



Evaluation of the Pardes Educators Alumni Support Project

# Promoting Retention of Pardes Educator Program Alumni

Report for the Jim Joseph Foundation and the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies

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## Executive Summary

The Pardes Educators Program (PEP) is a two year program consisting of advanced Jewish text learning and education that takes place at the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem. The program trains knowledgeable Jewish studies teachers for Jewish day schools in North America. Upon completion of the program, PEP graduates undertake a three year commitment to teach in Jewish Day Schools in North America. A total of 99 have graduated from the program, representing nine cohorts, since its inception in September 2000.

PEP addresses two key needs facing American Jewish education: 1) Recruitment and training of quality Jewish educators; and, 2) through the Pardes Educators Alumni Support Project (PEASP), support and retention. This evaluation project focuses on the second of these two areas, with the goal of examining the strategies PEASP is taking to tackle core issues regarding support and retention of educators once they enter the field. How does the variety of support and educational services offered by PEASP to its alumni after they enter the field: 1) improve their professional work and 2) contribute to the larger challenge of retaining quality teachers in the profession?

## The evaluation process

This is the final report of the first of three phases of the PEASP evaluation. Phase one began in July 2010 and lasted 6 months. Phase one provides a mapping of PEASP alumni with the focus on understanding the factors which influence intention to remain connected to the field of day school teaching, with some initial thinking regarding the implications for alumni retention and PEASP's work.

Phase one work includes:

- Analysis of data from a survey conducted in 2009 of 37 alumni in their first three years of teaching.
- 45 in-depth interviews, including 21 in person interviews and an additional 24 telephone interviews of between one half and one hour. The interviews included 16 novice teachers from cohorts 7 and 8, and an additional 29 alumni from cohorts 1 through 6, including 9 who are not currently working as Day School educators.
- Observation by Dr. Kopelowitz of the PEASP Fall Alumni Retreat.
- Discussions with Dr. Susan Wall, PEASP director.

## Findings

PEP alumni view themselves as members of a community of fellows, a cadre of elite educators with the passion, motivation and skills for bringing the highest levels of Jewish text study to Day Schools. They share a passion for Jewish text study and most have a deep commitment to Jewish education. For many, Pardes helped nurture this passion and for most the Pardes experience opened up a pathway to take their love for Jewish text study to the Day School classroom.

The primary role of PEASP, for both the novice and veteran alumni is to preserve the feeling of membership in a supportive and visionary community. Within that general charge, the mission needs to play out differently vis-à-vis novice teachers and those alumni who are past the three year commitment made to teach in a Jewish day school.

### Novice teachers

PEASP's mission to date has primarily focused on providing support services to alumni within their first three years of teaching. This evaluation confirms the importance of the focus on the first three years. As shown throughout this report, the induction phase determines the overall attitude of PEP alumni to Day School education and is a critical and productive phase for PEASP to focus its resources.

Among the novice educators, 68% of survey respondents indicated they intend to remain in the North American Jewish day school classroom beyond their formal three year commitment. Of the remainder, most express ambivalence. The critical variable in understanding the difference between those who intend to remain in Day Schools and those who don't is the school environment in which an educator works. The survey and interview data indicates that when PEP alumni feel that they work in a supportive environment, they in almost all cases are likely to see themselves in the Jewish studies classroom in the future.

The novice educators are divided into three groups:

#### **1. Right person, right school**

The majority (10 of 16 interviewed) of recent PEP alumni are committed Jewish educators who are in schools where they are happy. In this scenario, there are two groups. 1) The majority who experience the first year as overwhelming, but due to the factors cited above are able to adjust and enjoy teaching; and, 2) the small minority who hit the ground running, normally possessing a combination of previous teaching

experience, a confident outgoing personality and find themselves in a school in which they feel they can thrive.

For the first group the full package of PEASP support services, including the school visit is important, especially in the first year. For this group of alumni, PEASP provides a buffer zone or extra-territorial base of support easing the pains of the first years of teaching. In contrast, for the small number of alumni who hit the ground running and those who by the second year become confident teachers, the current configuration of PEASP services is not ideal. For these alumni, the school visit, which represents the most intensive use of PEASP resources, may still be needed – but not in its current format. These alumni more closely represent the needs of the majority of three year plus alumni, who are confident in their teaching and are thinking about the next step – to advance themselves personally and professionally within their school and the broader profession.

## **2. Right person, wrong school**

Three of the 16 interviewed fall into the category of “right person, wrong school.” This group is most dependent on PEASP. PEASP support provides a “life jacket” keeping the “right person” who finds themselves in the “wrong school,” in the profession. PEASP provides a critical source for support in dealing with the bad school experience and when necessary, provides assistance in finding another position.

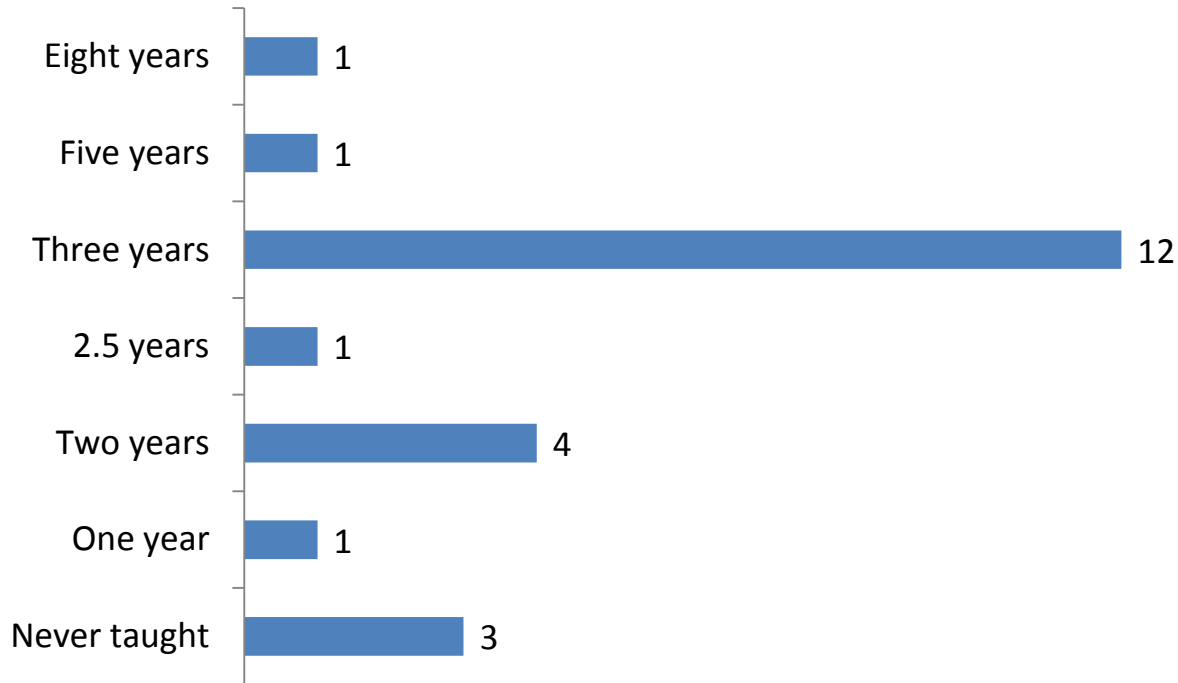
## **3. Wrong person, maybe wrong school**

A small group of alumni (3 of 16 interviewed) fall into the “wrong person” category. For these alumni PEASP will not play a strong retaining influence. They are very concerned with fast career and salary advancement, beyond the capacity of most Day Schools. Some also have head strong or independent personalities, which leads to an overly critical appraisal of their schools’ administrative culture. The only role PEASP might play is to help the alumnus find a better school environment. In most cases these alumni are very unhappy with their schools. However, given their personality or life situation there is a high probability that they will have a hard time at most schools.

## **Veteran educators**

PEASP’s mandate is to focus on novice PEP alumni in their first three years of teaching. However, as the alumni body grows, so the needs of veteran alumni are becoming a

**Number of years teaching  
before leaving Day School education  
(chart shows number of alumni who have left)**



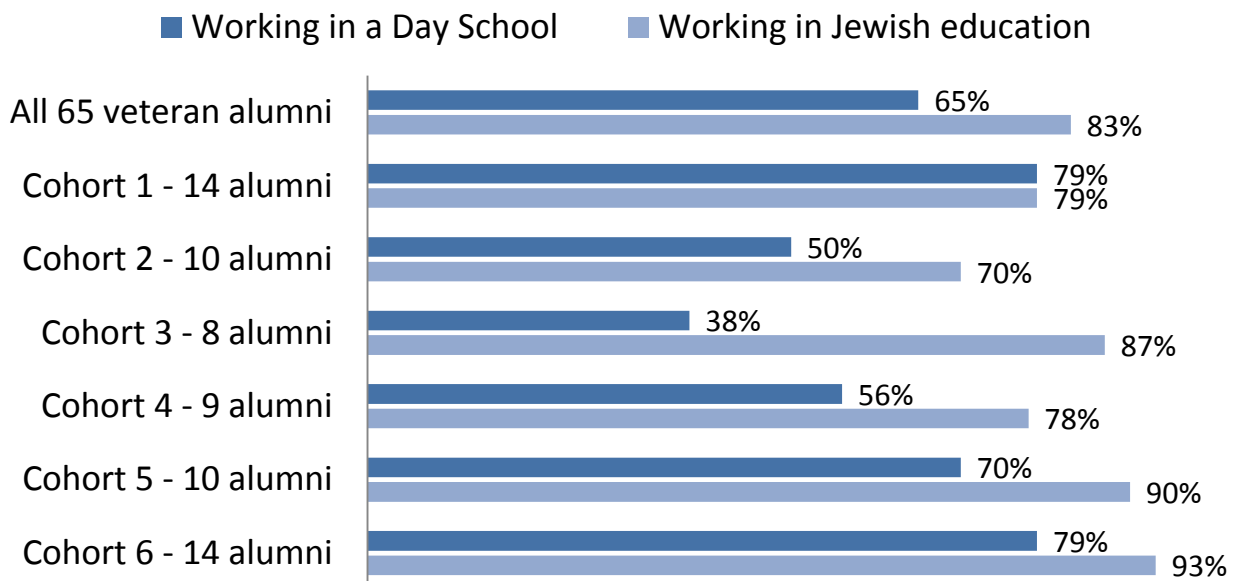
concern. To what extent should PEASP include the veteran alumni in its core mandate, and if so what are the implications for PEASP’s work?

The interviews with veteran alumni from cohorts 1 through 6 confirms the importance of the first three years and the working environment in which alumni find themselves during this period. An analysis of the veteran PEP alumni shows that almost all PEP graduates who make it past the three year threshold remain in Day School education (taking into consideration that we are speaking only of PEP graduates who are between four and ten years out from Pardes).

All but 2 of the 23 PEP alumni who no longer work in a Day School, left by the end of their first three years of teaching. Of the six veteran cohorts, 35% of alumni have left Day School education, with 17% having left Jewish education altogether.

Many of those who “leave,” return to work in a Day School. Six of the 26 interviewed took a break at some point from teaching and have since returned to work in Day Schools. Of the 9 interviews with alumni who no longer work in a Jewish Day School, four stated they intend to return.

