The Jewish Resource Specialist Program
Year 2 Evaluation Findings

Prepared for the Jim Joseph Foundation
and the Early Childhood Education Initiative (ECEI) at the Jewish Community
Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties

Prepared by Ellen Irie, Naomi Orensten & Isaac Agree
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BTW  *informing change* partners with nonprofits and foundations to improve their effectiveness and build a culture of learning and continuous improvement through strategic planning, evaluation and applied research. For more information about this project or BTW, contact Ellen Irie at eirie@btw.informingchange.com or visit www.btw.informingchange.com.
Introduction
Evaluation Overview

This report presents evaluation findings for the Jewish Resource Specialist Program (JRS) for 2012–2013, the second year of the JRS pilot, including key achievements and challenges. The evaluation assesses the JRS program overall—as a model—and not individual sites.

This evaluation addresses the following two distinct evaluation questions:

1. How, and to what extent, are families at JRS schools increasing their engagement in Jewish life and learning within JRS schools and in the community?

2. How, and to what extent, is JRS deepening Jewish learning within the JRS school environment, including enhancing the Jewish education of teachers?

* Please see the appendix for further information on the data collection methods and evaluation strengths and limitations.
JRS Overview

JRS is a flagship professional development initiative of the Early Childhood Education Initiative (ECEI) of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. JRS is being piloted in five Bay Area preschools over a three-year period. **JRS is designed to deepen the overall Jewish experience in Bay Area Early Childhood Jewish Education (ECJE) institutions and support parents in making Jewish choices for their families.**

The teacher in the new JRS educator position in each participating preschool is compensated for an additional 10 hours per week beyond their classroom responsibilities and receives professional development and leadership training focused on Jewish learning and knowledge. Utilizing this time, knowledge and support, the JRS educators are responsible for:

- Developing and implementing Jewish family engagement at JRS schools, and
- Serving as in-house mentors of Jewish education and pedagogic content at JRS schools.

This program also intends to support the ongoing professionalization of the ECJE field by providing additional leadership opportunities for teachers.

Finally, JRS is a demonstration project with intentions to replicate, adapt and/or scale to other schools and communities. The JRS program is designed with awareness-raising activities that spotlight the need for enhanced parent engagement and a more integrated Jewish curriculum within ECJE institutions in the Bay Area ECJE community.
# Jewish Resource Specialist Program Logic Model Overview

**PURPOSE:** To deepen the overall Jewish experience in the participating JRS schools for the staff, families and students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS/ISSUES ADDRESSED</th>
<th>TARGET CONSTITUENCIES</th>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES (1-3 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Jewish families are not inspired by Jewish life &amp; learning &amp; lack information about Jewish educational opportunities</td>
<td>• Five JRS school sites</td>
<td>JRS Educators</td>
<td>• Increased capacity to connect families with Jewish community resources &amp; post-preschool educational opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a need for enhanced Jewish education for Jewish preschool children</td>
<td>• ECJE teachers &amp; directors</td>
<td>• Ten hours per week supporting teachers, engaging families, participating in professional development &amp; implementing curricula</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preschool institutions &amp; educators need support to integrate enhanced Jewish frameworks into their classrooms, family programming &amp; their relationships with families</td>
<td>• Parents of preschool children at JRS sites, their preschool aged &amp; other children</td>
<td>• Number &amp; nature of new programs &amp; outreach methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a poor public perception of ECJE teachers &amp; directors</td>
<td>• Bay Area ECJE community</td>
<td>• Number &amp; nature of one-on-one meetings for coaching, mentoring &amp; monitoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ECJE standards of excellence are not yet widely applied</td>
<td>RESOURCES/INPUTS</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is high turnover among ECJE teachers &amp; directors &amp; challenges filling director positions</td>
<td>• Five JRS educators</td>
<td>• Increased family participation in school events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Five school partnerships</td>
<td>• Increased proportion of families informed about Jewish life/learning opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ECEI Department</td>
<td>• Increased proportion of parents whose Jewish engagement is informed by JRS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consultants to convene &amp; support the JRS Community of Practice</td>
<td>Partnerships &amp; Community Awareness</td>
<td>• Increased school interest in learning about the JRS model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Funding from JJJ; funding &amp; long-term institutional support from JCFSF; annually increasing funding from five JRS schools</td>
<td>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (3+ years)</td>
<td>• Increased prominence &amp; prioritization of family engagement at JRS schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• JRS Advisory Committee</td>
<td>• Increased integration of Jewish frameworks into school-wide activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• JRS curriculum &amp; supplementary texts</td>
<td>• The JRS position is institutionalized in 5 sites &amp; expands to 5+ additional schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITIES</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Continued JRS partnership with all five schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jewish family engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Continued contribution of JRS educators to the ECJE community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In-house mentor of Jewish education &amp; pedagogic content</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The Bay Area is an ECJE leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jewish professional development for JRS educators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jewish professional development for five JRS schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness raising in the ECJE community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ULTIMATE IMPACT: More Bay Area families are engaged in and inspired by Jewish education and Jewish life in their community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5 diverse JRS Schools + 5 diverse JRS Educators = 5 Different JRS Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preschool</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Families (2012-2013)</th>
<th>Total Students (2012-2013)</th>
<th>Host Site</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Key Changes (2012-2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chai Preschool</td>
<td>Foster City</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>None (housed at a Congregation)</td>
<td>None (loose connection with Chabad)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osher Marin Jewish Community Preschool</td>
<td>San Rafael</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Jewish Community Center</td>
<td>Jewish Community Center Association</td>
<td>✓ New school Director in 2012-2013 ▶ New incoming JRS educator for 2013-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshman Family JCC Preschool (T’enna)</td>
<td>Palo Alto</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Jewish Community Center</td>
<td>Jewish Community Center Association</td>
<td>✓ New JRS educator in 2012-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple Emanu-el Preschool</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>Congregation</td>
<td>Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)</td>
<td>✓ New JRS educator in 2012-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple Sinai Preschool</td>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Congregation</td>
<td>Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 diverse JRS Schools + 5 diverse JRS Educators = 5 Different JRS Programs
JRS Year 2 Summary

