmarks.

Methods

BTW collected data from multiple sources for this evaluation through five methods.

Key Informant Interviews: BTW conducted telephone and in-person interviews with a variety of individuals in both one-on-one and group settings, including:

- Teen participants in JSU clubs in the four regions (approximately 40)
- Public school faculty at club sites in the four regions (6)
- Representatives of other Jewish organizations (e.g., BBYO, synagogue youth groups, Israel gap year programs) in the four regions (13)
- JSU advisors in the four regions (10)
- National JSU staff (4)
- Chair of JSU Board of Directors (1)
- Members of the Chicago JSU Advisory Board (4)
- JSU funders (3)

Site Visits & Observations: BTW conducted site visits in the four regions to observe JSU clubs in action, collect program materials and interview club advisors, teens, school faculty and some Jewish professionals in partner organizations.

Materials Review: BTW reviewed JSU program materials and organizational plans and conducted a literature review of recent research on best practices for nonprofit program replication. BTW also reviewed recent literature about Jewish teen engagement.

Review of JSU Tracking Data: BTW reviewed and summarized select data collected by JSU advisors through two methods: 1) intake forms, administered to students during the school year, that ask about their demographic information and their previous Jewish-related experiences (e.g., trips to Israel, summer camp, etc.), and 2) attendance tracking at club meetings

Survey of JSU Teens: BTW prepared a paper survey that JSU club advisors administered to club members during scheduled club time in April and May 2011. BTW also prepared an online version of the survey for clubs that did not meet during this time period. Almost all (99%) survey data came from the paper-based version. Incentives were offered for participation in both survey versions.

- BTW only surveyed students in three regions. Denver was omitted from the survey sample due to the short tenure of JSU clubs in that region. BTW attempted to survey all JSU clubs in the other regions, but some clubs did not respond.
- To understand the range in the level of Jewish engagement of teens in JSU, BTW created four categories of level of Jewish engagement—none, low, mid and high. BTW used multiple survey items to determine the level of a teen’s past and current Jewish engagement. BTW based a teen’s level of past engagement on four factors: bar/bat mitzvah, Jewish overnight camp, trip to Israel and Jewish day school. BTW based a teen’s level of current engagement on the frequency of participation in Jewish-related activities other than JSU, the number of close Jewish friends teens have and the number of different kinds of Jewish-related activities teens participated in. See the Appendix for more information.
- Other than a few instances that are specifically noted, data on non-Jewish teens participating in JSU clubs were excluded from the data analysis and do not appear in this deck.
- Accompanying this deck is a memo that includes a series of data tables containing complete survey results for Jewish teens in each region as well as for JSU overall; a comparison of the survey results of teens with no, low, mid and high levels of past and current Jewish engagement; and a comparison of the survey results of Jewish and non-Jewish teens. BTW presents select data in this deck. Unless noted otherwise, all data presented are for all three regions combined. Readers are encouraged to consult the data tables for more detailed information.
- BTW conducted significance tests for group differences in survey responses. Many findings were similar across locations and varying levels of Jewish engagement. All significantly different results are marked in the data tables accompanying this deck.

Evaluation Strengths & Limitations

STRENGTHS

- This study used multiple methods to evaluate JSU's progress toward its benchmarks, which enabled BTW to triangulate findings to reach conclusions supported by more than just one data source. This gives BTW greater confidence in the findings and resulting recommendations.
- BTW visited multiple clubs in the four regions and spent a considerable amount of time talking with faculty advisors, JSU club advisors, students and Jewish professionals in the area. By being able to see so many clubs and talk with so many individuals involved with JSU, we feel confident in our conclusions and their generalization across clubs within a region and across regions (where applicable).

LIMITATIONS

- The number of completed surveys varied by region, limiting the analysis and conclusions we could make. Because of the late start date of clubs in Denver, Denver teens were not surveyed. Of 336 survey responses, most came from Chicago (249), the region with the most clubs and students; there were far fewer surveys from South Florida (54) and Westchester/Connecticut (33). Because of the wide range in the number of survey responses per region, we have refrained from making conclusions comparing regions.
- Site visits and teen survey administration were conducted late in the school year (i.e., April and May) when club attendance and the participation of seniors may have declined compared to earlier in the year.
- The primary data sources used in this evaluation are self reported (i.e., surveys, interviews), which may present some bias.
- Because of difficulties in data collection, the JSU tracking data are unreliable and, to some extent, unavailable. Not all clubs collect intake forms consistently or in the same way, and clubs track attendance in inconsistent ways. This limits our ability to use the tracking data in this evaluation, and we do not have data for some indicators.
- We do not know how representative the survey sample is of all JSU participants because of the lack of complete JSU tracking data.

Key Accomplishments & Progress Towards Benchmarks

JSU Key Accomplishments 2010–2011

The highlights of JSU's accomplishments in the 2010–2011 program year found below are elaborated on in the remainder of this deck.

- JSU reached more teens, created more clubs and had a positive impact on teens' knowledge of and connection to Judaism and Israel.
- JSU hired new regional and national staff and began operations in Denver.
- JSU continued to develop its national Board of Directors and a regional advisory board formed in Chicago.
- JSU engendered growing support from Jewish youth professionals and Jewish organizations.
- Fundraising efforts got underway nationally and in Chicago.
- JSU began a national evaluation process and a re-branding process.

Progress Towards Club & Staff Benchmarks

Exhibit 1
Club & Staff Benchmarks

Source: JSU tracking data

Benchmark	Region	As of June 2011	2012 Benchmark
Number of JSU clubs	Chicago	14	18
	South Florida	6	10
	Westchester/Connecticut	3	8
	Denver	4	5
Number of staff	Chicago	3 full-time, 1 part-time	4 full-time
	South Florida	2 full-time	3 full-time
	Westchester/Connecticut	1 full-time, 1 part-time	3 full-time
	Denver	1 full-time	1 full-time

Progress Towards Attendance Benchmarks

JSU tracking data were not consistently collected or entered into the JSU database throughout the year resulting in attendance numbers that are most likely lower than the actual number of club attendees.

Exhibit 2 Attendance Benchmarks

Source: JSU tracking data

Benchmark	Region	Total as of June 2011	2012 Benchmark
Total number of unique teens	Chicago	936	1,600
	South Florida	456	600
	Westchester/Connecticut	179	450
	Denver	^	400
Number of consistent attendees	Chicago	211	800
	South Florida	84	200
	Westchester/Connecticut	32	150
	Denver	^	200

^ JSU tracking data for Denver are not available due to the late start date of clubs in this region; however, the JSU regional director estimated 2010–2011 attendance of 115 teens. We caution against comparisons to the other regions due to the different data collection methods. The expectation is that data on Denver teens in next year's evaluation report will come from the JSU tracking database.

Progress Towards Program Benchmarks

JSU did not capture mentoring and referral data as indicated in the evaluation plan due to difficulties in developing an effective system to track these data.

Exhibit 3
Program Benchmarks

Source: BTW survey

Benchmark	Below Benchmark	Met Benchmark	Exceeded Benchmark
60% of participants report a positive change in their understanding of Judaism and Jewish life			CH, FL, W/C, ALL
60% of participants report increased connection to, knowledge about and comfort discussing Israel			CH, FL, W/C, ALL
60% of participants report an increase in making Jewish choices		CH, W/C, ALL	FL
60% of participants report an increase in the number of their Jewish friends	CH, W/C, ALL	FL	
35% of participants report that they participate in activities with Jewish organizations due to their JSU experience		CH	FL, W/C, ALL
35% of participants report that they participate in other activities due to their JSU experience [^]			
75% of teens report that staff are effective [^]			

[^] Data not available for this year's report.

Note: Data not available about Denver for this year's report.