**Alumni working in field of Day School and Jewish education (including Day Schools) per veteran cohort (1 through 6).**



\*Data is for all veteran PEP alumni provided by PEASP and supplemented by the interviews.

Once PEP alumni continue to teach past year three, the issue of work environment no longer stands by itself as a dominant factor for understanding retention. Rather, work environment mixes in with concerns of finances and career. Work environment either allays (in a situation of being in the “right school”) or exacerbates (“wrong school”) issues of financial security and career, which become ever pressing concerns for many as they build their family and begin to think about the long term. If issues of finances and career are satisfactory then veteran alumni who decide that Day School education is their chosen profession, make peace with a less than perfect school environment.

**Intention for continuing involvement in the field of Day School education among veteran alumni interviewed.**

	Number of alumni interviewed	Percent
No intention	2	8%
Low	5	19%
Ambivalent	9	35%
High	10	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Data source: Veteran PEP alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

The majority of PEP alumni who continue after the initial three year commitment, have an ambivalent relationship to working in administration. They love teaching and feel

pushed to administration due to the need for career advancement and a higher salary. For a significant minority the result is ambivalence about their future in the profession.

Veteran alumni interact with PEASP in three primary modes:

1. **“Reinvigoration”** is the strongest and most consistent theme which comes out of almost all of the alumni interviews, novice and veteran alike. For most veteran alumni contact with the Pardes community is primarily a source of rejuvenation, which trumps the other potential roles PEASP might play. While the rejuvenation function seems most powerful at the Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum Workshop, where there is an intensive immersion experience; veteran alumni also cite the on-going contact with the Pardes community through the e-mail list and newsletter as a basis for feeling that they are part of a greater community of fellows who care.
2. PEASP’s **professional development** function is focused on peer learning between alumni and continued contact with Pardes staff during the Fall Retreat, Summer Seminar and by way of the newsletter, e-mail list, conference calls and website.
3. PEASP staff reach-out to alumni asking them to serve as **leaders within the PEASP network**, including serving as peer mentors, as moderators or session leaders at the Fall Retreat, Summer Curriculum Workshop, to lead conference calls, write blogs and newsletter articles.

Given that PEASP mandate is to work with novice educators, there is not currently a clear theory of practice governing PEASP’s work vis-à-vis veteran alumni. Should Pardes decide to make work with veteran alumni central to PEASP’s mandate, a distinction is needed between support services offered to novice and veteran PEP educators. The lack of such a distinction leads to tensions around the different support needs of the veteran and novice educators, in which the needs of the former are seen as standing in conflict with those of the latter.

The current basket of PEASP services are not calibrated for veteran educators. The consequence is that while the veteran alumni harbor tremendous good will and feeling of emotional connection to Pardes, most grow distant from the Pardes community over time. Given the large numbers of veteran alumni who express ambivalence towards their future as teachers, the pressures to enter administration and the significant numbers who take breaks and then return to teaching, there does seem to be an important place for PEASP in the lives of veteran alumni.



Alumni have other frameworks to turn to in order to receive professional development services which focus on the art of teaching. The Pardes community is their address on matters of Jewish Studies in general and text study in particular. Only at Pardes are alumni able to benefit from contact with their community of peers and teachers who share a similar passion and vision for bringing Jewish text study to American Jewry. Alumni provided examples of types of PEASP support they would benefit from. The common theme is the need for PEASP to integrate what are currently different services into a single coherent module. Alumni want to see services such as the Fall Retreat, e-mail list, newsletter and other PEASP resources used in a systematic fashion to promote school based development projects. These projects which will enable them to continue their intellectual growth, while both contributing to their schools and the larger field.

## Recommendations

In thinking through the distribution of PEASP services to alumni for the purpose of promoting their retention as day school educators, a two pronged strategy is recommended.

### **1. One strategy for the purpose of successful induction**

PEASP services should be provided on an as needed basis to those alumni most in need of them during the induction period. Those alumni most affected by the pressures associated with learning a new role and potential lack of support at their school, should receive the lion's share of Pardes staff time, especially in the area of school visits, one-on-one consultation before and after the visits and access to support hours. The goal is to transition these alumni, as quickly as possible into confident teachers who can then be engaged by the second strategy.

When PEP alumni find themselves in the wrong school as novice teachers, the chances that they leave Day School education become much higher. Given the large financial investment Pardes and its philanthropic supporters make in each PEP graduate, creative thinking is needed to find ways to "actively" channel recent alumni to schools which have a record for providing supportive work environments.

### **2. A second strategy for the purpose of developing "Master Jewish Educators"**

PEP is producing graduates, who in the right conditions become Master Jewish educators. These include new alumni who hit the ground running and veteran alumni who are already confident teachers. Should the resources exist, PEASP is the ideal venue for maximizing the potential of PEP alumni to become "Master Jewish

Educators”. PEP alumni view “the Pardes community” as an anchor in their professional lives, helping them maintain a focus on the vision that inspired them to enter into Jewish education. The role of PEASP is to continually rebuild the unique connection of the alumni to “the Pardes community” and through the community bring benefit to the field of Day School and Jewish Education.

To maintain alumni motivation, PEASP’s role is to enable those who wish, to continue to focus on the text study and the challenges for bringing text to their schools. In particular, many alumni cite a pressing need for curriculum development. They find themselves continually writing curriculum. They and their schools will benefit from joint alumni projects focused on the development of curricular resources.

For this purpose, Pardes could develop support modules specifically designed for veteran alumni. These support services require integration of existing Pardes services into modules for veteran educators and in the process changing the nature of those services to better accord to their scheduling and learning needs.

Beyond the direct benefit for the veteran alumni, these modules will bring multiple benefits to Pardes and PEASP, including:

- 1) Creating a means of bringing exceptional novice alumni and veterans into a common working framework, to the benefit of both;
- 2) Developing curriculum in areas most needed in Jewish Studies aimed at young Jews – certainly in the Day School environment, but potentially beyond;
- 3) Positioning Pardes with the knowledge and infrastructure for training veteran Jewish educators and curriculum development.

## Introduction

The Pardes Educators Program (PEP) is a two year program consisting of advanced Jewish text learning and education that takes place at the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem. The program trains knowledgeable Jewish studies teachers for Jewish day schools in North America. Upon completion of the program, PEP graduates undertake a three year commitment to teach in Jewish Day Schools in North America. A total of 99 have graduated from the program, representing nine cohorts, since its inception in September 2000.

PEP addresses two key needs facing American Jewish education: 1) Recruitment and training of quality Jewish educators; and, 2) through the Pardes Educators Alumni Support Project (PEASP), support and retention. This evaluation project focuses on the second of these two areas, with the goal of examining the strategies PEASP is taking to tackle core issues regarding support and retention of educators once they enter the field. How does the variety of support and educational services offered by PEASP to its alumni after they enter the field: 1) improve their professional work and 2) contribute to the larger challenge of retaining quality teachers in the profession?

The following topics are covered:

1. Factors which determine retention of PEP alumni as Jewish day school educators
2. PEASP's role in the retention process
3. The use of PEASP resources with the goal of contributing to retention.

These three topics are each addressed vis-à-vis two groups of PEP alumni. Section one focuses on alumni who graduated within the past three years and are in their first three years of teaching, who are still working to fulfill their obligation to teach in a Jewish Day School as part of their commitment to Pardes. The focus of section two is the veteran alumni who graduated at least three years ago (cohorts 1 through 6). Section one was written in September 2010 and is presented here without substantial changes. Section two represents new material based on work done since September. Section three details the PEASP logic model, updated to reflect lessons learned from the evaluation. The report ends with recommendations.

## Overview of evaluation process

This report is the first of three phases of the PEASP evaluation. Phase one began in July 2010 and lasted 6 months. Phase one provides a mapping of PEASP alumni with the focus on understanding the factors which influence intention to remain connected to the field of day school teaching, with some initial thinking regarding the implications for the larger topic of alumni retention in general and PEASP's work in particular. The data in this phase one report relies solely on the survey and interviews with Pardes alumni and data maintained by PEASP on the alumni.

The second phase lasting six months will seek to build on phase one in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the potential and limits of an alumni support program. The work will include a review of research literature and existing knowledge about effectiveness of alumni support programs, including interviews with experts in the field, follow-up interviews with alumni and interviews with Heads of School who employ PEP alumni.

The third and final phase lasting 12 months will focus on setting up a method for on-going collection of data. The goal is to enable PEASP staff to have information in hand, on a real time basis, in order to apportion alumni support resources to attain the highest overall retention rate and involvement of alumni in the field of Jewish education.

Phase one work included:

- Analysis of survey data provided by a team of researchers from Yeshiva University lead by Dr. Shani Bechhofer. The analysis in this report focuses on a 2009 survey of 37 alumni in their first three years of teaching, representing 100% of the 2007, 2008 and 2009 PEP graduating cohorts.
- 45 in-depth hour long interviews.
  - 20 in person interviews with Pardes alumni at the Summer Curriculum Workshop in Jerusalem
  - One interview in New York with a PEP alumnus who is now on staff at PEASP
  - 24 telephone interviews, of which 9 were with alumni currently not working in a Jewish Day School
  - The following is a breakdown of cohort years interviewed:
    - Cohort 8 - 1 year out – 8 alumni
    - Cohort 7 - 2 years out - 8 alumni
    - Cohort 6 - 3 years out – 9 alumni

- Cohort 5 - 4 years out – 6 alumni
  - Cohort 4 - 5 years out – 5 alumni
  - Cohort 3 – 6 years out – 2 alumni
  - Cohort 2 - 7 years out - 5 alumni
  - Cohort 1 - 8 years out – 2 alumni
- Participation of the evaluator in the PEP/DeLeT Fall Retreat
  - A 2.5 hour summary discussion and joint thinking about the initial research findings with Dr. Susan Wall and several shorter informal discussions.

## Section 1: Alumni within their first three years of graduating PEP

### Factors which determine retention

68% of survey respondents indicated they intend to remain in the North American Jewish day school classroom beyond their formal three year commitment. Of the remainder, most express ambivalence.

#### 2009 survey of three most recent cohorts of PEP graduates

“In three years from now, do you intend to be a Jewish studies teacher in a day school?”

Definitely Not	Probably Not	Probably	Definitely	Total
1	11	23	2	37 alumni

\*Source: 2009 survey of novice PEP alumni

75% of those interviewed, who are in their first three years of teaching indicated that they intend to remain in the Jewish day school classroom after their first three years.

#### Interviews with alumni in their first three years: Intention to teach in a Jewish day school in the foreseeable future

	Alumni within first three years
Intends to teach after mandatory three years	12
Is ambivalent	4
Does not intend to teach after mandatory three years	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16 alumni</b>

\*Source: Interviews with novice PEP alumni

Comparing the survey responses and interviews of those who intend to remain in the classroom and those who do not, the following factors provide a clear means for predicting retention. The analysis focuses on first, second and third year teachers for whom we have both survey and interview data.

### 1. The right person for the job

The most important factor explaining retention is the teacher’s personal profile. If the “right person” is in the Jewish day school classroom, that person, at least in his or her initial three years is likely to see a future in the field.