There was much activity and growth in the JRS program this year. This slide provides a high-level summary of key activities from Year 2 of the JRS pilot.

THE JRS MODEL

• The JRS program further clarified program intentions and expectations and communicated this more consistently than in the first year to JRS educators and preschools.

• The JRS program built structures to support the JRS work. Preschools began submitting workplans which created a clearer, more manageable framework for the program, and JRS educators submitted a reflection report each semester.

• The JRS program traveled to Israel, learning about the country from the lens of early childhood education. This trip—a highlight of the year—inspired JRS educators and gave them new ideas to infuse Israel into the school environment.

WITHIN JRS SCHOOLS

• This year’s primary programmatic focus was Jewish family engagement. JRS educators spent much of their time designing, planning and implementing a range of Jewish family programs.

• With regard to deepening Jewish learning, the JRS educators worked to enrich the overall Jewish environment (e.g., integrate ‘Jewish’ into the school curriculum, strengthen Jewish content), support the teaching staff (e.g., leading staff meetings, in-service trainings and professional development workshops), and build the capacity of individual teachers (e.g., regular and impromptu meetings with individual or small groupings of teachers, informal check-ins, sharing resources and suggestions).

• The JRS educators’ support of individual teachers was primarily with those who were new to the preschool, those with little Jewish knowledge, and those who actively sought out the supports of the JRS educator.
Programmatic Findings: Jewish Family Engagement

- Changes in Jewish family engagement within JRS schools
- Family participation in Jewish life in JRS schools and beyond
- Family satisfaction with Jewish engagement within JRS schools
- Jewish family engagement achievements, challenges and opportunities
All types of interview respondents—JRS educators, other teachers, school directors and host site representatives—across all of the JRS schools report improvements in Jewish family engagement.

• **Quality:** All interview respondents report that Jewish family engagement programs* have improved on the whole, especially in Jewish content. Holiday programs went beyond ‘telling the story’ and drew more deeply from Jewish tradition. Informants report greater integration of Jewish classroom learning into family communication and programming. Additionally, there has been more integration of Jewish content into secular family programs. All teachers attribute this shift to the JRS program.

• **Diversity:** Jewish programming in JRS schools this year was more diverse, ranging in audience (family, adult and child), size (school or class), content and approach. For example, all preschools offered smaller, more-intimate grade-level programs this year, a practice that was not consistently offered previously.

• **Quantity:** JRS schools are primarily focused on improving the quality of their existing family programs. However, a few preschools have offered new programs around Jewish holidays and Israel.

“JRS provides a context by working with the teachers and creating classroom curriculum so that when the family program comes around, parents know that this is what they’ve been learning in the class, this is what their children have been doing.”

—Preschool Director

* The use of the word programs in this deck refers to activities, events and programs that are Jewish in nature, unless otherwise noted.
### EXAMPLES OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration of Jewish content into secular family events &amp; programming</th>
<th>New and/or Enhanced Jewish family engagement programming</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Integrating Jewish values into parenting workshops</td>
<td>• Sukkot family breakfast</td>
<td>• Preschool Facebook page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrating Jewish content into an annual welcome picnic</td>
<td>• Havdalah family program</td>
<td>• Including more Jewish resources and references in parent e-newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introducing Jewish growth, in addition to overall developmental growth, into parent teacher conferences.</td>
<td>• Tu BiShvat seder and tree planting</td>
<td>• More partnerships around family engagement, such as cosponsoring programs with PJ Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrating the Jewish lifecycle into a program in which parents helped release butterflies children raised in the classroom</td>
<td>• Tzedekah family program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We coordinated two Family Shabbatot this year. Parents got to know each other in their own homes. It was great to support independent, grassroots Jewish life. We don’t need to do everything for parents.”

—Preschool Director

“For years we have been doing classroom havdalah programs. And we never did it with families. This year we had a family havdalah program. It gave parents an avenue to explore this practice with their children. I heard a lot of parents say, ‘Oh, I have never done this.’”

—Preschool Teacher
The JRS Parent—a new concept this year—has become an innovative way for the JRS program to get more support and better understand parent needs.