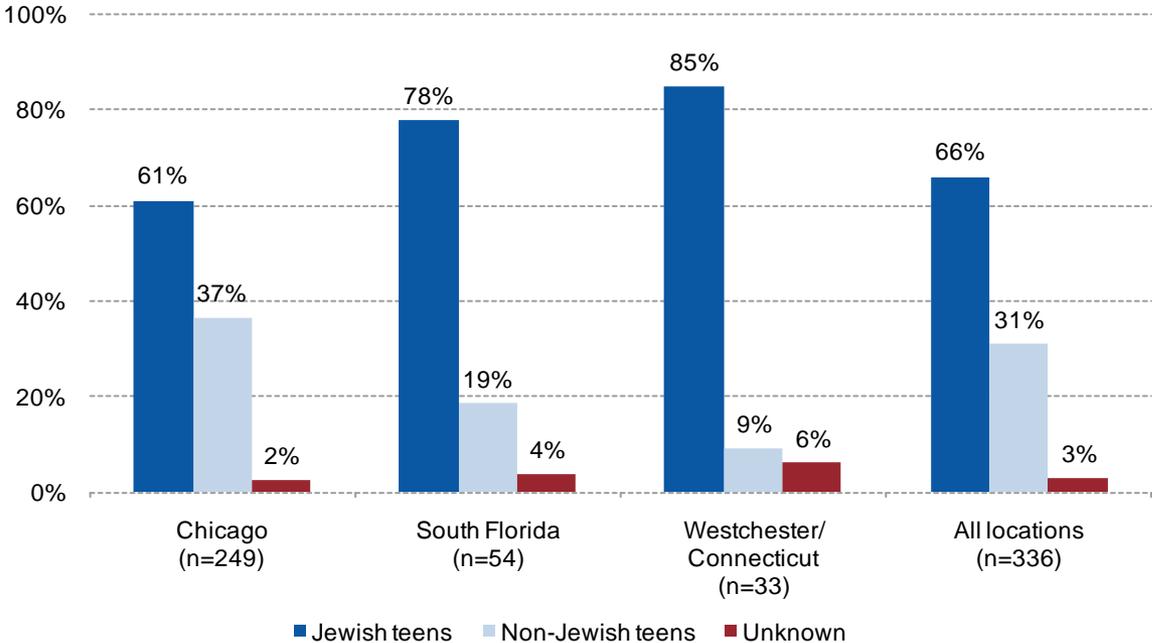
CH = Chicago
 FL = South Florida
 W/C = Westchester/Connecticut
 ALL= All locations combined

Characteristics of Teens in JSU

Religious Identity

JSU clubs attract a sizeable number of non-Jewish teens.

Exhibit 4
**Jewish vs.
Non-Jewish Participants**
Source: BTW survey



Grade Level, Gender & Club Attendance

- According to BTW's survey data, participation in JSU by Jewish teens is fairly evenly distributed across grade level, with a slightly higher proportion of tenth and eleventh graders.*
 - 22% are in 9th grade
 - 30% are in 10th grade
 - 28% are in 11th grade
 - 20% are in 12th grade
- More boys than girls participate in JSU (54% and 46% respectively).
- Most Jewish teens (70%) indicate that they attend JSU meetings most of the time; 16% attend some of the time, 10% attend occasionally and 4% attend rarely.
- How long Jewish teens have been coming to the JSU club correlates with how long the club has been in existence. Chicago teens have the longest tenure of participation: 54% have attended for one year or more.
- Given the lengths of participation indicated, some teens attended clubs convened by NCSY volunteer advisors prior to having a JSU employee as club advisor.

* In the remainder of this deck, all teen-related data are from BTW sources.

Past Jewish Engagement

- A large majority of teens report having at least one intensive Jewish experience prior to participating in JSU.
- Over 50% of all Jewish teens report what BTW calls a high level of past Jewish engagement, meaning having had three or four of these experiences.

Exhibit 5

Prior to JSU, Proportion of Jewish Teens who...

Source: BTW survey

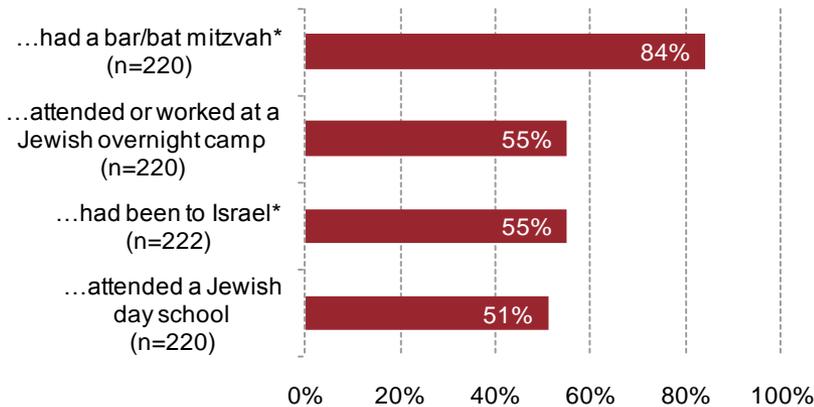
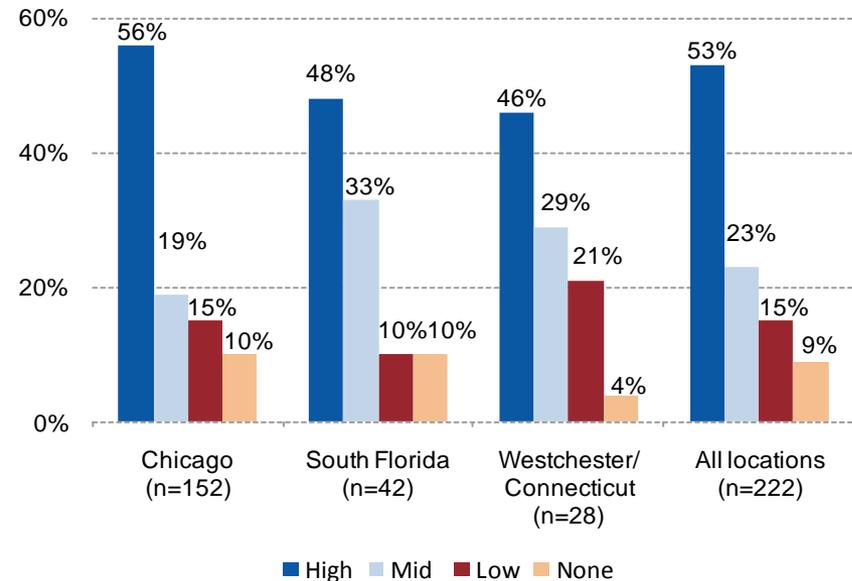


Exhibit 6

Level of Past Jewish Engagement

Source: BTW survey



* In comparison, in a 2011 survey of teen participants in BBYO programs, 94% of teens indicated they had a bar/bat mitzvah and 42% indicated they had been to Israel (Gerstein Agne Strategic Communications, 2011).

Current Participation in Jewish Activities

- JSU attracts many Jewish teens who are already solidly involved in Jewish activities. In the past year, almost three-quarters (74%) of teens participated in Jewish activities at least once a month.
 - 51% participated one time per week or more
 - 23% participated one time per month or more
 - 20% participated less than once a month
 - 6% never or almost never participated
- Of those Jewish teens who were involved in Jewish activities in the past year:
 - 68% participated in an organized Jewish youth group. About a third attended a synagogue youth group (33%) and almost a quarter participated in either USY (24%) or BBYO (21%); far fewer participated in other youth groups (NFTY 9%, NCSY 8%, Young Judaea 3%, Habonim-Dror 1%). Some teens participated in multiple youth groups.
 - About a third attended Jewish classes (36%) or Jewish overnight camp (35%).
 - Over half of Jewish teens participated in synagogue services or a chavurah (55%). In comparison, in a 2011 survey of teen participants in BBYO programs, 91% of teens indicated they participated in synagogue services or a chavurah in the past year (Gerstein Agne Strategic Communications, 2011).