The following is the profile of the typical PEP alumna who expresses strong intention to remain in the day school classroom. Each of the five profile factors are ordered in terms of importance, with the first factor providing the greatest predictor for understanding why a person will remain a day school educator, and so forth.

#### **a. Commitment to Jewish education**

Those who clearly state their intention to remain in day school education are committed at a personal level, making statements such as: “This is who I am,” “the profession chose me,” “I can’t imagine doing anything else.” They are enthusiastic about contributing to advancing the profession; and, draw inspiration and fulfillment from bringing Judaism to their student’s lives. An oft heard statement: “I am making a Jewish difference in their lives.”

#### **b. Really likes teaching children**

Alumni who clearly emphasize that, “I love teaching kids and want to nurture their growth and development” in general, and “their Jewish growth” in particular are more likely to see themselves in the Jewish studies classroom in the future.

#### **c. Career considerations**

In their initial years teaching a PEP alumnus is focused on becoming an excellent classroom teacher and is relatively unconcerned with fast career advancement and salary. The latter factors become “pre-maturely important” and decisive in two scenarios: 1) When an alumnus experiences financial pressure; and, 2) when an alumnus has an ambitious personality for which salary and career advancement (level of formal responsibility and ability to influence) serve as the major source for affirmation of self-worth.

After year two, once the individual alumnus feels comfortable teaching, his or her energies are directed towards advancing the quality of Jewish education either in the school or beyond and issues of career fulfillment begin to take a central role. Issues of salary increase in importance. The manner in which these factors play out are presented in section II.

#### **d. Other factors which seem to play an important role**

##### **1. Previous teaching experience and a confident, inquisitive personality**

Previous teaching experience (formal or informal) and a confident or inquisitive personality in combination with school environment (see below) play a huge role in the quality of a PEP alumnus’s first year teaching experience and the speed in which he or she settles in and starts contributing to the school. Previous teaching experience means the individual is able to deal with the pressures of teaching and not be

overwhelmed. With a confident and inquisitive personality, the alumnus is able to reach out for help and the challenge of teaching is enjoyed. Relatively quickly, the new teacher is able to push forward with his or her ideas and become an innovator, while reaching out to others for collaboration, support and learning. Without previous teaching experience and/or confident and inquisitive personality the effect of the first year is traumatic, leaving a much greater weight on the support environment at the teacher's school and PEASP support services.

## **2. "Head strong" or "overly confident" personality**

A small number of alumni, who are less likely to remain in the field, seem to have "very strong personalities." They are super bright, often very confident and might have teaching experience; however, in the interviews these alumni gave "overly confident" or "strong" readings of their positions in their schools. While their analysis might be sophisticated, it nevertheless rests on weak legs, given the alumnus's short experience in the field. More importantly, the head strong personality seems to prevent the alumnus from opening up and "going with the flow," learning how to deal with the vagaries of institutional life and time needed to accrue seniority and influence. A head strong personality combined with teaching in what the alumnus perceives to be a poor school environment creates very negative implications for retention.

### **e. Love of Torah study**

On one hand, we learn from the interviews, that love of Torah study for one's personal enrichment is a critical factor for a successful teaching career which pulls the person into the profession and provides an individual with sufficient Jewish knowledge to gain a position at a school which values Jewish Studies. On the other hand, the survey data shows that "I teach because I love Torah study and want to share its wisdom and joy" has a reverse correlation with retention. If someone emphasizes this aspect as a motivation to teach, over and above "I love teaching children" they are less likely to see their future in the classroom. Thus, in the context of the classroom, Torah study serves as a critical, yet secondary variable to love of teaching. If Torah study is understood as an activity that stands unto itself, in an academic sense, and is not framed in terms of educational interaction with children, an alumnus will likely lose enthusiasm for classroom teaching.

## **2. The right school**

When the "right person" is in the "right school" we have a winning combination. However, if the right person finds themselves in the "wrong school," that person will



transfer schools with the intention of remaining in day school education. The clearest problem is the combination of “wrong person,” “wrong school.”

What determines if a school is the right place? The following factors are ordered by their importance for predicting retention.

**a. Supportive environment**

The survey data indicates that when PEP alumni answered favorably to the following factors, they in almost all cases are likely to see themselves in the Jewish studies classroom in three years.

- The school is responsive to my needs
- Satisfaction with feedback from mentor
- Satisfaction with feedback from Pardes support
- Overall feeling of job security

The strongest finding is the extremely high correlation between “I have a mentor” and “likely to be in the classroom in three years.” *It is rare to find such clear correlations in social scientific research.*

**Three years from now, I intend to be a Jewish studies teacher in a day school?**

		Definitely Not	Probably Not	Probably	Definitely	Total
<b>Do you have a mentor now?</b>	Yes	0	1	17	2	<b>20</b>
	No	1	10	6	0	<b>17</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>37 alumni</b>

\*Source: 2009 survey of novice PEP alumni

The interviews provide an opportunity for a nuanced understanding of these very strong survey findings showing the importance of a “supportive environment.”

**Freedom to develop**

At the top of the list is the “freedom to develop in one’s classroom.” Alumni who intend to remain in the field all felt that their schools provide them with the minimal environment needed for experimentation with and development of their teaching skills and worldview for Jewish studies. These schools might not have highly developed systems for mentor or collegial support or a sufficient vision for Jewish education; nevertheless, the alumni felt that they do receive basic support needed to feel good

about their work, in particular support for making mistakes and learning from them and recognition of work well done.

### **Mentor or sufficient system of collegial support**

As we saw above the presence of a mentor correlates strongly with intention to remain in day school education.

Most important is that the mentor is not a negative force. There was a case of one alumnus who reported a mentor interfering with her teaching and working as a negative force against her advancement in the school. That alumnus, who seems to be a “right person” in terms of her commitment to Jewish education and love of teaching, transferred schools. Everyone else interviewed reported a positive mentoring experience.

The importance of the quality of the mentor is something that needs further thought and likely depends a lot on the personality of the mentee and the larger supportive environment. In all likelihood, the presence of a mentor suggests a school able and willing to support its teachers. This becomes apparent, if we limit our analysis to viewing the issue of retention to the near future. In that case, the broader support environment, rather than the formal qualifications of the mentor seems to predict retention.

Qualified mentors include veteran teachers with years of mentoring experience and often formal mentor training, or mentors coming in from the Jewish New Teacher Project (out of New York connected to the University of Santa Cruz) or working with the mentor support program from Brandeis University’s Mandel Institute. Those PEP alumni who have well trained mentors seem very happy and report tremendous learning. However, there were just as many PEP alumni who reported their mentor as “sufficient.” The mentor was not qualified, but did ease the transition into a new school and provided basic support. In many cases the non-qualified mentors did not carry out classroom observations or were not themselves Jewish Studies teachers. These alumni made up for some of their mentors short comings by pulling extensively on colleagues, their school’s administration, and upon PEASP for support particular to Jewish studies.

Thus, the issue it seems is broader than the mentor. The PEP alumnus needs a support system, of which the mentor is an important part. Even if the mentor is not formally qualified, alumni who are able to reach out to fellow teachers, school administration

and PEASP still come out feeling good about their teaching situation. It is likely that those schools which provide mentors, even if the mentor is not professionally trained, are schools where it is overall easier for the alumni to receive such support.

### **Jewish vision and mission**

After support for teaching is the issue of a “Jewishly nurturing environment,” in which Jewish vision and mission are given high priority. This includes three factors:

1. The school administration has a sufficient understanding of academic Jewish Studies and the resources required for excellence
2. The school regards excellence in academic Jewish Studies as important for mission
3. The Pardes alumnus doesn’t feel like an overused or singular resource. There is a cadre of staff capable of developing Jewish vision and implementing Jewish mission and not everything falls on the alumnus’s shoulders.

In comparison to the general support environment, Jewish vision and mission is not as strong a predictor of retention. While it is possible to find a substantial number of alumni who feel their school has weak Jewish vision and mission, but nevertheless see themselves remaining at the school; there are few who will say the same when they feel their school offers a poor general environment for nurturing them as teachers.

### **The role PEASP plays in the retention process for novice educators**

For all of the recent PEP alumni interviewed, Pardes serves three primary roles:

1. Pardes provides a **community of colleagues and mentors** who share Jewish vision and mission, and offer resources to enable their excellence as Jewish educators.
2. Pardes, provides a framework which **directs and coaches regarding selection of which school to work in**; including encouraging the job candidate to asking for a mentor and sensitizing him or her to awareness of a school that will nurture them as educators or not.
3. Pardes provides a **framework for ongoing professional development**. For early teachers, PEASP provides critical support to enable successful teaching experience.

### **Right person, wrong school**

For three of the 16 alumni interviewed, PEASP provides a “life jacket” keeping them in the profession. These are the “right person” in the “wrong school.” In this scenario

Pardes remains an anchor, a supporting community of colleagues and mentors who keep the individual focused on his or her reasons for teaching and love of Jewish education. Practically Pardes serves as a source for support in dealing with the bad school experience and when necessary, provides assistance in finding another position.

In the right person/wrong school scenario the school visits are exceptionally important. Often the PEP alumni, new to the profession are unable to diagnose the source of their frustrations and blame themselves. During the school visit a Pardes professional is able to point out to the alumnus support processes that should be in place in the school and either are not there at all or not working correctly. The Pardes professional is also able to intervene and advocate on behalf of the alumnus. Further down the line, if the problems persist, Pardes has the credibility to recommend that the alumni transfer schools and provide assistance in the process.

Also cited as significant is “distance support,” in which a veteran alumnus or staff member is asked by Pardes to provide support for a new alumnus. Such support includes a series of as many as ten phone conversations and accompanying e-mail correspondence (with staff always accessible). Besides practical knowledge, contact with a veteran alumnus enables the young alumnus to place the current situation in which he or she finds himself in perspective and anchors the feeling that he or she is part of a broader community of people with vision and love for Jewish Studies.

### **Wrong person, maybe wrong school**

Three of the 16 interviews with recent alumni clearly fell into the wrong person/wrong school category. For these alumni PEASP will not play a strong retaining influence. They are very concerned with fast career and salary advancement, beyond the capacity of most Day Schools. Some also have "head strong" or "independent" personalities, which leads to an overly critical appraisal of their schools' administrative culture. The only role PEASP might play is helping the alumnus find a better school environment. In most cases these alumni are very unhappy with their schools. However, given the personality or life situation of the teacher there is a high probability that he or she will have a hard time at most schools.

### **Right person, right school**

The majority of recent PEP alumni (10 of 16 interviewed) are committed Jewish educators who are in schools where they are happy. In this scenario, there are two basic groups. 1) The majority who experience the first year as overwhelming, but due to

the factors cited above are able to adjust and enjoy teaching; and, 2) the small minority who hit the ground running, normally possessing a combination of previous teaching experience, a confident outgoing personality and find themselves in a school in which they feel they can thrive. By the second year, the ranks of the latter group begin to grow and by year three most PEP alumnus have hit stride; meaning they feel confident in the classroom, are actively contributing to their school community and in some cases are beginning to think about larger issues of personal career advancement and contributing to the wider profession of Jewish education.

Of significance for this evaluation, are the different support needs of these two alumni groups.