In three preschools this year, a parent supported the JRS educator in brainstorming, planning and implementing family engagement. For preschools, JRS educators and parents, this is a win-win effort. The JRS parent brings a sense of parent interests, helps with event recruiting and assists with implementing programs. These supports are valued immensely by the JRS educators. Additionally, it has emerged as a strategy for building parent relationships and creating opportunities for them to be more active in Jewish life. All of the five JRS schools expect to be working with a JRS parent next year.

“This year I learned that I really need a parent to support this work, to think with me and to be my liaison to the other parents. I am really happy that I have somebody. We are already planning next year.”

—JRS Educator

This year, there was better planning, preparation and coordination of family programs.

Respondents, especially JRS educators and preschool directors, report that events were planned further in advance and with more thought going into them. The three JRS schools that independently surveyed families about their needs and interests used parent input to drive program content. Two preschools worked with their host site to expand family programming, which better integrated JRS into the overall site.

“There’s been more focus and intention on family programs. The difference is in the details and in the engagement itself. There’s more symbolism and more music. I have been getting more positive feedback from parents, too, about the connection to Judaism.”

—Preschool Teacher
Parents continue to be highly satisfied with Jewish Family engagement in their child’s preschool.

While responses for each question range from 1 to 5, the vast majority of parents chose good (4) or very good (5). Overall ratings from parents in 2013 are very similar to parent ratings in 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>2012 Range</th>
<th>2013 Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of Jewish family events</td>
<td>4.2 - 4.8*</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of Jewish family engagement</td>
<td>4.5 - 4.9</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School's overall ability to provide you with Jewish educational resources in the Bay Area community</td>
<td>4.1 - 4.8</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School's overall ability to connect you with Bay Area Jewish life, learning and community</td>
<td>4.2 - 4.8</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The numbers within each horizontal bar represent the range across the five sites.

**SURVEYING PARENTS IN JRS SCHOOLS**

The parent survey for this evaluation gathers information about Jewish family engagement and the overall Jewish learning environment from all parents at all 5 JRS preschools. This evaluation takes a cohort approach, gathering feedback from the cohort of all parents at each school each year, rather than tracking the same parents from year to year. Changes from year to year, whether an increase or decrease, refer to the sample as a whole and not individual families. Therefore, some of the observed differences may be due to differences in the parent sample from last year to this year rather than the intervention itself.
PARENT VOICES ON JEWISH FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Comments from parents about the Jewish educational environment at their school commonly focused on the following themes.

**Deepening Learning:** “I appreciate the way we’ve deepened our understanding and observance of many traditions and holidays, particularly the ones I never celebrated as a child.”

**Sparking Family Interest:** “My daughter is learning things we couldn’t have taught her at home. Her experience has made us more interested in Jewish holidays and traditions at home. However, I am not sure what’s available in the Jewish community. It would be great if someone could talk with parents about their interests in expanding their Jewish connections and help them actualize this.”

**Welcoming Interfaith families:** “My husband is Jewish. I am not, and we are raising our children as Jews. I feel welcome. I feel that my involvement is appreciated and I appreciate learning about Judaism through what my daughter is learning and experiencing.”

**Learning the Basics:** “As an interfaith family who hovers between “not Jewish” and “not very” Jewish, we often felt left out of the more nuanced holidays (Purim, etc.) because we didn’t know what they were. We were embarrassed to ask for clarification because we felt like we were the only ones who didn’t know this seemingly “obvious” information.”

**Making Connections:** “Being involved in [school] has allowed our family to make new connections in the Jewish community. We love it here!”
Like last year, parents report high attendance at Jewish events in the preschool this year.

In 2013, parents report attending an average of 10 Jewish preschool events, the same number as 2012. The number of events offered by each preschool varies, and often relates to school size.

Preschool Events Attended

- **Shabbat celebrations**: 81 - 94%*, 68 - 91% (2012: 91%), 80% (2013)
- **Jewish family/holiday events**: 85 - 96%, 70 - 91% (2012: 89%), 80% (2013)
- **Informal family gatherings**: 51 - 84%, 52 - 73%, 63% (2012: 70 - 91%), 57% (2013)
- **Jewish parenting classes**: 8 - 33%, 0 - 46%, 13% (2012: 4 - 27%), 15% (2013)
- **Events about post-preschool Jewish education**: 7 - 19%, 13% (2012: 4 - 27%), 10% (2013)

* The numbers within each bar represent the frequency range across the five JRS sites.
The majority of parents with children in the final year of preschool have chosen a Jewish educational framework for their post-preschool child, many of whom report that their preschool supported them in considering their child’s post-preschool plans.*

- Almost two-thirds (63%) of the 52 parent respondents with children in the final year of preschool report that their child will be in a Jewish educational framework (either part-time Jewish school or day school) after preschool.
- Almost half (47%) of parents with children in the final year of preschool report that their preschool has moderately or very much supported them in considering the role of Judaism in their plans for their child. An additional 22% report than the preschool has slightly supported them.
- In open-ended survey responses, parents indicate interest in learning more about what Jewish educational options are available in the Bay Area for their children.

* New question asked in 2013; responses exclude families that do not identify as Jewish.
Parents report high attendance at Jewish events in the broader Jewish community.