Jewish Relationships

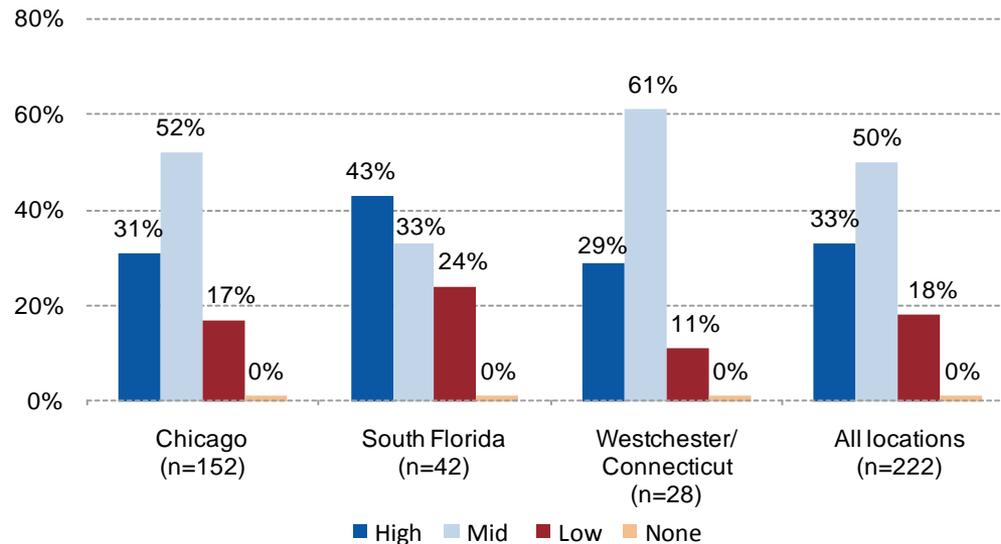
- Teens have strong Jewish social networks, with over half of teens reporting that most or all of their friends are Jewish.
 - 15% of teens indicate that all or almost all of their friends are Jewish.
 - 38% of teens indicate that most of their friends are Jewish.
 - 47% of teens indicate that some of their friends are Jewish.
 - 1% of teens indicate that none of their friends are Jewish.
- A large majority (89%) of teens have a trusted Jewish adult in their life (other than their parents), such as other family members, rabbis or friends, who they can talk to about important matters.

Current Jewish Engagement

- Jewish teens in JSU are currently moderately to highly engaged in Jewish life and activities (83%). No teens are identified as having no current engagement.
- To determine current levels of engagement BTW considered how often teens participate in Jewish-related activities, the number of close Jewish friends teens have and the number of Jewish-related activities (e.g., BBYO, JCC, synagogue youth group, etc.) teens have participated in over the last year. See the Appendix for more information.

Exhibit 7
Level of Current Jewish Engagement

Source: BTW survey



JSU Influence on Jewish Teens

Being in a JSU club is a meaningful Jewish experience in and of itself.

- Teens come to JSU for more than the pizza. They value being a part of a Jewish community within their school and value the learning they do at club meetings.
- JSU is different than other Jewish activities teens participate in. Teens appreciate that JSU is pluralistic, that non-Jews attend club meetings and that the teaching and learning they do is different from what they experienced in Hebrew school or youth groups (whether leadership development-oriented or movement based).

"I heard about the club from my mom. I saw they had free pizza and I thought, what have I got to lose? Now I am the president of the club, so clearly, it is not just about pizza."

—Chicago Teen

"There are lots of clubs I could be in, but this one [JSU] is about me. It's deeper than any other club I'm in. [The JSU advisor] teaches you about things to value in life."

—Westchester/Connecticut Teen

"I like the diverse viewpoints. It is different than my synagogue youth group where it's the same kids I've always known. This is different kids that I didn't even know were Jewish."

—Chicago Teen

JSU is influencing teens' connection to Judaism and building their Jewish knowledge.

- JSU and faculty advisors observe an increase in teens' understanding about Judaism and Jewish life. Teens know more about Jewish history, practices and culture and can connect these to their own lives.
- For some teens, JSU inspires a significant “life change” in their relationship to Judaism, but advisors caution against expecting that kind of experience for all teens.
- Faculty advisors and Jewish youth professionals see JSU as giving teens an avenue to “be Jewish” in the bigger non-Jewish world and try on how it feels to use their understanding of what it means to be Jewish in decision-making and friend-making.

Exhibit 8

Thinking about your experience with your JSU club, to what extent do you agree with the following?

Source: BTW survey

	Mean response on a scale of 1 to 4*
I am interested in learning more about Judaism or what it means to be Jewish (n=207)	3.4
I am concerned about anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination (n=205)	3.4
I talk with friends outside of JSU meetings about Jewish things (n=201)	3.2
I feel closer to my Jewish friends (n=198)	3.1

“We plan great activities and get insight into Judaism. I like that we are all Jews but we are all different. I like connecting to my heritage.”

— Denver Teen

* 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree

Teens value learning about Israeli culture and history and building a connection to Israel.

- Advisors report that Israel-related club activities are “a hit.” They encourage lively conversation and debate.
- Teens like that clubs give them “facts” about Israel that they perceive as not being from a particular political point of view. Clubs have had a variety of guests and activities that present Israeli culture from different aspects: singers, scholars, Krav Maga teachers, Israeli dancing, etc.
- Bringing in teens’ personal experience of Israel helps to reinforce their bond to Israel and makes going to Israel an interesting possibility for those who have not yet been to Israel.

“I like the activities in the club. [The JSU advisor] knows a lot about what’s really happening in Israel....we can keep up on current events.”

— Chicago Teen

Exhibit 9

Thinking about your experience with your JSU club, to what extent do you agree with the following?

Source: BTW survey

	Mean response on a scale of 1 to 4*
I am interested in learning more about Israel (n=204)	3.3
I talk with friends outside of JSU meetings about Israel (n=199)	3.1

* 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree

“JSU clubs are a road for non-Jewish teens to engage in discussions about Israel.”

— JSU Advisor

Teens are engaged in learning about Judaism and Israel because skilled advisors know how to make this happen.

- Advisors are able to connect with teens where they are on their Jewish journeys, engaging teens in conversation and activities that are meaningful to them and encouraging them to take on responsibility for planning club activities and creating a caring Jewish community.
- Having advisors from different Jewish backgrounds and JSU's unique pluralistic environment is a benefit of JSU. Teens see many examples of how to live a Jewish life.

"The JSU advisor is very personable, nonjudgmental, kids relate to him. He's very visible and he is always available—the teens see him at BBYO and in the neighborhood. He is an unbelievable youth leader. He is creative and can lead programs on the spot."

— Faculty Advisor

Given the broad range of their responsibilities and the number of students across their clubs, advisors have limited time to be in contact with teens outside of club meetings.

About half of teens (49%) report having had a one-on-one conversation with their JSU advisor outside of club time, mostly through electronic communication (Facebook, text message or e-mail); this varies significantly by region. The frequency of this interaction points to a tension in the aspirations of JSU: the growth in the number of clubs and teens makes it harder for JSU advisors to have one-on-one contact with all teens.

"[The JSU advisor] knows so much! And kids in the club like him. He can act like a teen and an adult."

— Denver Teen

While an outside observer might question the participation of non-Jews in clubs, JSU advisors, Jewish teens, faculty advisors, Jewish youth professionals and JSU leadership find the participation of non-Jews to be beneficial for teens and for the Jewish community more generally.