For the first group the full package of PEASP support services, including the school visit remains important. For this group of alumni PEASP provides a buffer zone or extra-territorial base of support easing the pains of first and second year teaching. While the school provides sufficient support, Pardes allows for an extra set of eyes (the school visits), collegial feedback and resources focused on Jewish Studies education that are not bound by the politics and inter-personal dynamics of the Jewish day school. The Pardes community is viewed by all as an intellectual well spring and beacon of inspiration. The Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum Workshop serve as an opportunity to recharge and refresh. Several of the alumni pointed to non-PEP colleagues having a far more difficult adjustment to teaching, and cited the primary difference as the Pardes community and PEASP resources, to which their colleagues do not have access.

In contrast, for the small number of alumni who hit the ground running and those who are feeling more confident by their second year, the current configuration of PEASP services is not ideal. For these alumni, the school visit, which represents the most intensive use of PEASP resources, may still be needed – but not in its current format. These alumni more closely represent the needs of the majority of three year plus alumni, who are confident in their teaching and are thinking about the next step – to advance themselves personally and professionally within their school and the broader profession. The needs of these alumni is the focus of section II.

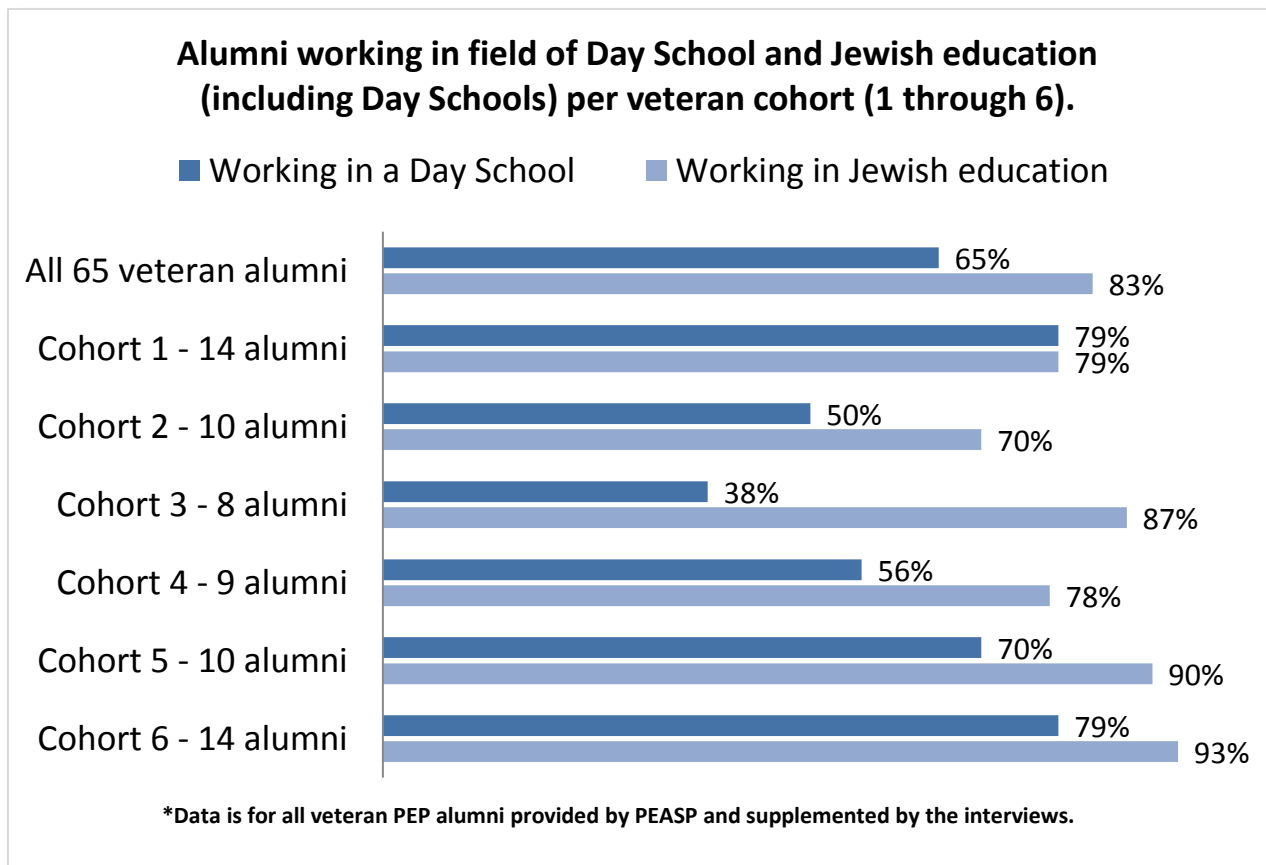
## Section 2: Year four and beyond

PEASP's mandate is to focus on novice PEP alumni in their first three years of teaching. However, as the alumni body grows, so the needs of veteran alumni are becoming a concern. Many of the veteran alumni do participate in the various PEASP offerings and to the extent possible the PEASP staff attempts to take their needs into consideration. To what extent should PEASP include the veteran alumni in its core mandate, and if so what are the implications for PEASP's work?

This section provides a framework for thinking about the experience of veteran PEP alumni and how they currently benefit from PEASP and ways in which PEASP might work with them in the future. The focus is on cohorts 1 through 6 of PEP alumni, all of whom are four or more years beyond graduation from Pardes.

### The numbers

The chart below shows that 35% of cohorts 1 through 6 have left day school education, with 17% having left Jewish education altogether. If we focus on those who have left "day school education" large differences appear from one cohort to the next, with, for



example, cohort three being four times more likely than cohort one to have left day school education. In contrast, a focus on those who have left Jewish education altogether, shows less difference between the cohorts and a much lower overall rate of dropout.

The high levels of continuing involvement with the Jewish education (beyond Day Schools) shows that PEP alumni share a common commitment to Jewish education. The differences are in terms of the commitment to Day School education. Some of the differences between cohorts are likely the result of PEP recruitment practices. PEASP’s director offers the following explanation:

*Overall, the acceptance policy through cohort 4 was a "work in progress". Often candidates were accepted due to their stellar performance at the Pardes Beit Midrash, with PEP serving as a way to enable them to continue on with more advanced studies at Pardes. After cohort 3 was accepted, PEP hired a full time director who began to study and implement lessons learned from the previous and current cohorts to create a more systematic recruitment policy focused on Day School educators.*

**Of those who drop out of day school teaching, the number still working in Jewish education**

	Number of veteran alumni	Percentage of all alumni (cohorts 1-6)
<b>No longer working in Jewish education</b>	11	17%
<b>Continuing to work in Jewish education</b>	12	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	

\*Data source: All veteran alumni, from PEASP data and data from the interviews conducted for this evaluation.

The following are areas of Jewish education outside of Day Schools in which PEP alumni work.

- Director of Education at an After School Jewish Education program
- University Chaplain
- Coordinator of Youth and Family Education at an institution concerned with Jewish learning
- Jewish communal work
- Cantor educator at a synagogue
- Working or training to work as a Tour Guide in Israel
- Setting up innovative Jewish community in Israel
- Israel Advocacy
- Pursuing a Phd in education (with intention to return to Day School)

## Factors which determine retention

### 2. Reasons leading PEP alumni to leave Day School education

The following table depicts the major reasons for each of those who have left Day School education. Aliya (often in combination with other factors) appears as by far and away the leading cause, involving 43% of the cases, with a variety of reasons contributing to the other 57% and also contributing to a decision to make aliya.

#### Main reasons for leaving Day School Education (one individual may have more than one reason)

	Percent of all those dropping out	Number of alumni
<b>Aliya</b>	43%	10
<b>Issues arising from marriage, family or other personal constraints</b>	17%	4
<b>Currently studying for purposes of professional development</b>	13%	3
<b>Couldn't find job, within geographical constraints</b>	13%	3
<b>Decided that he/she doesn't enjoy teaching</b>	13%	3
<b>Strong and/or independent personality leads to conflict or strong negative appraisal of work environment</b>	9%	2
<b>Desire for fast career development and/or better salary</b>	9%	2
<b>Difficult first year (chose not to continue)</b>	4%	1

\*Data source: All veteran alumni, from PEASP data and data from the interviews conducted for this evaluation.

Those who leave due to the decision to make aliya seem to have had a more stable induction period, as they are more likely than the others to complete the 3 year commitment made to teach in a Day School.

#### Number of years teaching, comparison between those who make Aliya and those who do not

	Number of years working in Day School before leaving
<b>Did not make aliya</b>	<b>2.2</b>
<b>Made aliya</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.6</b>

\*Data source: All veteran alumni, from PEASP data and data from the interviews conducted for this evaluation.

Of interest is the fact that the 15% percent of PEP alumni who make aliya is in line with research showing that 17% of participants in long term (five month +) educational programs in Israel, such as PEP, make aliya.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Steven M. Cohen and Ezra Kopelowitz. 2010. Journeys to Israel: The impact of longer-term programs upon Jewish Engagement & Israel Attachment. Research sponsored by Masa. Available at: <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=7495>



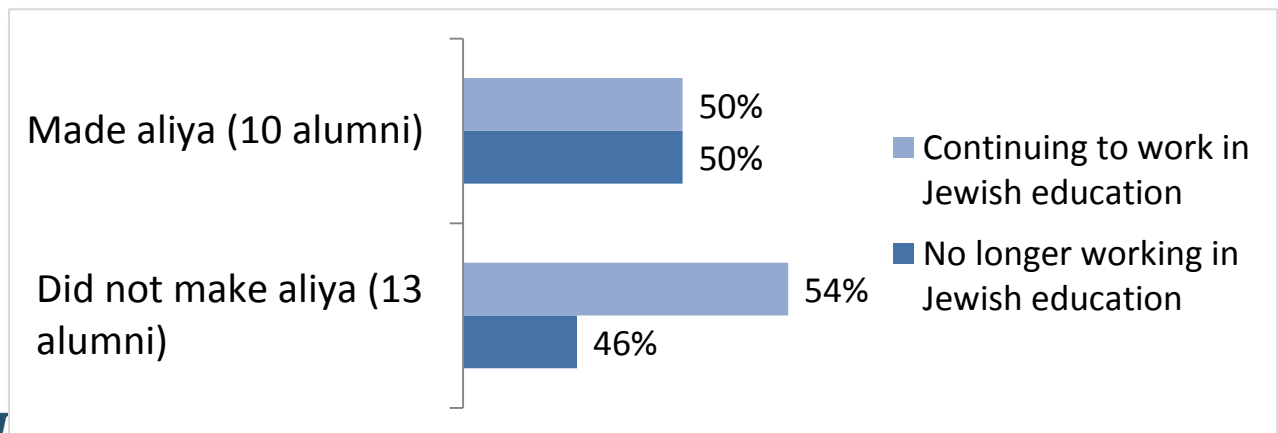
For Pardes alumni the reasons for aliya divide into two categories: 1) those who were already living in Israel prior to Pardes and decided to return, and 2) those who due to professional difficulties or personal reasons decided to move to Israel. In the former group, a common theme was the desire for experimenting or perhaps adventure; that is, the desire for an experience of working in the United States for a number of years. Not all in this group were fully committed to working as a Day School educator in the United States for the long term and as a result stopped working in Day School education as soon as their commitment ended. At the other extreme, are those who had not given serious thought to living in Israel until failing to find a new job after moving from one city to another, or due to family or personal considerations. With changing circumstances moving to Israel becomes an attractive option. For example, one alumnus ties aliya to the finances of Jewish life and his low salary:

*“My big concern if we weren’t moving to Israel, are the financial difficulties of sending our kids to a Jewish day school. Generally I find teaching extremely rewarding and never boring. I feel like I’m making a difference. But teaching is not a financially stable profession these days.”*

As is the case in the above example, the majority of those who move to Israel are still strongly committed to Day School education at the time of their move. When they arrive in Israel they will attempt to remain engaged with Jewish education, to the extent that they can find employment.