Parents report attending an average of 17 Jewish community events in the 2012-13 academic year, slightly less than the 19 reported in 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Frequency Range</th>
<th>2012 Percentage</th>
<th>2013 Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish holiday celebrations</td>
<td>61 - 90%**</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabbat observance/celebration</td>
<td>68 - 74%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities with Jewish friends***</td>
<td>54 - 85%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synagogue services or Tot Shabbat</td>
<td>50 - 88%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Jewish Learning</td>
<td>45 - 55%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish cultural events</td>
<td>27 - 55%</td>
<td></td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish philanthropy</td>
<td>20 - 43%</td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Jewish education</td>
<td>6 - 20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excludes families that do not identify as Jewish.
** The numbers within each bar represent the frequency range across the five JRS sites.
*** New item asked in 2013 (not 2012)
Preschools have had some influence on parent interest and participation in Jewish life in the Bay Area.

Approximately one third (39% and 29%) of parents report that their preschool “very much” or “extremely” influenced their interest and participation in Jewish-related events or activities in the Bay Area, respectively. Another third (32% and 31%) say the preschool “moderately” influenced this interest and participation, respectively.

### Preschool Influence on Parent Interest in and Actual Participation in Jewish-Related Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest in Jewish-related events</th>
<th>13%</th>
<th>17%</th>
<th>32%</th>
<th>31%</th>
<th>8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actual participation in Jewish-related events</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excludes families that do not identify as Jewish.
Neither the JRS program nor the five preschools have focused on connecting families to Jewish life and learning in the broader Bay Area community.

- The JRS program aims to inform families about Jewish life and learning opportunities in the Bay Area, with the ultimate intention of increasing their involvement in Jewish life. The JRS program, the preschools and the JRS educators, however, have not focused on this component of the program. For some, this is a result of limited time and limited capacity to quickly identify opportunities that can easily be shared with parents.

- It appears that this goal is simply not a priority of preschools. In particular, for preschools with a host site, there is a sense that promoting community programs poses a conflict of interest with the host site. As the program continues, this issue ought to be addressed.

- It is possible that over time, the ECEI’s ongoing efforts in developing and maintaining a Bay Area website for Jewish families, if sourced with compelling resources in a user-friendly interface, can facilitate more connections to broader Bay Area Jewish life.

“It doesn’t make sense to offer parents programs that are put on by organizations outside of the [host site] because these options are in direct competition with the [host site].”

—JRS Educator

“Our leadership wants us to keep our members here. We’ll advertise some programs, like PJ Library. Yet there are different ways to connect to Judaism, like Urban Adamah and Wilderness Torah. And we don’t advertise them. I don’t feel threatened by them, but I think people on our staff do feel threatened or are not sure how to connect to these organizations who are doing great things that we don’t or can’t offer.”

—Preschool Director

* There were no specific evaluation questions related to the new website for Jewish families in the Bay Area; the website did not surface during data collection.
Preschools and JRS educators face some common challenges in their efforts to engage families.

• **Attendance**: Sites report good attendance at family events overall. However, they struggle with marketing and communicating programs and ensuring consistent family participation across events. One preschool has learned that attendance is high in the fall and low in the spring, and another finds that parents do not RSVP. Preschools hope the JRS parent and better marketing, together with high-quality programs that better match parent interests, will address this challenge.

• **Variance in Program Quality**: While sites report higher program quality overall, they do report inconsistencies in program quality. In other words, some programs are better implemented and better planned than others. For preschool and host site directors, it is particularly important that programs provide a value add to be “worth” families limited time.

• **Designing Adult Jewish Learning**: Respondents consistently report that JRS educators run high-quality family programs that focus on the children, however, JRS educators are more likely to struggle with developing and implementing programmatic content targeted to adult interests and needs. These reports note that it is both about confidence and skills. It is possible that improvement in this area will lead to more high-quality programs and more consistent family attendance.

“We learned a lot this year about family engagement. We had some really successful programs, enough hom run s to merit and balance the misses.”

—Preschool Director

“I think [the JRS educator] may be lacking in training for teaching adults. I see great Jewish learning and work with kids, but I don’t think [the JRS educator] knows adult learning theory or is able to run a great workshop for parents.”

— Preschool Director
Programmatic Findings: Deepening Jewish Learning

- Changes in the JRS schools’ overall Jewish learning environment
- Changes in the classroom within JRS schools
- Parent satisfaction with Jewish learning within JRS schools
With more intentional integration of Jewish content and learning within each JRS school, nearly all respondents report a richer overall Jewish environment.

- JRS school directors unanimously report increased attention to the schools’ Jewish learning environment this year.
- Teachers, even those identifying as having strong Jewish backgrounds, appreciate that JRS educators have created a staff environment that offers richer Jewish tradition, values and culture.
- Most respondents attribute these changes to the JRS program and are pleased to have an address for coordinating Jewish learning.

“[The JRS educator] lives and breathes Judaism, and I don’t. [He/she] contributes to our staff meetings, sends emails with suggestions for activities and information, and helps me implement changes in the classroom. [He/she] observes, gives tips and compliments... and has been really helpful.”

—Preschool Teacher

“[The JRS educator] has continued the series of holiday workshops. I was amazed by the level of depth—not just the story but the reason behind it. It made me much more confident in the classroom and helped me communicate this better to parents.”