- Jewish teens enjoy sharing their culture and pride in being Jewish with the non-Jewish club attendees.
- The inclusion of non-Jews has two complementary effects: 1) Jewish teens have a deeper sense that being Jewish is special and something to be proud of, and 2) there is less of a sense of separation from teens who are not Jewish.
- Non-Jewish club members appreciate learning about Judaism and Israel and feeling included in a religious group. They are also having a meaningful Jewish experience. Several non-Jews talked about how they now go to Jewish friends' houses for Jewish holidays and Shabbat and like being a part of that.

"I think it's really, really great that JSU lets teens bring their non-Jewish friends. That builds support for [Jewish teens] for when JSU isn't around."

— Jewish Youth Professional

"[I've learned that Judaism] is about living a lifestyle applying values of community, family, charity and kindness every day."

— Non-Jewish Teen

"I love [the club]. And today, I can't tell you how profound the Seder [at the club meeting] was for me. I never thought I would sit next to an Arab at a Seder."

— Chicago Teen

Participation in JSU is correlated with a slight increase in involvement in other Jewish-related activities and number of close friends who are Jewish

- Given the already high level of participation in Jewish-related activities and number of Jewish friends, this slight increase is not surprising.
- In survey results, slightly less than half (44%) of teens report that their advisor has referred them to other Jewish activities or groups. Of those referred, about half went to an activity that the club advisor referred them to. The high number of “don’t know” responses may mean students didn’t know how to interpret the word “referral”.
- JSU advisors report that at most club meetings they share details of upcoming Jewish-related activities and encourage students to attend those activities. These group announcements may not be seen by teens as referrals as opposed to more direct recommendations encouraging a specific teen to attend a specific activity.

Exhibit 10

Since I have been involved with JSU...

Source: BTW survey

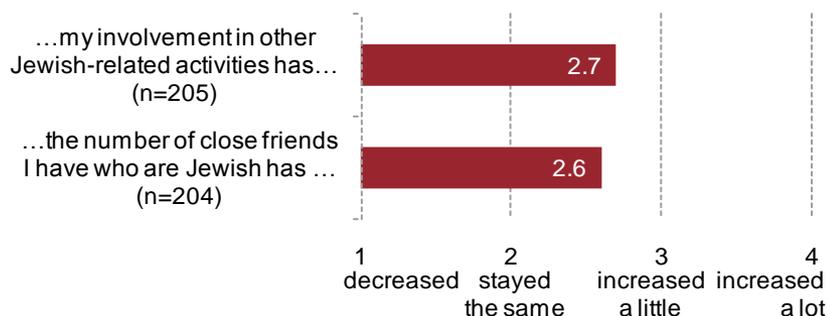
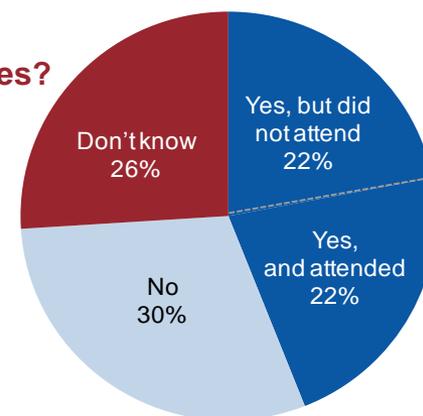


Exhibit 11

Has your JSU Advisor referred you to other Jewish-related activities?

(n=204)

Source: BTW survey



Participation in JSU seems to contribute to positive change in teens' attitudes around Jewish traditions and Jewish choices.

- Teens say JSU contributes to their observance of Jewish holidays and Shabbat.
- To a lesser degree, teens report JSU contributes to their attitudes and behaviors around expressions of Jewish culture and community.
- From evaluators' observations of JSU club programs, it appears that teens are exposed to a wide range of topics within Jewish culture, arts, science and history in engaging, age-appropriate ways, often communicated by their peers rather than adults.

Exhibit 12

Thinking about your experience with your JSU club, to what extent do you agree with the following?

Source: BTW survey

	Mean response on a scale of 1 to 4*
Jewish Holidays & Shabbat	
I celebrate Jewish holidays at home with my family (n=204)	3.5
I celebrate Jewish holidays with my friends (n=208)	3.1
I celebrate Shabbat (n=202)	3.0
Cultural Activities	
I wear clothing or jewelry with Jewish words or symbols (n=202)	3.0
I listen to Jewish or Israeli music (n=203)	2.7
I read Jewish books, magazines, blogs, Web sites, Facebook pages, etc. (n=207)	2.6

* 1 meaning strongly disagree and 4 meaning strongly agree

Teens express diverse opinions about how JSU helps them understand what it means to be Jewish.

Values

“... that Judaism can help me lead a good life.”

“...that I am proud to be a part of this religion.”

Tradition

“... about acknowledging a rich cultural heritage dating far back.”

“... being involved and keeping Jewish traditions alive.”

“... it means to observe the principles of Torah and promote the welfare of worldwide Jewry.”

“... that I am a part of an ancient tradition that prides itself in learning and being closer to God.”

“... it means I am proud of how hard my Jewish ancestors worked to keep our faith throughout the ages and want to continue doing the same.”

“... community, tradition, identity.”

Now, after participating in JSU, when I think about what it means to be Jewish, I think...

Israel

“... strong feelings for Israel. Good morals. Doing the right thing. A lively culture.”

“... about how much I want to protect Israel.”

“... that it is awesome!”

Community

“... it means to feel for the Jewish community during the good and bad times.”

“... about the value of education and a Jewish feeling of family.”

“... that there is not a more supportive and comforting community than the Jews.”

“... we need to be stronger as a religion and this club is a great start.”

“... it is about being together as a community but still supporting our individual beliefs.”

“... it is great to be a Jew.”

“... it is a lot more than wearing a hat.”

Now, after participating in JSU, when I think about what it means to be Jewish, I think...

“... roots, community, and spirit.”

Identity

“... it means being me.”

“... nothing new. I'm always Jewish.”

“... it's something that makes me unique but allows me to connect with other people.”

“... to embrace your Jewish side, but not to change who you are.”

“... that establishing a Jewish identity while in high school is important.”

“... that it means something different for everyone and however religious someone is doesn't matter. What matters is how you carry yourself.”

“... it can mean either being a religiously-connected Jewish person or more of a Jew who relates culturally to other Jews.”

Teens' experience of JSU aligns with recent research about Jewish teen participation.

- In a 2009 study, Max Klau shares a list of Jewish activities that teens find meaningful, which is very similar to what teens report that they like about JSU: talking with other kids and sharing what they think and feel, participating in activities that help them grow as Jews, doing things with their friends, meeting new people, having fun and being a part of passing down Jewish traditions. JSU also seems to avoid things that teens report turns them off about Judaism, including cliques or snotty kids, parents forcing them to come, not liking the people leading activities and not being involved in decision-making.
- JSU practices also comport with what was learned in the 2008 BBYO study about effective marketing to Jewish teens. This study indicates that teens demand instant gratification, that teens are smart and know when you are trying to “get” them and that teens need to define what being Jewish means to them.
- The JSU model of an inclusive club that actively connects teens to other Jewish organizations and activities may circumvent problems in the infrastructure of Jewish youth education (Sales, 2007), particularly the tendency among organizations to compete for student participation rather than collaborate. “The entire enterprise...is largely structured around sub-sectors—camping, year-round youth group, Israel experience, day schools [etc.]...Little advantage is taken of the potential synergy among these subs-sectors....”
- JSU’s open, pluralistic programming that does not differentiate in approach to the less engaged versus more engaged is similar to findings in a study of innovation in Jewish organizations that outlines characteristics of dynamic start-up Jewish organizations: “New initiatives bring together people of different Jewish backgrounds and appeal to people at different places in their Jewish journey. Serving the highly involved and engaging the less connected are not separate activities” (Jumpstart, The Natan Fund, and the Samuel Bronfman Foundation, 2009).