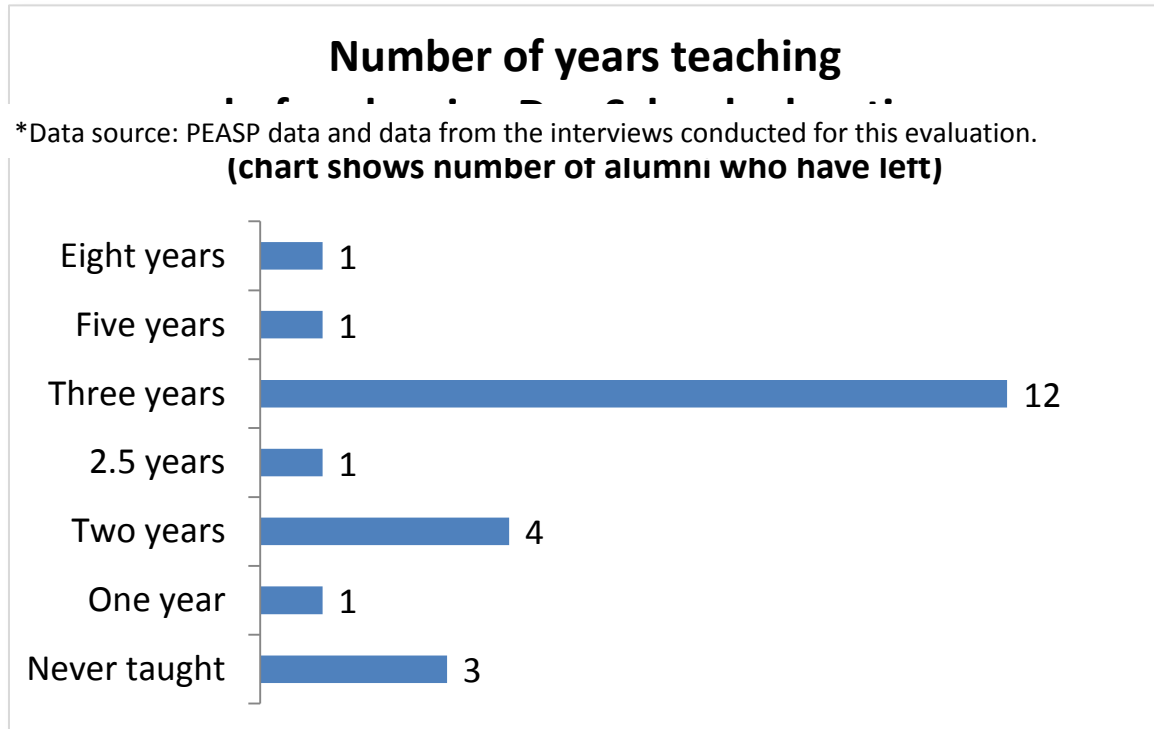
As shown in the chart below, those who make aliya are only slightly less likely to drop out of Jewish education altogether, than those who leave Day School education but remain in the United States; this, despite the fact that it is more challenging to pursue a career in Jewish education in Israel.

**Continuing to work in Jewish education after leaving Day School. Comparing between those who make Aliya and those who do not.**



### 3. The three year threshold

No matter the reason for leaving Day School education, they seem to occur for almost all PEP alumni within the first three years of teaching. The following chart shows that all but 2 of the 23 PEP alumni who no longer work in a Day School, left by the end of their first three years.



\*Data source: PEASP data and data from the interviews conducted for this evaluation.

The extremely low dropout rate after year three, confirms the importance of the induction phase. The first three years serves as a sieve, pushing some out of Day Schools and into the broader field of Jewish education and some out of Jewish education altogether. Those who pass through the induction phase and remain in the field of Day School education are committed Day School educators (taking into consideration that we are only speaking of PEP graduates who are between four and ten years out from Pardes).

The peak of those leaving occurs at the conclusion of the three year commitment. Of the 12 who left after fulfilling their commitment, five made aliya, four decided to take a break with an express interest in returning to Day School education and the remaining three switched to different professions.

While for some the three year commitment is the point at which they leave Day School education for others the three year commitment serves as a framework for enabling retention. The following is an observation from the PEASP director:

*“There have been a number of times that graduates have said to me during their second year that they think they will finish year 3 and move on to something else. And lo and behold, the start of year 3 is very different and they get hooked! I can point to a least 6 or so that shared that with me. I do believe that it takes 3 years to begin to feel you can really be a star.”*

This insight was confirmed by one alumna interviewed, who came close to giving up after her first year and credits the three year commitment to keeping her in the classroom. She now plans to stay in Day School teaching for the long term.

#### **4. Considerations for remaining engaged with Day School education**

Rather than focus narrowly on the reasons for drop-out, it is more productive to inquire into the intention of alumni to remain committed to Day School education. Many of those who currently are not working in a Day School (counted as drop-outs above) intend to return and there are those who are currently working as Day School educators, who are unsure of their future in the profession.

Of the 26 interviews conducted with alumni from cohorts 1 through 6, 9 are not currently working in a Jewish day school; but, of these only two were 100% certain that they will not return to working in a Jewish school.<sup>2</sup> Six of the 26 interviewed took a break at some point from teaching and have since returned to work in Day Schools.

The following table shows the intention of the 26 interviewed to remain in the field. 10 of the 26 are fully committed to remain in day school education, with about half expressing low intention or ambivalence.

##### **Intention for continuing involvement in field of Day School education**

	Number of alumni interviewed	Percent
No intention	2	8%
Low	5	19%
Ambivalent	9	35%
High	10	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Data source: Veteran PEP alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

<sup>2</sup> We intentionally write "Jewish school," as those who make aliya are referring to teaching in Israel.

Two areas of concern govern the decision to remain in Day School education. The first is overall satisfaction with the experience of teaching; the second, a combination of concerns with finances and career.

The importance of landing in the “right school,” during the induction phase, as discussed in section one, once again comes through strongly in the interviews with the veteran PEP alumni. The following two tables show a clear correlation between induction experience and intention to remain in Day School education. To the extent that alumni report a difficult induction experience so they are less likely to see themselves working in Day Schools going forward.

#### Induction experience

	Intention for continuing involvement in field of day school education				Number of alumni interviewed
	No intention	Low	Ambivalent	High	
<b>Induction experience difficult</b>	17%	17%	33%	33%	6
<b>Mixed</b>	0%	60%	0%	40%	5
<b>Relatively easy</b>	0%	0%	40%	60%	5

\*Data source: Veteran PEP alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

#### Supportive environment in induction phase

	Intention for continuing involvement in field of day school education				Number of alumni interviewed
	No intention	Low	Ambivalent	High	
<b>Unsupportive environment</b>	25%	25%	0%	50%	4
<b>Mixed</b>	13%	38%	25%	25%	8
<b>Supportive</b>	0%	0%	50%	50%	10

\*Data source: Veteran PEP alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

For alumni who continue to teach past year three the issue of work environment no longer stand by itself as a dominant factor, but rather mixes in with concerns of finances and career. Work environment either allays (in a situation of being in the “right school”) or exacerbates (“wrong school”) issues of financial security and career, which become ever pressing concerns for many as they build their family and begin to think about the long term. If issues of finances and career are satisfactory then veteran alumni who decide that Day School education is their chosen profession, make peace with a less than perfect school environment.

## Financial and career concerns

A significant minority is very concerned with issues relating to financial income; however, the manner in which those with no, low or ambivalent intent to stay in the field grapple with this concern differs from those who intend to remain.

### High level of concern with income and intent to remain in Day School Education

	Intention for continuing involvement in field of day school education				Number of alumni interviewed
	No intention	Low	Ambivalent	High	
<b>Strong concern with income</b>	11%	44%	11%	33%	9

\*Data source: Veteran PEP alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

For those who are firmly committed to Day School education this alumni's approach is representative:

*“Nobody does this for the money; we do it because we are idealistic and believe in teaching Torah and bringing meaning into people’s lives. I feel that I am contributing and with that comes a certain level of sacrifice, but I have job satisfaction. I have a job that helps me think about texts and Torah and education and students and meaning, either now or down the road.”*

Most come into their work aware of the low pay Day School teachers receive and as the above example indicates, other types of non-financial remuneration are seen as equally or more important. Alumni who are committed to remaining in Day School education, but for whom finances represent an important concern, will either move into administration or find supplementary income. As an example:

*One alumnus intends to remain in the field of Jewish education for the remainder of his career, eventually moving into administration. He would like to develop vision for teachers, have influence in the school and continually learn new things. He graduated from the DSLTI last year and wants to become a Head of School in the next 5 years.*

*He is always struggling financially. He tutors after school and although it is rewarding, it is very exhausting. This is one of the reasons he wants to be a Head of School. If teaching was financially viable he would never leave.*

For most alumni finances become a negative issue when combined with other factors in one's personal or work environment. For example, one alumnus states: *“Teaching doesn’t pay the bills, it is a lot of work and I feel under appreciated.”* In other words, if

she felt appreciated, the issue of salary would not become as big an issue as it currently is for her. Working in the "wrong school" exacerbates frustration about low pay.

For a small group, all of whom have low or ambivalent intentions to remain in the field, a strong connection is drawn between a strong need to receive recognition of accomplishment, through increase in salary and rapid career advancement. In section one this personality profile was categorized as representing a “wrong person” for Day School education. As an example, already at the end of her first year, one alumna wanted administrative responsibility for Jewish life in her school, which in most cases is too fast a path of career advancement to reasonably expect.

*“I wanted more responsibility and to get paid more, to advance. I negotiated what my position could be, but was rejected. There wasn’t room for me to have more of the Jewish life portfolio and get paid more. They then hired an additional rabbi who received responsibility for Jewish life. I was offended. I was doing all this stuff, but they wanted a rabbi. This led me to question and made me feel how limited the options were.”*

When finances and strong expectations of rapid career advancement are linked together so early in a teacher's career, it is very likely to lead that person to leave the profession.

One other scenario which arose in the interviews, in which finances play a negative role, is represented by only one alumna, but nevertheless seems important for Pardes to consider in terms of the recruitment of older educators.