—Preschool Teacher

EXAMPLES OF A DEEPENED JEWISH LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT JRS SCHOOLS:

- Leading workshops that empower teachers to learn more about Jewish holidays and traditions and that include ideas for classroom programs
- Introducing school-wide Hebrew vocabulary (e.g., word of the month)
- Developing take-home “Shabbat boxes”
- Providing Jewish ritual objects in each classroom
- Offering staff a clergy-led panel on Jewish values
- Partnering with a Jewish high school to build a preschool tefillah experience
- Increasing the presence of Israel in the classroom
The JRS program is bringing new and improved practices to classrooms, and teachers find the JRS educator to be a valuable “go to” resource for Jewish content.

• All teachers report that the JRS educator has brought new and improved Jewish and Israel resources as well as fresh ideas for classroom activities. These resources have been helpful, particularly to preschool teachers with little Jewish background. For all teachers, the JRS educator has been a resource for “random” questions about Jewish learning and engagement.

• The JRS educators are characterized as accessible, open and warm. Their non-threatening peer-based approached is perceived by teachers and preschool directors as effective.

• While sites report overall improvements in teacher capacity, this varies across classrooms. JRS school directors report that the JRS program could help JRS educators prioritize their time supporting teachers.

• A few respondents report that JRS educators are developing their own programs when they could be drawing from a wealth of existing ECJE resources, building a “toolkit” of books, visuals, materials and curricula for the preschool.

EXAMPLES OF JRS EDUCATORS SUPPORTING TEACHERS:

• Weaving classroom Jewish content into weekly updates and programs with parents
• Suggesting Jewish books that connect to classroom inquiry
• Helping teachers respond to parent inquiries
• Designing new and revamped Jewish classroom programs (e.g., Rosh Chodesh; Hanukkah)
• Developing Israeli cultural programs for classrooms (e.g., shuk activity)
• Supporting teachers to learn Hebrew words and brainstorm ideas for bringing them into the classroom.
• Helping teachers integrate the school’s Jewish values into classroom inquiry
TEACHER VOICES ON DEEPENING JEWISH LEARNING WITHIN JRS SCHOOLS

Teachers find the JRS educator to be a valuable “go to” resource for Jewish content, as illustrated by the quotes below.

Identifying Resources: “A parent came to me and said that her child was asking a lot about God, and asked if I had any books that could open a conversation. So I checked with [the JRS educator] who helped me find good book options. Similar things came up over the year, and [the JRS educator] helped me for all of them.”

Providing Support: “It’s nice to have a person who has this role. Rather than ask myself, ‘Who should I ask?’ I know who my go-to person is. Before this position started, I didn’t know who to go to. Sometimes a teacher, sometimes a director. I knew what teacher knows Hebrew when I need help with how to pronounce something. And now it’s [the JRS educator]. That’s helpful, to have this specialty right here in the school.”

Encouraging Active Reflection: “I think this program has made us more reflective. We are thinking more about what we are doing, what we want to achieve, and how we can do it better. This is really beneficial.”

Sparking New Ideas: “Rather than just tell us what to do, [the JRS educator] asks questions like, ‘How do you do this?’ and it causes our teacher team to have the conversation about how we’re doing things. And that sparks ideas of doing new things. [The JRS educator] brings new ideas out of us, helps us brainstorm, and sometimes shares [her/his] own ideas. If [the JRS educator] wasn’t there, these brainstorms would not have happened.”
Like last year, parents continue to be highly satisfied with the Jewish Educational Environment in their child’s preschool.

- While the range of responses for each question was from 1 to 5, the vast majority chose good (4) or very good (5).
- With high parent satisfaction across these items, similar to Jewish family engagement, there is little opportunity for big growth. As the JRS program thinks about how to accomplish its short-term outcomes related to deepening Jewish learning, the program might consider how it can address the lower-ranking measures, specifically in supporting the overall knowledge of preschool teachers.
- Parents, like JRS educators, teachers and school directors, note that the quality of Jewish education does vary significantly by classroom.

*The numbers within each horizontal bar represent the range across the five sites.*
PARENT VOICES ON THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT WITHIN JRS SCHOOLS

Integration of Jewish Learning: “I love that Judaism is in the fabric of all that the children learn and do versus being a separate curriculum.”

Quality of Jewish Education: “At this age, Judaism is very abstract to my son, but I have enjoyed learning about Jewish history and asking him questions about it as well. I get funny answers but he enjoys the rituals of Shabbat and refers to them in his play. The school events are great but chaotic, which is to be expected with kids this age.”

Quality of Jewish Education: “I have been very impressed with the level of Jewish education that my child is receiving from [school]. It’s been amazing to hear how it flavors her life in so many ways—in song, in story-telling, in the way she views her world. We couldn’t ask for more.”

Communication with Parents: “There was an excellent hand-out for Tu’Bishvat seder, but it wasn’t shared with everyone. Communicate about the holiday, about how you can discuss/share it with your child in a brief and informative way.”

Teacher Knowledge: “This is my second child at the school, and I find that some teachers are able to make Judaism meaningful for young children and others are not.”

Quality of Overall Education: “We think [school] does a great job, but we are there based on the quality of care and learning that is provided, not for religious education.”

