

**Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA)
Remarks on the Educators in Jewish Schools Study (EJSS)
Charles “Chip” Edelsberg, Executive Director, Jim Joseph Foundation
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I would like to make 10 points about this important study in the context of contemporary Jewish philanthropy and Jim Joseph Foundation grant making in particular.

1. There is abundance in the Jewish world replete with extraordinary opportunity to nurture Jewish life around **dynamic life-long learning**.
2. During the past two years, JJF has devoted resources, time, and energy to mapping the field of education of young Jews in the United States—in a study carried out by Dr. Amy Sales and a Brandeis team of researchers; in commissioned papers; in an extensive literature review; and via countless in-depth conversations with funders, representatives from educational organizations, as well as leaders of Jewish not for profit educational organizations.
3. In general, we find the field to be data deprived to this point. In the words of the JESNA staff: “Although Jewish day and complementary schools are the primary avenues for educating the majority of Jewish youth in North America, the Jewish community has gathered surprisingly little empirical information about Jewish educators over time in a systematic way. Without accurate, current, and comprehensive data, decision-makers in the Jewish community lack a sufficiently complete context for the field in which they are considering Jewish education policy and planning educational change.”

4. The EJSS Study that I have had the privilege of reviewing responds in a direct and significant way to the need for descriptive data we, among others, have identified to be lacking. If we are to make planned progress toward enriching the quality of Jewish education, we need **replications** of this study.
5. The EJSS Study lends itself to formulation of testable hypotheses. Research into these hypotheses on issues of Jewish educator training, professional development, career satisfaction, and retention can take place because the EJSS Study provides us the basis for doing so.
6. JJF believes that **strategy** is essential to **effective philanthropy**.
7. Sound strategy has as one of its fundamental pillars social science data. This data, when thoughtfully analyzed and intelligently applied in solutions-oriented philanthropy, represents one direct route to impacting the field of Jewish education.
8. Wendy Rosov averred in an article written in summer 2006 that “Our next frontier is the creation of a communal forum devoted to policy analysis and discourse in Jewish education that is informed by funded research and rigorous evaluation in the field.” We agree with Dr. Rosov, although we see that considerable work needs to be accomplished before such a forum actually comes into existence.
9. If JJF is to excel as a foundation it cannot work without credible data. We simply are not smart enough to do so. Nor is JJF inclined, in its infancy, to exercise its philanthropic privileges without partners—funders, intermediaries, research institutes, technical experts—to understand what most helps Jewish educators and their institutions enrich student learning and develop learners’ Jewish identities.

10. JJF theorizes that funding initiatives designed to improve teaching, learning, and student engagement is one pathway to realize JJF's vision of "ever increasing numbers of young Jews engaged in ongoing Jewish learning and choosing to live vibrant Jewish lives."