*“I would tell someone to think twice about going into Jewish education as salaries are so low. If younger teachers start early and then work their way up to becoming head of school, that would make more sense. Entering teaching as a second career without financial stability will not bring stability in later years.”*

**Concern with career and intent to remain in Day School Education among alumni interviewed**

	Intention for continuing involvement in field of day school education				Number of alumni interviewed
	No intention	Low	Ambivalent	High	
<b>Strong concern with career</b>	0%	22%	22%	56%	9

\*Data source: Veteran PEP alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

The majority of PEP alumni who continue after the initial three year commitment, have an ambivalent relationship to administration. They love teaching and feel pushed to

work as administrators due to the need for career advancement and higher salary. For a number, the result is ambivalence. In the following instance the resulting pressure is likely to lead to a hiatus from Day School education:

*"The move to an administrative position did not enhance my level of satisfaction. After 7 years in the field I'm thinking of taking a break from teaching to be with family, to recharge batteries. I'm thinking that running an afternoon program for children or being involved in adult education might be better for the short term, and then eventually returning to teaching as my long term career."*

In another instance, this PEP alum opted to develop parallel career tracks:

*"I spent 3 years fulfilling my commitment to Pardes and really enjoyed teaching at which I did well. However, I decided to pursue writing as a career, but in the past year was offered a part time job at a local Day School. My decision was to go back to part time teaching due to my ability as a teacher and I love to teach. I'm not sure if I will go back to teaching full time as I am committed to writing, but it might happen one day. I don't see myself in an administrative position."*

### PEASP and veteran alumni

The following table provides an assessment of the relationship of each veteran alumnus interviewed to Pardes by way of PEASP. The assessment is based on a mix of the alumni's subjective feeling of closeness to the Pardes community and actual contact with other alumni and Pardes faculty through the newsletter, e-mail list, conference calls, Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum Workshop.

#### Connection of veteran alumni interviewed to PEASP

	Intention for continuing involvement in field of Day School education				Number of alumni interviewed in this category
	No intention	Low	Ambivalent	High	
<b>No connection</b>	50%	50%	0%	0%	2
<b>Little</b>	13%	0%	50%	38%	8
<b>Moderate</b>	0%	13%	50%	38%	8
<b>Strong</b>	0%	50%	0%	50%	6

\*Data source: Veteran PEP alumni interviewed for this evaluation.

The table shows a loose correlation between intention to remain in Day School education and the alumni's relationship with PEASP. There are two alumni interviewed with no connection to Pardes and who have no or low intention to remain in Day School education. They have decided they are out and cut themselves off. With the exception

of one alumnus who has "a little involvement" with PEASP and no intention to remain in Day School education, all others have at least some connection to PEASP and have at least a small degree of possible involvement with Day School education in the future.

### **The modes by which veteran alumni interface with PEASP**

The following quote, gives a rich sense of the transition of one alumnus from the induction to veteran educator phase within the PEASP framework.

*"I have been to most of the retreats and really enjoy them. They are an opportunity to reconnect with friends and teachers and also to pick up ideas and strategies as a form of professional development. The last few times I have had more of a leadership role at the retreats which I really enjoy.*

*The last retreat, someone sought me out with a problem and it felt really good to be able to assist. In that retreat I finally felt there was a switch. I feel that now, I am a teacher who knows what I am doing. I now expect less support from others and more in terms of professional development and reinvigoration. Pardes does well with retreats as it reminds everyone that studying Torah is such a powerful experience for you that it inspires you to make it positive for your students, which is hard to see in the middle of classroom issues."*

This quote shows a veteran alumnus who has a strong connection to PEASP moving between three modes: 1) playing a leadership role within the PEASP framework, 2) seeking out a professional development experience and 3) the need for "reinvigoration." These three are contrasted to a fourth PEASP function, "support," which is in the eyes of this alumnus, is geared to the novice teacher.

A review of these four PEASP functions as they appear in the interviews explains the nature of PEASP's current interaction with veteran alumni.

#### **Mode 1: Support**

As seen in the previous quote, the concept of "support" as it is currently employed by PEASP is focused on the idea of help for the novice teacher. This includes: Job search, practical advice for navigating the politics and the inter-personal dynamics of work in a school and "nose to the ground" support in the form of phone calls and schools visits aimed at helping the novice teacher master the day to day tasks of teaching. In some of these areas, such as information about available jobs, veteran alumni benefit as well.



PEASP's mission to date has primarily focused on providing these support services to alumni within their first three years. ***This evaluation confirms the importance of the focus on the first three years. As shown in both part one and two of this report, the induction phase determines the overall attitude of PEP alumni to Day School education and is a critical and productive phase for PEASP to focus its resources.***

In order to understand how PEASP might bring maximum benefit to both the veteran PEP alumni and the field of Day School and Jewish Education, we need to draw a sharp distinction between “support services” aimed at novice teachers and the three additional alumni support modes.

## **Mode 2: Reinvigoration**

“Reinvigoration” is the strongest and most consistent theme which comes out of almost all of the alumni interviews, novice and veteran alike. For most veteran alumni contact with the Pardes community is primarily a source of rejuvenation, which trumps the other potential roles PEASP might play. One alumnus made this point explicit in the context of the Fall Retreat:

*“The retreats are very helpful. It is an opportunity to reconnect and meet new colleagues and educationally rejuvenate. It is good to feel that you are not alone and that there are many other people who are struggling and succeeding and they are all with you. It is a type of pep rally for Jewish teachers. If I wanted learning then I’d go to Limmud or PEJE or other Professional Development opportunities. The retreat adds an aspect that you can’t get from a bunch of strangers.”*

For one alumnus, the overall vitality of his Pardes peers is credited directly to PEASP.

*“Right before last year’s retreat I decided to visit a friend of mine teaching at the Yeshiva where we were at school. He was so burnt out. It was really scary, I was feeling nervous. When I got to the Retreat, everyone was so excited; the contrast was so stark.”*

The Fall Retreat also plays an important role for those who are not active teachers.

*“I was surprised I could go, when I wasn’t actively teaching. I went last year and one before that and I wanted to reconnect. I joked I was a deadbeat, but had every intention of going back. Going to the Retreat is a way of keeping a foot in the water. It is good to remember I was a teacher and will go back soon. These*

*are my colleagues and this is my greater Pardes educator family and I don't want to cut myself out of it."*

While the rejuvenation function seems most powerful at the Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum Workshop where there is an intensive immersion experience, veteran alumni also cite the on-going contact with the Pardes community through the e-mail list and newsletter as a basis for feeling that they are part of a greater community of fellows who care.

### **Mode 3: Professional Development**

PEASP's professional development function is focused on peer learning between alumni and continued contact with Pardes staff during the Fall Retreat, Summer Seminar and by way of the newsletter, e-mail list, conference calls and website. Two types of professional development are mentioned.

The first is "how to" learning, which involves learning best practices from one another focused on the art of teaching. Alumni focus on need for curricula and ideas to become better teachers in specific areas. For example:

*"More attention needs to be paid to teaching Hebrew language as it is often required and graduates are not prepared. In addition Pardes' focus is on the text and its commentaries and the teachers aren't provided with creative ways in which these texts can be taught in the classroom to a variety of different students or in different contexts. We have to create fun and artistic activities with every text that is studied."*

Other common areas mentioned are teaching Israel and Tefilla. In contrast to the novice teachers, areas such as classroom management or lesson planning aren't mentioned by the veteran alumni.

The second area of professional development is personal enrichment, with a focus on text learning. In many interviews alumni draw a distinction between take away value directly applicable to their teaching and personal enrichment.

*"I love the learning, it does something for me personally. I am what translates to the class. I don't sit in a session [at the Fall retreat] and think about how to translate."*

For many veteran alumni, the primary function of the Fall Retreat is personal enrichment. One alumni suggests bringing the two areas together:

*“I am thinking about ways in which the specific professional development that I get from the school such as classroom management and lesson planning and Pardes, texts and vision in Jewish education can be integrated. There should be an integration of the big ideas, the texts and the classroom and there isn’t.”*

#### **Mode 4: Leadership within the PEASP framework**

PEASP staff reach-out to alumni asking them to serve as peer mentors and to moderate and lead sessions at the Fall Retreat, Summer Curriculum Workshop, to lead conference calls, write blogs and newsletter articles. Those alumni with the most active connection to PEASP have taken multiple leadership roles of this sort over many years.

#### **Distinguish “novice support” from “veteran support”**

PEASP’s focus on novice alumni means that there is not currently a clear theory of practice governing PEASP’s work vis-à-vis veteran alumni. Should PEASP take work with veteran alumni as part of its core mandate, a clear difference between support services offered to novice and veteran PEP educators will need to be made. All of the current PEASP services were designed with novice teachers in mind and also offered to the veteran alumni, as described in modes 2, 3 and 4 above. The results are two sets of tensions, which PEASP is aware of, but has not figured out how to resolve:

#### **Tension 1: The work with veteran alumni is often seen as standing in conflict with the need of PEASP to serve the novice teachers**

An example of the tension between the needs of novice and veteran alumni is in the scheduling of the Fall Retreat. The following is a quote from the PEASP staff’s summary of the Fall 2010 Retreat.

*The time of year is, as always problematic in that there is too much competition for shabbatonim and parent-teacher conferences in the individual schools. At the same time, this is the absolute best time to offer support to new teachers who are feeling totally overwhelmed. We struggle with this each year. We need to come up with a more creative solution. (Last year, when we approached key schools and key alumni in advance, we managed to try to have them clear this with their schools, but it is not always possible. Should we have two separate retreats – one for first year people only and then have the other retreat later in the year? (But then the novice teachers do not get to meet more senior alumni and who is to say*

*that a time in the spring would be a better time not to compete with school functions.)*

The Fall Retreat, is scheduled and designed with the novice teacher in mind. One veteran alumnus commented:

*“I have been to all of the Fall Retreats and really enjoy them. They reinforce my commitment to teaching and the encouragement and recognition I receive there are very important. I would love the retreat to be at the end of the year so that I have the summer to implement things. Once the year begins it is a struggle to find time to implement new ideas, unless it is something small.”*

## **Tension 2: Different learning needs of veteran and novice educators**

Much of the content provided at the Fall Retreat and other venues focuses on the learning and support needs of novice teachers. At Fall Retreat 2010 a session specifically designed for veteran alumni was offered. Marc Baker an alumnus from cohort one and a PEP success story lead a session called “Critical Friends Group for Administrators.” The following feedback from the six in attendance, well describes the needs on those alumni now working in administration.

- “I believe this should be offered to all teachers who are transitioning to administration positions.”
- “More theoretic and practical sessions about teacher-leader and teacher-administrator can benefit those who are at this stage of their professional development”
- “Amazing! I would really like to set up a listerv for us, and possibly have Marc as my mentor. He is amazing and really helpful! as always.”
- “This was necessary and helpful. Please create a listerv-email group for alumni who also hold administrative positions.”

The problem is that creating sessions focusing on administrators only goes part of the way towards resolving the tension between the different learning needs of novice and veteran teachers. As noted above, many veteran alumni have an ambivalent relationship to administration and want to find ways to grow and stay in the classroom.

## Losing the veterans

Alumni harbor tremendous good will and feeling of emotional connection to Pardes, which for many seems to go far beyond a professional connection of the ordinary type. An example:

*Pardes has made my life what it is today. I met my husband there and Susan has been a real mentor. Pardes make an effort to communicate to that it isn't only about sustaining teaching but also about sustaining our Jewish life.*

Many alumni expressed willingness to serve as peer mentors and to be called upon. However, most feel that the connection weakens over time, simply by dint of the fact that it is the novice educators who most need the support PEASP currently offers.