Welcoming Environment: “We love [school]. We love the community. It is a warm and welcoming environment that has engaged our entire family in Jewish life, learning and community.”
Findings About the JRS Model

- Core components of the JRS model
- JRS program achievements & challenges
- Commitment to the JRS program
Certain components of the JRS program, including those that emerged this past year, are becoming the foundation of a strong program model.

**Defining & Communicating Program Goals:** This year JRS/ECEI was increasingly focused on clarifying the intentions of the JRS program and making the role of the JRS program in each preschool increasingly clear and tangible. This focus gave JRS educators and preschools more clarity and confidence.

**Support from JRS/ECEI:** Like last year, respondents report that JRS staff bring legitimacy to the program. Preschools and JRS educators appreciate their counsel on Jewish content and program administration. JRS educators and preschool directors report that the JRS staff are supportive, resourceful and accessible.

**Supporting JRS Educators:** Despite the challenges they experience—balancing both JRS goals, navigating being both a peer and a mentor to teachers, and doing the JRS work within 10 hours a week—all JRS educators feel supported by the JRS program, and four of the five feel supported by their preschool. For JRS educators, the role is rewarding and meaningful.

**Program Documentation:** This year’s focus on documenting the program, both overall and within individual schools, not only made the program goals clearer to JRS stakeholders, but it began building a base of materials to ensure institutional memory and help preschools “make the case” for JRS.

**Parent-Driven:** The JRS program has prompted preschools to be more attentive to parent interests. JRS schools report that they are more proactive and more committed to asking families what they want and developing a diverse range of programs.

“**The #1 strength of JRS is that, without it, it is a challenge to be accountable to the goal of raising the level of Jewish content overall. JRS gives incentive to step up. It underscores a certain seriousness around Jewish content for our school.”**

— Host Site Director

“**JRS is a phenomenally supportive program. I have a wonderful relationship with JRS staff. They could not be more responsive or helpful.”**

— Preschool Director
Certain components of the JRS program, including those that emerged this past year, are becoming the foundation of a strong program model. (continued)

**Accountability:** Preschool directors consistently reference the importance of making it clear that their preschool is a Jewish preschool, yet they report limited bandwidth to lead these efforts themselves. For them, the JRS program reinforces the preschool’s commitment to being a Jewish environment and provides a partner to ensure that this happens.

**Connecting JRS to the preschool’s Jewish vision:** In preschools with an articulated Jewish vision, the JRS program is a tool to implement that vision. For example, the JRS program helped one preschool move the curriculum to a Jewish values-based approach from a holidays-based approach; the program helped another preschool integrate its six core Jewish values into the preschool environment. For preschools developing a Jewish mission or vision, the JRS program has prompted this conversation.

“JRS has reinforced that we should be focusing on Jewish family engagement because we are a Jewish school. The beauty of JRS is that it reminds us to be doing this work.”

—Preschool Director

**Relationship between the preschool director and the JRS educator:** For JRS to succeed in schools, it is critical that the director and the JRS educator have a shared vision for Jewish family engagement and deepening Jewish learning, as well as a collaborative relationship and regular communication. This supports the JRS educator in carrying out the Jewish goals of the school. The absence of this relationship stalls JRS; its presence amplifies its outcomes.

“JRS has a deep understanding of our values, our approach to curriculum and the philosophy of the school. And that gets wrapped up in the great way [the JRS educator] is supporting other teachers and their work.”

—Preschool Director

**Rapport between the JRS educator and other teachers:** To succeed in a peer leadership position, each JRS educator must be perceived by other teachers as a respected peer. This “soft” skill is critical to the goal of supporting teachers. Deep familiarity with the school culture and curricula are also important to building buy-in from other teachers.
A key challenge of the JRS program—faced by directors, teachers and the JRS educators themselves—continues to be individual classroom observation.

- This year, in a coordinated decision with their preschool directors and JRS staff, the JRS educators intentionally spent less time conducting individual classroom observations than in the previous year and than the program originally intended. Instead, they focused more on the overall preschool environment, such as increasing the JRS educator’s role in staff meetings or having the JRS educator meet with smaller groups of teachers.

- Respondents this year continue to report that individual classroom observation does not work well. Logistical challenges remain, from arranging substitute teachers to identifying the right time to observe Jewish classroom learning to making time for one-on-one follow-up. It is challenging for the JRS educators to leave his or her own classroom, especially when working with younger children and/or with less strong co-teachers.

- Given that almost all preschools are already experimenting with alternative approaches to classroom observation that serve the goal of building the capacity of teachers, the JRS program might consider whether the strategy of individual classroom observations should be explicitly replaced by an alternative, one that may be different across different preschools.

“It is great that [the JRS educator] can connect with other classes while they were in session, and yet it creates a huge challenge to the [JRS educator’s] class. I know that the idea of the JRS program is that they want a teacher for this role, but I don’t have an answer for this challenge.”

—Preschool Director
Even as the JRS program is making significant progress toward many of its outcomes, there has been little focus on certain outcomes articulated in the program’s logic model.

In building the JRS model, its designers envisioned many outcomes that are not currently the focus of implementation, including the following.

The JRS program intended …

• for families to attend a greater quantity of events within the preschool, however in practice, the JRS educators have focused more on increasing the quality of events rather than their quantity.

• for families to learn about Jewish life and learning opportunities in the broad Bay Area Jewish community, which is proving to be complicated in preschool environments.