JSU Influence on Teens' School Environment

JSU clubs are enhancing the Jewish community within public schools.

- Overall, public schools are welcoming of JSU and see its value. In a few schools there is hesitation about having a religious club at school. As a result, some are structured as an Israeli club or Jewish culture club. This varies from region to region, school to school.
- In some cases, JSU clubs are limited in what kinds of resources they can receive from the school or how the faculty advisor can participate. Overall, this does not seem to have much explicit impact on club activities or atmosphere. However, due to the religion-related nature of the clubs, many schools limit publicity for club activities on campus, which advisors and teens believe may prevent JSU from attracting as many teens as possible.

"[The faculty advisor] gets excited and engaged in the program. She's definitely a sponsor who is involved, so she wants to know what the program is. She often brings a personal story [related] to the program, which I think just enhances the whole program."

— JSU Advisor

"Teachers and administrators come and they love it. When the superintendent hears we are making food, he comes to eat what we bake. For him, it shows there is diversity in the school."

— Faculty Advisor

JSU clubs are friendly and safe places to be within a large school environment in which it is easy to feel lost.

- Club meetings have a spirit of openness and welcome. Anybody and everybody can come. Teens, JSU advisors and faculty advisors all comment on the warm atmosphere of the clubs. Teens are noticeably kind to one another.
- JSU advisors and faculty advisors say that connecting with other Jewish teens provides club participants with the opportunity to be their full Jewish selves at school. Teens describe this feeling as comfortable and a relief from the regular school-day activities.
- The inclusive spirit extends to teens with learning disabilities and challenges with social interaction. They have a place to be within the school where they are part of the group in the same way as everybody else. Advisors report that parents express appreciation for this.

"It's nice to not have to explain so much about who you are—it's refreshing to be [my Jewish self] at school. JSU is a meaningful Jewish experience."

— Denver Teen

"There's a Jewish clique at this school. They always hang around together, but if you're not already in it, you can't get in. Here I can be with others like I want to be."

— Florida Teen

"This is a really large campus. When students come to club, they reconnect with each other. They may never see each other on campus the rest of the time. I think they also make new friendships at club. The connections are happening outside of club meetings as well."

— Faculty Advisor

Teens start coming to JSU because they want to be with their friends, but they stay also for the Jewish programming.

- While being with friends is an important reason for why teens continue to come to meetings, many of the Jewish aspects of JSU also keep teens coming, including the activities at meetings and exploring what it means to be Jewish.
- The club advisors may not initially attract teens to JSU, but they play a key role in keeping the teens returning to JSU.

Exhibit 13

Why did you decide to start coming to JSU meetings? What are important reasons why you continue to come?

Source: BTW survey

	Reason for coming (n=221)	Reason for staying (n=215)
Being with friends	70%	85%
Spend time with Jewish teens	52%	67%
Learn about Judaism and Jewish life	47%	63%
Convenient way to do something Jewish	55%	52%
Club advisor	27%	65%

JSU Influence on the Broader Jewish Community

JSU clubs are well positioned to become a step to engagement in the broader Jewish community.

- JSU advisors and other Jewish youth professionals believe that JSU has increased the overall level of teen participation in Jewish activities in their communities. In some cases, a JSU club participates in other Jewish events as a group, such as attending a teen dance or doing a service project. These one-time events have the potential to serve as a gateway for continued involvement. In other instances, JSU attendees individually join another group or activity, such as BBYO, an American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) trip or summer camp.
- Faculty advisors and JSU advisors expect to see delayed impacts from JSU. Over time, they anticipate that teens who return to JSU year after year will make deeper connections to one another and the Jewish community and will grow their knowledge and understanding of Judaism and Israel. Advisors also believe that JSU will influence Jewish-related actions after teens leave high school. Advisors are already starting to see JSU teens participating in Hillel when they go to college as a result of being in JSU.

“We did get new participants in our service projects. We know [JSU advisors] promoted J-Serve. That made a difference, and it will be even greater next year when there are more clubs.”

— Jewish Youth Professional

“I’ll be going to [college] in the fall that has a great Hillel. I’m definitely interested in joining when I’m on campus. If I weren’t in JSU I would never have looked at whether a school even had a Hillel.”