Of the basket of services PEASP offers, the e-mail list-serve seems the natural place, where veteran alumni could still interface on an on-going basis. As the following table shows, 64% of those interviewed do follow the e-mail traffic on the list-serve, but only 32% are at least somewhat active.

### Veteran alumni participating in e-mail forum among those interviewed

Not involved	Follows, but not active	Follows, somewhat active	Follows, very active	Number of alumni
36%	32%	23%	9%	22

Another area of relatively high levels of veteran alumni participation is the Fall Retreat. In 2009, PEASP reported high participation with 23 (47%) out of 48 PEP grads who had been out of Pardes for more than 3 years participating. Of these 13 had been out for more than 5 years. At Fall Retreat 2010, 14 (33%) of participants were veteran teachers, which is 21% of all veteran alumni.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear that a significant number of alumni are involved with PEASP, primarily through the e-mail list or attending the Fall Retreat. However, most are not being touched in a regular and active way. Moreover when they are activated, as in the Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum Workshop, they serve as mentors or teachers, but do not on the whole, participate in a program designed for their benefit.

One alumnus stated:

*"I feel that I am off the Pardes radar as I am now a successful teacher. They worry less about me. I am a good teacher and have a lot to share. I want to share*

<sup>3</sup> In 2010 the Fall Retreat was held in conjunction with the DeLeT program. Due to lack of space veteran alumni not currently teaching were not invited.

*this success with others and would love to have more people come and see the impact I'm having at school. I'm a big fan of Pardes, but after 4 years, they seem distant."*

Another alumna is among those currently working in another area of Jewish education, due to the inability to find a Day School job. She states:

*"Pardes provides wonderful support. There are people to talk to and they provide resources. But, I was very disappointed not to have been invited to the Retreat this year. I am out of teaching involuntarily. They did offer me a place at the last minute, but it wasn't a nice feeling."*

Given that it is not PEASP's mandate to work in a focused manner with veteran alumni, these comments are expected. What then might PEASP's work look like if veteran alumni become a focus?

### **A veteran support module**

*Given the large numbers of veteran alumni who express ambivalence towards their future as teachers, the pressures to enter administration and the significant numbers who take breaks and then return to teaching, there does seem to be an important place for PEASP in the lives of veteran alumni.*

- What might a support module, specifically designed for veteran alumni look like?
- What might the benefits of a veteran support module be for the alumni themselves, and for the larger fields of Day School and Jewish Education?

As noted above, alumni have other frameworks to turn to, if their goal is to receive professional development services which focus on the art of teaching. Where the Pardes community has a unique niche in their lives is on matters of Jewish Studies in general, and Jewish text learning in particular, where they cannot find an easy replacement for their community of peers and mentors at Pardes.

Alumni provided examples of types of PEASP support they would benefit from. The common theme focuses on the need to integrate the support, reinvigoration, professional development and leadership modules into a single coherent module.

Several alumni, want to see the Fall Retreat and other PEASP resources used in a systematic fashion to promote school based development projects, which will enable alumni to continue their intellectual growth, while both contributing to their schools and the larger field. These would be projects having to do with curriculum and

pedagogy in Jewish education. One example, mentioned by several alumni is the Tefilla project, which PEASP is launching this academic year.

*“I don’t want to go into administration. Everything I love about the classroom would fade away. Through initiatives like the Tefilla project or serving as a mentor I can grow without getting behind a desk.”*

The Tefilla project or its equivalent will have a group of alumni with a passion for a particular topic, push forward a change initiative in their school, documenting their work and reporting back to their peers. In this type of scenario, the Fall Retreat and perhaps the Summer Curriculum Workshop can become an opportunity for face to face work and a platform for communicating success and best practices to the Pardes community and beyond. In an initiative like the Tefilla project, the leadership, professional development and rejuvenation modes are intentionally melded into one meaningful *and* ongoing experience.

The opportunity for collaborating on curriculum development seems especially important. Many of the alumni cite deep frustration at having to continually develop new curricula at their schools. The lack of curricula resources for Jewish Studies teachers means a much higher work load in comparison to teachers in other disciplines. Some recommended using Wiki technology to enable collaborative writing of curriculum.

A number of veteran alumni cited the Summer Curriculum Workshop as the ideal venue for them, as it is uniquely designed [when compared to other PEASP services] to enable a veteran teacher the time and space to develop curriculum and work on projects with a community of peers and teacher/mentors from the Pardes staff.

*“I went to the first Summer Curriculum Workshop, but it may have been too soon for me to get the most out of it. I did not yet possess a wide enough perspective of the world of teaching. It should be offered to experienced teachers and not just first year graduates.”*

*“It was amazing. I needed to spend the time on a new Gemarrah curriculum and dedicated the time to work on specific curricular issues. It was very helpful.”*

The Fall Retreat's sessions focus on the particular issues, without intellectual continuity between them and without much time to develop and play with ideas. In contrast, the Summer Curriculum Workshop seems better suited for the learning needs of veteran

alumni. As we saw in the above quote, the time of year is also better for the veteran educator. The obvious problem is that funding is only provided for recent alumni to attend the Summer Curriculum Workshop, meaning that its location in Israel and the expense of travel means it is out of reach for most veteran educators.

One alumnus takes this idea a step further:

*I would love to have a Master teacher follow up – a type of Shabbaton – where teachers who have been in the field for 5 years can come to Pardes and spend a year, learning, developing a craft beyond the basic teaching skills, craft a curriculum and really recharge.*

The idea of a Shabbaton as imagined by this alumni, whether for a year or shorter periods, is similar to an initiative like the Tefilla project in that what are now distinct PEASP services are integrated into a single module. That module not only enriches alumni professionally, but also empowers them to become Master Educators in their school communities and the broader field. A thorough revision of PEASP services in order to attune them to the needs of veteran alumni or those novice teachers who are exceptionally strong, might also entail changing the format of the Fall Retreat and use of the website and newsletter to better support the logic of an on-going alumni development initiative of which the Tefilla project serves as an example. The various PEASP services for veteran alumni will create a continual link between work at school to the broader Pardes community of peers and teacher/mentors, and through them to the broader field of Jewish education.

### **Section 3: PEASP logic model and recommendations**

Pardes Educators are not ordinary teachers. The interviews show people with a passion for Jewish text study and a deep commitment to Jewish education. For many, Pardes helped nurture this passion, and for most Pardes opened up a pathway for them to take their love for Jewish text study to the classroom. PEP alumni view themselves as members of a community of fellows, a cadre of elite educators with the passion, motivation and skills for bringing the highest levels of Jewish text study to Day Schools.

The primary role of PEASP, for both the novice and veteran alumni is to preserve the feeling of membership in a supportive and visionary community. Within that general charge, the mission needs to play out differently vis-à-vis novice teachers and those alumni who are past the three year commitment made to teach in a Jewish day school.



In thinking through the distribution of PEASP services to alumni for the purpose of promoting their retention as Day School educators, a two pronged strategy is recommended.

### **1. One strategy for the purpose of successful induction**

PEASP services should be provided on an as needed basis to those alumni most in need of them during the induction period. Those alumni most affected by the pressures associated with learning a new role and potential lack of support at their school, should receive the lion's share of Pardes staff time, especially in the area of school visits, one-on-one consultation before and after the visits and access to support hours from veteran alumni or PEASP staff. The goal is to transition these alumni, as quickly as possible into confident teachers who can then be engaged by the second strategy.

### **2. A second strategy for the purpose of developing "Master Jewish Educators"**

For new alumni who hit the ground running and veteran alumni who are already confident teachers, PEASP should provide opportunities to develop into "Master Jewish Educators".

After PEP alumni make it past their first three years teaching they are committed to Jewish education; however financial pressures and career considerations lead a large number to regard their place in Day School education with ambivalence. PEP alumni view "the Pardes community" as an anchor in their professional lives, helping them maintain a focus on the vision that inspired them to enter into Jewish education. The role of PEASP is to continually rebuild the unique connection of the alumni to "the Pardes community" and through the community to the field of Day School and Jewish Education.

To maintain alumni motivation, PEASP's role is to enable those who wish, to continue to focus on the text study and the challenge of bringing it to their schools. There might also be room to look beyond the Day School to those alumni who continue to work in Jewish education outside of schools. For this purpose, Pardes could develop support modules specifically designed for veteran alumni, as described in the previous section.

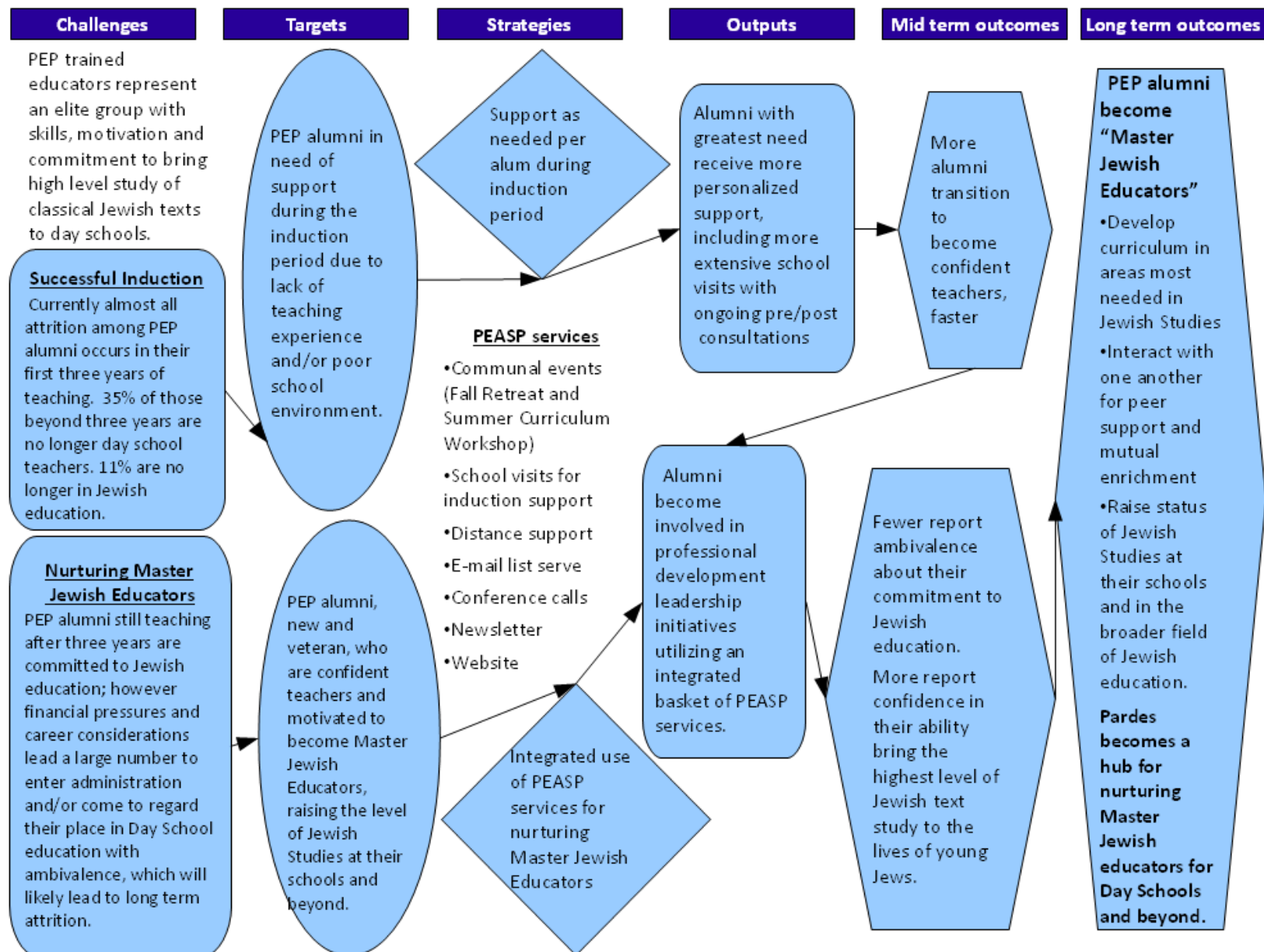
Beyond the direct benefit for the veteran alumni, these modules will bring multiple benefits to Pardes, PEASP and the field of Jewish education, including:

- 1) Creating a means of bringing exceptional novice alumni and veterans into a common working framework.