• to build community awareness of the program model, however there is little evidence to date that this is happening.

As the program matures, now may be an appropriate time to revisit the feasibility and importance of these outcomes or to take additional steps to ensure that they are achieved.
The JRS program needs to continue to balance the program’s focus with parent interests.

Parents most frequently report that they would like to see more:

1. Shabbat and holiday programs
2. Opportunities to get to know other families
3. Programs that support and inform interfaith families, specifically non-Jewish parents
4. Information about other Jewish programs in the Bay Area Jewish community

• With a goal of deepening Jewish family engagement, the JRS program promotes many kinds of Jewish family programs. It is possible, though, that the growing focus on adult learning and higher-level Jewish engagement could potentially be in tension with overwhelming parent interest in preschool holiday programs and social events. The JRS program should be aware of this possible tension and continue to offer a diverse array of programs for a diverse grouping of families. This is not to suggest that adult learning should not continue; it should, and it should continue together with other lower-barrier programs.

• Parents, specifically working parents, continue to report that the early-afternoon timing of family programs is problematic. As JRS schools strive to serve all their families, it may be appropriate to offer more early evening or weekend programs.

• Because the JRS schools serve many interfaith families, it is not surprising to see requests that programs be more accessible to those less familiar with Judaism and for programs that can support interfaith families.
Preschools have begun to see benefits of the JRS program and would like to see JRS continue. However, host site directors are not yet planning for sustaining the program over time.

- All preschools strongly support the goals of the JRS program and would like to see it continue. Host site directors, too, see benefits to the program. However, no schools or sites have had senior staff or board conversations regarding the future of the JRS program. A few preschools and sites are concerned about taking on financial ownership of the program, citing budget concerns.

- As preschools think more about sustaining JRS, they report that they would likely make some structural changes should they continue funding it. For example, a few JRS schools would likely adjust the program model to be more integrated across the host site in order to convince leadership to support the program. Others are considering a larger “Jewish Family Programming” position or a “Chief Jewish Content” preschool team member, both of which could wrap up the JRS role, focusing more or less on family engagement and deepening Jewish learning, as dictated by site and preschool needs.

- Some site directors report that they would like to see more information about the program’s activities and outcomes, as well as receive more regular updates about its progress.

- Preschools report that, should they continue supporting the program, they would not commit to the current level of professional development funds which is set at $10,000 per preschool per year, for workshops and trainings for all site teachers. Most believe that this fund would be too costly to support. Some report that the amount of funding available is disproportionate to the preschool size and budget, and some do not see it as a core component of the JRS model.
Recommendations
Recommendations: Jewish Family Engagement

Assess parent needs and interests, and let that drive family programming: Three JRS schools conducted a family survey this past year. As the family community changes with each year’s enrollment, this should be a regular embedded process for all five preschools. Some preschools may need support from JRS/ECEI to do this, and the JRS parent may also be a useful resource.

Focus on quality and integration: High parent participation in and satisfaction with Jewish programs suggests that there is limited possibility for improvement. Therefore, preschools should continue to offer diverse, increasingly high quality programs that integrate Jewish themes and classroom learnings and that align with parent interests. As the JRS program strives to accomplish its family-related short-term outcomes, JRS might consider how it can support families on the lower-ranking measures, specifically connections to the Bay Area Jewish community. Additionally, JRS/ECEI could consider identifying family engagement priorities by preschool and focus on these in the coming year.

Communicate with parents: Each preschool and the JRS educator should continue to communicate to parents that the JRS educator is a resource for all things Jewish, both verbally (e.g., family events, class pick-up, parent teacher conferences), and in writing (e.g., newsletters, bulletin boards). The JRS educator, together with preschool leadership and other teachers, should continue proactively to share resources to families, whether that be in regular parent newsletters or posting information within the preschool environment. Parent communication can also be addressed by the JRS parent.

Leverage host sites for family engagement programs: Some JRS host sites have prioritized Jewish family engagement or outreach to young families. While there has been more site-wide collaboration this year, there is room for preschools and sites to do more, whether that be hosting more site-wide events in the preschool that make more families aware of the preschool or inviting preschool parents to a classroom event prior to a host-site event.
Recommendations: Deepening Jewish Learning

**Make the JRS program more visible in preschools and to teachers:** As the JRS program strives to build a deeper Jewish culture in each preschool, the JRS educator should take on an increasingly visible and active role with other teachers. While some JRS educators are part of planning and implementing staff meetings and professional development days, this practice—and other opportunities for the JRS educator to lead Jewish content or support others in leading Jewish content—should be more prevalent in the coming year. Additionally, the JRS educators can more proactively share and elicit ideas for the classroom.

**Spread the knowledge to amplify the program effect:** As JRS educators become more confident, and as teachers show enthusiasm for the program, it is now appropriate for JRS educators to empower other teachers to further deepen the Jewish learning environment in the preschool. This is starting to happen in some preschools. For example, the JRS educator can enlist strong teachers to support other teachers on a specific Jewish-related task or to design more family programs. Particularly for the larger preschools, this may be a way to infuse JRS more deeply in the preschool environment. And for all JRS schools, this is a way to support teachers who need additional guidance.