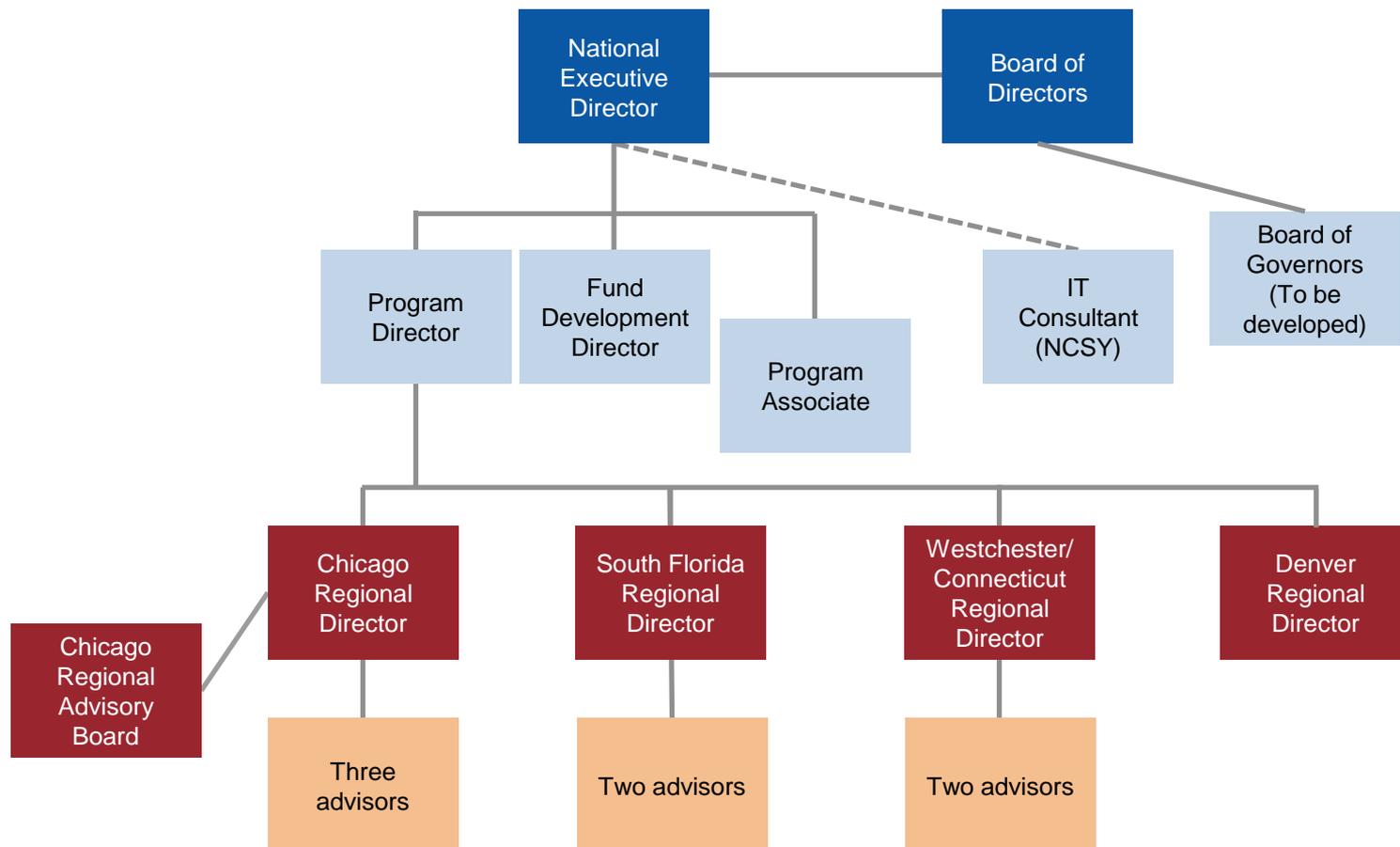
— Westchester/Connecticut Teen

Building Capacity to Support Regional Expansion

New Infrastructure for a Growing Organization

- In the 2010–2011 program year, JSU continued to grow in Chicago, launched three expansion regions and began building infrastructure to support the organization’s vision for growth. JSU continues the process of moving from being a program of NCSY and the OU to being a fully independent organization. The two entities, while legally distinct since 2002, remain interdependent in this time of transition.
- JSU is experiencing many of the challenges typical of an organization in start-up mode: creating strategic focus without constraining vision and creativity, balancing organizational growth with running programs, on-boarding new staff, looking for new revenue sources, establishing organizational structure and processes and developing the governing board.
- JSU began to fill out its national staff structure, which is designed to support the regions as they launch and mature into more autonomous operations. Regional support includes both in-region staffing (i.e., a regional director and JSU advisors) and national staff who carry responsibility for JSU functions more broadly, such as fundraising, program oversight, strategic communications and information technology. National staff also support the regional staff as supervisors, coaches and trainers.
- JSU’s organizational development curve is still very steep, with many pieces being launched and in development. National staff are working to implement a business plan designed to direct and monitor the organization’s growth over a five year period. JSU leaders press to keep the organization moving forward. They are not willing to slow the pace to let all the pieces in motion catch up, both because of the immediate needs of the growing regions and because staff do not want to lose the accumulated momentum.

JSU Organizational Structure



Investing in carefully chosen, highly skilled regional staff has multiplied JSU's capacity to deliver program.

- Increased staffing has been the engine for opening new clubs and attracting more teens. Nine of the 11 regional positions planned as part of the expansion were filled by the close of June 2011; candidates for the two remaining positions were selected at the close of this evaluation period, with the expectation of summer start dates for both.
- JSU advisors are highly skilled and experienced in working with Jewish teens and bring deep knowledge about Judaism, Israel and the Jewish community to their work. All advisors are trained Jewish educators; many have rabbinic training and experience in managing Jewish organizations.
- JSU advisors have received some common training that included reviewing roles and responsibilities, program expectations and database training, as well as a well-received training on incorporating Israel into teen programming. There is not yet a formalized training curriculum for regional staff.
- Regional staff describe their work with a deep passion for JSU's mission and goals, and for the most part, a sense of satisfaction with being part of the organization's expansion. Their belief in the value of their work is evident and contagious.

"JSU has an ideal staff. I'm impressed with the caliber of youth educators they got. They are doing a great job. They are absolutely dedicated to the kids."

— Jewish Youth Professional

Similar to other organizations in start-up mode, providing and becoming known for quality programming are the central concerns in all four expansion regions.

- In the newer regions, staff are focusing predominantly on student recruitment and program delivery, including developing relationships with Jewish partner organizations. Regional staff focus less attention on administrative tasks and resource development.
- Regional staff think carefully about how they will grow and increase the number of clubs (e.g., which schools or communities to tackle next and which synagogues and partners to work with to start or revive a club). While the national office has shared guidelines about developing regional growth plans, regional staff feel they could benefit from more guidance in thinking strategically about how to expand their work.
- All regional staff are aware that their regional operations must develop capacity in other areas beyond program and community partnerships. At the same time, the sense of priority for program delivery and student recruitment means it is easy for staff to be sidetracked away from planning, management and fundraising.

Regional context influences the regional priorities for capacity development.

The tenure of prior JSU staff and clubs in the area,* concentration of Jewish families and the social-political environment reflected by the public schools have considerable influence over the progress of infrastructure development in each region.

- In general, the **Chicago** region has more infrastructure in place and shows greater capacity than the other three regions because of its longer history using the JSU-employee model. The Chicago regional director spends 80% of her time on capacity development and has a clear sense of regional needs and priorities. At this point, the regional director is cautious about creating additional clubs until the region can further expand staff and local fund development. JSU shares office space with the NCSY Midwest regional office and has access to administrative support from NCSY.
- In **South Florida** the high concentration of Jewish families and Jewish teens in public high schools has created a very high demand for more clubs across a large geographic area where faith-based clubs on school campuses is a common occurrence. Regional staff have many opportunities to open clubs and recruit teens. There is minimal administrative support.
- **Westchester/Connecticut** is characterized by scattered pockets of Jewish teens in high schools that have a competitive academic atmosphere and high interest from parents in their children's extracurricular activities. Regional staff try to balance building up clubs with building community relationships. Housed in the national JSU office, the staff in this region have access to administrative and moral support from the national staff team.
- **Denver** has a smaller population of Jewish families and teens than the other regions and is envisioned to be a one-person regional operation. By design, JSU in Denver will look slightly different from the other regions in which there are multiple JSU staff. There is high interest and support for JSU from Jewish community organizations, but mixed reactions from public schools thus far. There is no dedicated JSU office space or administrative support.

* In Chicago, South Florida and Westchester/Connecticut, NCSY volunteer-staffed JSU clubs have been in existence for a number of years. Chicago has been fully operational using the JSU-employee model since 2006.

As regional staff grow their capacity, they are identifying challenges and gaps in JSU systems and practices.

- Regional staff appreciate the support they receive from the national staff but need more frequent and targeted contact with national staff and specific direction about regional roles, responsibilities and expectations. The frequency and content of bi-weekly group conference calls and weekly individual check-in calls are not supplying regional staff with the tools and resources they need for program content and design or the development of database management systems.
- Regional staff would like more opportunities to meet and learn from one another.
- Regional staff frequently describe their workload as overwhelming. Their personal dedication drives them to create new clubs, to reach more teens and to provide high quality programming, but they are also keenly aware of other responsibilities: setting up management systems, fundraising and developing relationships in the Jewish community.

“What I see is that [regional staff] lack a formal structure, the mechanics for the outreach and program preparation. They need more administrative help, and I hope they get that.”

—Jewish Professional

“Our greatest challenge is doing expansion and building infrastructure at the same time. [New regional staff] have jumped into new jobs, big jobs, without adequate national support. ... We can't drop people there if they can't also access a national infrastructure.”

—National Staff

Jewish professionals from partner organizations are generally enthusiastic about the JSU program model.

- Jewish professionals describe their relationships with JSU as positive or very positive. As a group, these representatives of JSU's key partners and supporters enthusiastically support the JSU program concept, seeing the benefit of the public school model in reaching teens where they are and providing opportunities to engage them in Jewish life in a way that typical Jewish organizations do not.
- Jewish professionals have already seen increased participation in their organizations' youth programs as a result of JSU, and they are hopeful that this will continue to grow.
- JSU staff are regarded as highly skilled, and Jewish professionals compare them favorably with other Jewish youth education professionals.
- JSU club advisors are satisfied with the relationships they have developed with their partner organizations and individual Jewish professionals in the community. They find that partners welcome JSU once they are convinced that JSU will not "steal" youth away from other Jewish youth programs. All advisors emphasize that their job requires having the skills and the time to network with other Jewish community professionals and build relationships with key individuals.

TYPICAL PARTNERS OF REGIONAL JSU STAFF

- BBYO staff
- Synagogue youth directors
- Leaders of Israel trips
- Jewish service learning program leaders
- Jewish education directors in larger organizations

"JSU is bringing tremendous energy to the Jewish educational community here. When they make a presentation, there is excitement, a sense of perhaps even cutting edge, something pioneering. I like that energy a lot."

—Jewish Professional

Answering questions about JSU's history with NCSY is a necessary step on the path to building organizational relationships.