- 2) Developing curriculum in areas most needed in Jewish Studies aimed at young Jews – certainly in the Day School environment, but potentially beyond.
- 3) Positioning Pardes with the knowledge and infrastructure for nurturing Master Jewish educators, with a focus on text study, in Day School education and beyond.

The following is a graphic depiction of the above stated logic model.

# Pardes Educators Alumni Support Project – Logic Model



## Novice teachers within the first three years

For novice teachers, PEASP provides critical support to enable successful teaching experience. This function is critical, as this evaluation has shown that almost all alumni who have left day school teaching to date, have done so within the first three years of teaching.

PEASP support services aimed at novice teachers fall into five categories.

### 1. High resource, high universal impact

The Summer Curriculum Workshop and Fall Retreat are deemed valuable by all interviewed. These events serve as a chance to reconnect with colleagues with whom alumni studied at Pardes and to meet and interact with people from other cohorts. For the younger alumni the chance to interact with older alumni also serves as an entry point into a larger professional community and the chance to learn from those with greater experience.

### 2. High resource, differential impact

Almost all regard the school visits as valuable, but PEASP should distinguish between very different levels of need and benefit.<sup>4</sup>

- a) For those alumni who find themselves in the wrong school, the need for the school visit is vital and clearly a factor keeping them in the profession.
- b) For alumni who find themselves in the right school, but having a tough first year the school visit is also important, although perhaps not at the same level of intensity needed by the first group.
- c) For the small number of alumni who hit the ground running, the school visit might be an opportunity for face to face learning and reflective discussion about areas that the alumnus wants to develop for his or her school community. For these alumni, frameworks for intellectual advancement are crucial and a short

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<sup>4</sup> These recommendations were first written in September 2010. The following are is feedback from PEASP regarding steps taken in the intervening period. "The importance of differentiating in the support we give our novice teachers was something we picked up on from the first report in the Fall of 2010. The framing was helpful. We have tried to put this (employing different strategies) into practice already this year with the alumni we've visited. Some have had multiple visits, and substantial follow-up. For those really struggling who do not have mentors in their schools we have offered (and in some cases provide) regular working calls. For some we have focused on classroom management, for others the work has been on curriculum design, etc. We feel the school visits have been much more focused and helpful this year."

school visit that will help them into such a framework is the greatest priority. However, for all other purposes, this group should come under the strategy PEASP develops for the veteran alumni.

### **3. Low resource, high impact**

The e-mail list serve is a low resource, high impact service. While not all actively contribute, almost all PEP alumni cite the e-mail list serve as something they monitor and are pleased to have. The list serve is a concrete, daily reminder that they are part of wider community of professional peers, with whom they deeply admire and identify. The list serve is also a means for access and exposure to Pardes faculty whom all the alumni regard as mentors. Several cited the pleasure they get from knowing that senior Pardes faculty are reading their posts and at times responding.

Another relatively low resource, high impact service are the paid hours given to veteran alumni to support new alumnus who are in need of a focused conversation and feedback on a particular topic. This support is assigned by Pardes staff to those they deem in need and in all cases alumnus who received this support reported great benefit.

### **4. Low resource, low impact**

The conference calls are the only PEASP service, which consistently receives low ratings. Most of those interviewed view the conference calls as lacking the focus required to keep their attention and involvement. For those on the West Coast time differences make participation difficult.

### **5. Not clear**

Most alumni, novice or veteran, did not mention the website and newsletter, unless they were specifically prodded. Some visit the website to find teaching resources, others for job information. Some cite the newsletter as a source for receiving updates about their colleagues and the Pardes community. These resources, at least in their current format do not seem to require too much work to maintain and serve to provide a framework for providing a sense of on-going community among Pardes alumni and news from Pardes.

## Facilitating entry into “right schools”

When PEP alumni find themselves in the wrong school as novice teachers, the chances that they leave Day School education become much higher. Given the large financial investment Pardes and its philanthropic supporters make in each PEP student, might there be a way to “actively” channel recent alumni to schools with a reputation for providing supportive work environments?

There is currently a lot of pressure to place PEP graduates, wherever a job is found. The following steps might change that situation.

Is it possible to provide PEP graduates with a means for ranking schools during their job search based on the likelihood of receiving a positive induction experience? A school's ranking would likely include the following aspects of the induction period:

- Support for novice teachers
  - Reduction of full teaching load in first year
  - Consistent teaching areas over the first three years, to enable development of expertise and confidence
  - Provision of a Mentor, a veteran educator teaching in a similar area, with training to work as a mentor.
- Overall environment
  - The overall support provided by the school and sense of collegiality among Jewish studies faculty
  - The priority placed on Jewish studies vis-à-vis other disciplines.

Taking the idea of ranking schools a step further, might it be possible to provide financial incentives for top ranked schools to hire PEP graduates during their induction periods or bridging programs at Pardes or elsewhere for PEP alumni who need more time to find a job in the right school. It seems counterproductive to try and push the newly minted PEP graduate into a school where the chances of burn-out are very high.

## Nurturing Master Jewish educators - Integrating services for veteran alumni and exceptionally confident novice teachers

PEP is producing graduates, who in the right conditions become Master Jewish educators. The Master Jewish educator is able to bring the study of Jewish text to a school, or other Jewish institution, in a manner that is relevant and meaningful to the lives of the young people with whom they work, while also empowering their colleagues to engage in Jewish life and raising support for Jewish studies at their institutions. Moreover, most teach in liberal or community Day Schools in which the art of Jewish

Studies is in its infancy, and they are literally, with their colleagues inventing the wheel or fine-tuning a larger system for inculcating Jewish learning into the culture of their schools. There seems to be a great need for educators with this profile.

This evaluation shows that those who pass the three year threshold are deeply committed to Jewish education, but with a majority harboring ambivalence about their future as Day School educators. Not surprisingly frustration with low salary and the resulting pressure to go into administration are a primary cause of that ambivalence.

PEASP needs to decide if support of veteran alumni is central to its mission. If so, it is clear that PEASP is not going to be able to change the salary structure of Day School educators; but there are several strategies PEASP might be able to implement, which will encourage graduates to stay in the classroom, or at least take an active role in pushing forward Jewish Studies in day schools or other educational institutions. Phase two of this evaluation project will explore this area to a much greater extent.

In this report we focused on recommendations which arose from the interviews. The clear desire of PEP graduates is to maintain connection with Pardes in a manner that is specifically designed for the veteran educator. The desire is not for Pardes to provide general teaching support and professional development services, which can be attained elsewhere. Rather, the desire is for Pardes to serve as a source for continued intellectual growth and feeling of being part of a dynamic community pushing the profession of Jewish text study forward. The newly instituted Tefilla project is an example provided by alumni of the successful (in potential) reconfiguration of PEASP services with the veteran teacher in mind. If taken to its logical extent the following changes might occur:

### **List Serve**

Currently the list serve is a general resource with low intervention by PEASP staff, other than occasionally encouraging a member of the Pardes faculty to respond. There is room for Pardes faculty to create sustained opportunities for alumni who are looking to contribute to their schools and the broader profession, to pursue focused conversations or group projects. These would not be on the main list serve, but in dedicated Internet forums, which might integrate with a broader program that includes the Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum Workshop.

## **Conference calls**

Conference calls could benefit from a distinction between the needs of alumni who are experiencing induction difficulties, and a higher level strategy aimed at confident teachers who are ready to take on leadership positions in their school and the wider field. Perhaps for the former the conference calls are not the appropriate venue, while for the latter conference calls which integrate with focused e-mail discussions, which in combination could be an ideal venue for continued professional development. In this scenario the conference calls are a venue for bringing people with focused concerns or ambitions together to work with one another.

## **Newsletter and website**

It is likely, that both the newsletter and website could serve as platforms for promoting and broadcasting the focused professional development projects in which veteran alumni participate. Several alumni raised the idea of applying Wiki technology to enable collaborative curricula writing efforts. This type of work is relatively resource intensive, demanding staff or alumni volunteers to actively encourage and sustain alumni participation, editing and selecting for quality of contributions.

## **The Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum Workshop**

From the perspective of the alumni, the Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum Workshop are the jewels in PEASP's crown. Alumni *love* attending these events, as it is a chance, first and foremost for reinvigoration by reconnecting to the Pardes community and for a brief moment recapturing the experience of text study with peers who share an equal passion.

Veteran alumni have two major issues with the Fall Retreat.

1. The scheduling of the Retreat at the beginning of the school year, the most intensive time of the year for teachers, does not enable many veteran alumni to attend and does not facilitate the ability to play with and implement ideas when back at school. Some alumni indicate that Summer is a better period.
2. A comparison of the structure of the Fall Retreat and Summer Curriculum workshop is instructive. Veteran alumni get much more out of the latter, due to the large amount of time given over for small group work and work with Pardes faculty and peer mentors. Alumni utilize the Curriculum workshop to “go deep” in a manner that the current format of the Fall Retreat does not allow.



Might Pardes consider a format similar to the Curriculum Development Workshop at the Fall Retreat for veteran alumni? Such a format would better integrate and support an initiative such as the Tefilla project.

Given the expense of the Summer Curriculum Development workshop, due to the length of time required and its location in Israel, perhaps shorter immersion weekends or week long retreats during holidays might be offered in the United States. These could also, in potential, be open to veteran Jewish educators who are not PEP graduates, which could in turn generate new sources of revenue to support PEASP's work.

In summation it is clear that PEASP must continue its focus on the induction period. The first three years are critical to ensuring a novice teacher's future in Day School and Jewish education. The first three years are also PEASP's current mandate. Should PEASP decide to extend its mandate to include a focus on veteran alumni, the first step is to work with current resources to synchronize PEASP services for the purpose of nurturing Master Jewish educators. Should Pardes decide, the goal of helping veteran alumni and other experienced Jewish educators become Master Educators, could in itself become a central area of Pardes's work with the American Jewish community.