“We’re all learners and we all can contribute. I use some knowledgeable teachers as models. So if a teacher has been here for a long time and is a Jewish educator and can share with others, I’m going to tell that teacher, ‘You’re capable of teaching others.’ It helps, and it makes everyone feel good.”

—JRS Educator

“Having JRS brings attention and value to our school’s Jewish agenda, and we have our own person to move us in that direction. We don’t have an arts or math specialist. We are a Jewish school and we have a Jewish specialist because it’s important that we live this Jewish life. That is made clear to our school, to our children and to our families.”

—Preschool Director
Recommendations: The JRS Model

Continue documenting the JRS program: As noted earlier, this year saw marked growth in documenting the JRS program model across JRS schools. Next year, work plans and the semi-annual JRS educator reflections should more explicitly connect to the two JRS goals and preschool and host site priorities, as appropriate. Reports from the JRS educators continue offering reflections to shape future programs. This ongoing documentation builds a shared understanding of the JRS program and facilitates real-time learning and reflection about the model and its implementation.

Consider site-based outcomes: As each site is becoming increasingly different, JRS/ECEI should consider developing preschool-specific metrics and outcomes. This will ensure that the program is focusing on school and host site priorities, which can leverage the assets that each site brings. Additionally, this may help preschools make the case by showing program impacts and integration with organizational priorities.

Continue building a Community of Practice that serves the diverse range of JRS educator needs: All JRS educators report that the JRS Community of Practice is instructive and supportive. However, given differences across the JRS schools, the content can be more or less relevant for different JRS educators. JRS/ECEI should account for this, whether that be more customized supports, smaller group breakouts, or something else entirely. JRS/ECEI might also consider if or when it may be appropriate to include preschool directors in community of practice meetings and whether site visits to the five JRS schools would be beneficial for the program.
Recommendations: The JRS Model (continued)

**Plan for and Manage Staff Turnover:** High rates of director and teacher turnover are not uncommon in the ECJE field, so not surprisingly, turnover is happening in the JRS program as well. Personnel changes underscore the importance of clarifying the program’s vision, scope and expectations, as well as ensuring written documentation of the program. JRS/ECEI staff should meet more frequently with sites experiencing staff transitions.

**Continue to support a healthy partnership between the JRS educator and preschool director:** The JRS model requires shared vision, collaboration and good communication between the JRS educator and the preschool director. In a few cases, some JRS schools have not seen a healthy partnership between the preschool director and JRS educator. In JRS/ECEI interaction with the JRS educator and preschool director, this should be a regular check-in item, even more so in preschools experiencing staff transitions.

**Begin working now to make the case for sustaining the JRS program in each preschool:** Host site directors would like more written communication about the JRS program—from JRS/ECEI and the preschool. As preschools prepare to make decisions about the future funding of the program, JRS/ECEI should now begin supporting preschool directors to make the case to sustain the program. JRS/ECEI and preschool directors should share more program updates and written information about the JRS program with host site lead staff. This communication is important as decision-makers prepare to take on more financial responsibility for the JRS program.

“If we are supposed to be thinking about how to proceed in the future, it would be great to give a full detailed report to our board. The JRS program should prepare a summary of what’s going on, the learnings of the program. This would help us support the program and have a better discussion of what do to going forward.”

—Host Site Director
Appendices

• Appendix A: Data Collection Methods
• Appendix B: Evaluation Strengths & Limitations
Appendix A: Data Collection Methods

The evaluation uses a multi-year mixed-method approach to address the two evaluation questions. The major data collection approaches are:

**KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (23)**
- JRS educators (5)
- JRS school directors (5)
- Teachers in JRS schools (9)
- ECEI/JRS staff (2)
- Host institutions directors (2)

**PARENT SURVEY:**
BTW administered the survey through an online tool (Qualtrics) and offered incentives for participation. Out of a pool of 656 parents, 194 responded—a 30% overall response rate, ranging from 21-50% across the sites. The nearly 10% of parents reporting that they do not identify as Jewish were excluded from most analyses.

**MATERIALS REVIEW**
BTW reviewed applications to JRS, Memos of Understanding, JRS resumes, JRS work plans (for JRS overall and individual schools), semi-annual grant reports submitted to JJF from ECEI, Community of Practice agendas, winter 2012 and spring 2013 JRS reflections; ECJE research and other relevant articles.
Appendix B: Evaluation Strengths & Limitations

STRENGTHS

• The evaluation uses multiple methods, which enabled BTW to triangulate findings to reach conclusions supported by multiple data sources. This gives BTW greater confidence in the findings and resulting implications.

• The overall survey response rate across preschools is 30%, ranging from 21-50%, which is important to validate results. Response rates were higher in smaller schools and lower in larger schools, which prevents skewed responses, especially given the range in preschool sizes.

LIMITATIONS

• The primary data sources used in this evaluation are self-reported (e.g., surveys and interviews), which may present some bias. However, this evaluation bases findings only on commonly mentioned responses across multiple informants.

• This is a relatively small evaluation focused around two discrete questions, yet there is much additional information to learn from a pilot initiative.

• This evaluation assesses contribution toward outcomes rather than attribution. It is not possible in this evaluation to determine the degree to which results are due solely to the efforts of the JRS pilot.