- For both national and regional relationships, JSU staff find they usually need to take extra steps to clarify JSU's history and current relationship with NCSY and the OU. JSU staff encounter some confusion and a lot of out-of-date information about this relationship. This delays other Jewish professionals from embracing the JSU-employee model, but it does not appear to stop their eventual support. It is too early to tell if or how this issue may affect fundraising.
- The NCSY relationship is not a question in Denver where NCSY is not active.
- Jewish professionals would like to see the JSU staff reflect the diversity of Jewish affiliation that is welcomed in the clubs. They perceive a tendency for advisors to be allied with orthodox, conservative or traditional movements.

"JSU's reputation is growing as an independent model, but there are still some hindrances that they haven't been able to effectively address. They are still anchored in some stereotypes....They are still perceived as anchored in an OU program. It has been a continuing struggle for them to move beyond this."

—Funder

The national staff bring particular expertise into the organization and increase the level of support available for regional staff.

- The creation of the current national team of four full-time staff represents a huge jump in capacity for the organization. Prior to the 2010–2011 program year, national staffing was in transition; it was not until late fall of 2010 that the national staff team was fully in place. However, four is a small number of people to cover all the responsibilities of a national operation.
- The national office is still determining the right level of oversight and supervision of regional staff in terms of monitoring progress and giving regional staff the tools and resources they need.
- National staff are following a business plan that gives direction for organizational growth and development, but much of that work is not yet formalized, and the pace of growth is inconsistent.
- Similar to regional staff, national staff sometimes feel overwhelmed. They are conscious of how much more work needs to be done in the short term to reach the level of organizational stability that they desire, which includes maintaining the current regions and expanding to others.
- National staff members hold a deep conviction in the value of JSU for individual youth and for the Jewish community overall. They show an obvious readiness to persevere in working towards organizational goals.
- At this point in time, national staff work is focused on directly supporting regional expansion. Developing adequate national infrastructure is critical for the stability and growth of JSU regions.

JSU is in the process of developing systems and practices to support the regional work.

- As JSU continues to separate from NCSY and set up its own systems and structure, it's challenging for national staff to stay ahead of the regions in setting policies and practices. The national organization finds itself trying to manage two timelines—an ideal, sequential timeline and a practical, simultaneous timeline.
- In a sequential approach, the national organization would first develop overall policies, procedures and systems and then roll them out in an organized way to the regions, offering the regions more and steadier support than it does now.
- In reality, the regions' immediate needs require staff to develop systems and resources simultaneously with the national office. Sometimes this is useful, as a region can develop a prototype or pilot an effort, such as a recent fundraising event held in Chicago, from which the national staff can develop further efforts or templates for shared use. Often, however, it is stressful, with national staff rushing to react to an immediate need.
- The sequential versus simultaneous issue is at play in program development as well. Regional staff want program guidance and a repository of helpful program resources, but when the need is pressing, they develop program activities and make decisions based on their own best judgment to meet their immediate needs.

"Our greatest challenge is doing expansion and building infrastructure at the same time."

—National Staff

Fund development goals and strategies are clear, but the tools and support systems needed to reach those goals are in development.

- With the addition of an experienced fund development director in November 2010, JSU is establishing fund development routines, materials and support systems, for example fundraising calendars, donor research files and tracking tools.
- Staff, the national board and regional advisory board members are just becoming familiar with their respective functions in fundraising and communications. Efficiency will hopefully increase as the teams have opportunities to work together. As the national systems become more established, regional fund development will benefit as well.
- JSU leaders have a clear fundraising objective: to have \$200,000 of new funding available to the regions in 2013 and annually thereafter to take the place of the current grants.
- In order to accomplish their fund development goals, it is critical to develop both the national board and the regional advisory boards. National staff and the chair of the national board are acutely aware of this.

NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- 15 members
- Convenes four times per year, once in person
- \$5,000 minimum contribution

REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARDS

- Size, responsibilities and giving requirements determined by region
- Convene in person at least twice per year

Rebranding and a strategic communications plan are giving JSU new tools, but it will take time for JSU to benefit from applying them in practice.

- JSU staff, board and advisory board members are working to understand their respective roles in communications and public relations. In addition to clarifying communications responsibilities, staff and board members are also trying to incorporate guidance from branding consultants. Staff are looking forward to having an organizational strategic communications plan in hand.
- Improving JSU's brand clarity has the potential to drive the organization's advancement. The tension of both honoring the OU's creation of JSU and separating the program from NCSY is an ongoing challenge for almost every staff member. The rebranding will provide a platform for moving ahead with a clearer identity and refreshed goals, as well as new communications tools.
- JSU leaders see the strategic communications plan as an essential component of fund development.

Information management practices need greater rigor and routine if the organization wants to track progress toward goals and document impact.

- Information on teen club attendees is not consistently collected or entered into the JSU tracking database. Because the data on participation and club activity are incomplete, JSU cannot accurately assess its program process and program outcomes.
- JSU advisors focus on program delivery, resulting in delayed or incomplete data entry and referral monitoring.
- Advisors are not benefitting from the information that club and student data can provide. They are not aware of or using any tools to review and analyze the data they currently collect. Lacking an immediate benefit from data collection and record keeping contributes to gaps and delays in collecting intake forms and data entry.
- As presently collected and organized, JSU's data on program outcomes are too inconsistent to be persuasive with potential donors and funders.

"We could use our database better. It's like a 'black box' that we're putting data into. Maybe with more administrative help we'll be able to get useful information from all that."

—National Staff

Lessons Learned by JSU about the Expansion Model

Building a Base for Expansion

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Prior to having staff on the ground in a new region, JSU national staff and supporters (e.g., funders, national partners) should begin cultivating local supporters and introducing the new staff.

It is essential to communicate that JSU is not a competing youth group, but a way to bring kids to existing Jewish programs and activities. Share data, if available, demonstrating that this is happening.

SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

Well in advance of starting a club, JSU advisors need to know a school's policies on having religiously-affiliated clubs and the procedures that need to be followed.

JSU advisors should not only be aware of current policies but also learn about past experiences that may impact how open a school administration is to having JSU on campus.

TIMING OF STARTING NEW CLUBS & ADDING STAFF

In schools where new clubs need to be established, it is better to start new clubs mid-year.

- The process of initiating and organizing a new club with teens and school administrators is better done in late fall, well after the busy start of the school term, or in early winter, with plans to have the new club launch with meetings in January or after winter break.
- Planning for staff hiring should reflect this timeline.

Outreach

OPEN MEMBERSHIP

The principle of open membership is key to a JSU club's success. It is important that teens, teachers, school administrators, parents and Jewish community leaders all perceive that the club is open to all teens, whether or not they are Jewish and regardless of their affiliation or previous Jewish experiences.

Having non-Jews attend club meetings is seen as positive, not problematic.

DIVERSE PARTICIPATION

JSU clubs are enriched by having JSU advisors and teen members who represent a mix of Jewish backgrounds.

- Having JSU advisors who reflect diverse Jewish practice and affiliation is a real benefit of JSU.
- It is important that advisors can meet teens wherever they are on their Jewish journeys, regardless of the advisor's background.
- Teens like being in a group with other Jewish teens whose background and experience differ from their own. This brings depth to their understanding of Judaism and Israel and their own relationship to the Jewish people.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

The leadership skills and personality of the JSU student leaders affect recruitment and participation in clubs.

Clubs benefit from involving teens who are already leaders in both the school and the Jewish community, as they are able to draw in the large, diverse group of teens that JSU ideally wants.

Relationships

MULTIPLE CONNECTIONS

JSU regional staff benefit from making as many connections as possible within the Jewish community and talking about JSU in a variety of formal and informal settings.

- JSU advisors should get involved in Jewish communal activities with both teens and adults to familiarize the community with the advisor and JSU as an organization. Most advisors are active members of congregations as well as frequent attendees at teen activities.
- JSU advisors should actively seek out opportunities to engage with other Jewish youth professionals to explain the JSU model and reassure them that JSU does not intend to draw teens away from existing programs. If there is a Jewish youth professional group or council, JSU advisors should join this group and actively contribute.
- Building a good relationship with regional BBYO leaders is a good early step in expansion regions, due to BBYO's national commitment to JSU and the alignment of the two organizations' purposes/missions.

COMMUNITY POLITICS

JSU advisors need to be aware of and navigate community politics.

- Even though a lot of their work is focused in schools and with Jewish youth groups, JSU advisors also need a good understanding of the relationships among the key Jewish organizations in their communities, as well as individual leaders and key communicators.
- JSU needs to quickly acquire a working understanding of the major concerns of these organizations (e.g., a Federation's approach to youth outreach, competing Israel trips, a reduction in youth staff or funding, etc.).

SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

It takes time for a new program to build good relationships, dependable program partnerships, connections to potential board members, and openings with potential funders.

- Relationships with other Jewish professionals and organizations in Year 2 deserve as much care and attention as in Year 1. In the first year of a relationship there hasn't been enough shared experience and mutual benefit to fully establish program partnerships.
- Some partners expect that it will take two to three years before they see impact from JSU on their programs and in the Jewish network of youth organizations.

Best Practices for Adaptation

In reviewing the literature about best practices for program adaptation and expansion, five practices stand out as being highly relevant for JSU leadership to consider or review given JSU's current state of expansion. The research reviewed is included in the reference list.

1. Know the essential elements of the program.

Be clear on which program elements are essential and need to be standard across locations and which elements are flexible and open to adaptation within a local context.

2. Ensure consistency in the delivery of key program elements by creating and using implementation and training guides.

Implementation guides help staff in new communities produce consistent, concrete, measurable results. Guides include descriptions of each essential program component, data collection guidelines, and standard operating and reporting procedures.

3. Provide program sites with ways to measure quality.

Rigorous data monitoring enables dispersed sites to adhere to program quality standards. Tools, standard procedures and staff training help new sites monitor progress and measure quality.

4. Replicate in clusters.

Saturating a region with expansion sites enables sharing of resources (e.g., staffing), peer learning and more effective communication.

5. Communicate the brand and the essential program elements.

Put effort into developing a marketing and communications strategy based on a clear brand to communicate consistent messages across all sites.

Implications & Recommendations for 2011–2012

Program Level Implications

1. JSU clubs attract Jewish teens who are moderately to highly engaged in Jewish activities.

Recommendation:

Consider whether the organization wants to enhance student recruitment to focus more on teens who are less Jewishly engaged prior to participating in JSU.

2. It is not clear what constitutes a teen referral to other Jewish organizations and what actions are expected of teens who receive a referral.

Recommendations:

- Discuss and clarify the concept of referrals with staff; compare the ideal practices and the actual practices in use around this concept.
- Consider developing draft standards and practices and using them during a short-term “pilot” period followed by an internal assessment of what works.
- Give thought to how JSU intends to collect and track data about referrals over the long term.

3. The role of one-to-one mentoring between JSU advisors and teens is unclear, since mentoring even a modest proportion of JSU teens is unrealistic given the size of the clubs and the anticipated increases in each region.

Recommendations:

- Assess whether and how club advisors currently do mentoring, clarify the role mentoring holds in achieving JSU outcomes, and provide clear guidance to club advisors about their responsibilities for mentoring teens who attend club meetings.
- Determine a realistic number for anticipated mentoring relationships, to assist club advisors in making choices about how to spend their time.

4. JSU is depending on volunteer teen leaders in all clubs to promote JSU and increase membership, regardless of differences in club or school context.

Recommendations:

- Develop a set of robust policies, procedures, tools and training to support this role. Copy or adapt materials and best practices used by other, more established youth organizations that have internal youth leaders with similar roles and expectations.
- Consider convening student leaders within a region for training in communications and marketing JSU to other teens.

Organizational Level Implications

1. **Given its early stage of organizational development, JSU lacks a clear roadmap and consistent practices to guide the work of the regions.**

Recommendations:

- Update and finalize JSU's business plan outlining the organization's growth and share with regional staff, explaining regional roles and responsibilities in implementing the plan.
- Develop program standards to inform advisors' work and ensure there is consistency in quality and messages across regions and clubs.

2. **Regional staff are focused on tactical advances, not planning strategically; a gap in this competency at the regional level is of concern because of the fast pace of JSU's regional growth.**

Recommendations:

- To cultivate strategic thinking among staff in each region, occasionally include regional directors in discussions about strategy at the cross-region or national level, such as with board members.
- Find ways for regional staff to occasionally review and discuss the organization's progress toward all benchmarks, outcomes and key strategies.

3. The lack of complete data on students and clubs makes it difficult to understand JSU's impact on students or identify areas for program improvement and adaptation.

Recommendations:

- Improve internal staff systems for collecting and recording student and club data.
- Develop a regular schedule (e.g., quarterly) of data analysis meetings where regional directors and national staff examine student and club data. Engage club advisors in discussions about what the data mean.
- Explore ways for low-cost or no-cost volunteer staff or interns to help regional staff with data entry.

4. There is a tension between the demands of building fundraising capacity in the regions simultaneously with expanding program delivery.

Recommendations:

- Continue to develop and use fundraising systems and structures across the whole organization, such as written procedures, records of donors, records of requests and planning calendars.
- Continue to provide regional staff with close guidance and support from national staff with expertise in fund development.

5. To implement JSU's vision, it is critical to recruit and develop national board members and regional advisory board members who are able to take on fundraising responsibilities.

Recommendations:

- Continue to focus JSU staff and board members on this work.
- Be sure all staff understand why JSU leaders must commit significant time in the coming months to cultivate and recruit national board and advisory board members, and find ways they can support this organizational priority.

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Appendix

DETERMINING LEVEL OF PRIOR & CURRENT JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

BTW created four categories of level of Jewish engagement—none, low, mid and high—and used multiple survey items to determine a teen’s level of past and current Jewish engagement.

Past Jewish Engagement

- Teens were asked if they had experiences in four Jewish activities (i.e., bar/bat mitzvah, Jewish overnight camp, trip to Israel and Jewish day school) prior to participating in JSU. Teens who said “no” to all items were coded as 0, teens who said “yes” to one item were coded as 1, teens who said “yes” to two items were coded as 2 and teens who said “yes” to three or more items were coded as 3 (respectively described as none, low, mid and high on page 19).

Current Jewish Engagement

- Teens were asked how often they participate in Jewish-related activities and how many close Jewish friends they have. These two items were asked on a four-point Likert scale, with each point coded as 0–3, progressively getting higher (i.e., the lowest point was coded as 0 and the highest point was coded as 3).
- Teens were asked about the number of Jewish-related activities (e.g., BBYO, JCC, synagogue youth group, etc.) they have participated in over the last year. For this item, teens who did not select any activities were coded as 0, teens who selected one or two activities were coded as 1, teens who selected three or four items were coded as 2 and teens who selected five or more activities were coded as 3.
- Coded scores for these three items—the frequency of participation in Jewish-related activities, the number of close Jewish friends and the number of Jewish-related activities a teen participated in—were combined to determine a teen’s level of current Jewish engagement. A combined score could range from 0 (received 0s for all items) to 9 (received 3s for all items). Teens whose combined scores were 0 were classified as having no current Jewish engagement (none), teens whose combined scores ranged from 1–3 were classified as having a low level of current Jewish engagement, teens whose combined scores ranged from 4–6 were classified as having a mid level of current Jewish engagement, and teens whose total ranged from 7–9 were classified as having a high level of current Jewish engagement.