



AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE WITH JEWISH EDUCATION

Prepared for
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REPORT ON

IMMIGRANT ATTITUDES TOWARDS JEWISH EDUCATION

BACKGROUND

At present, the children of immigrant families are under-represented in Jewish Day Schools. This is a major concern to The UJA Federation's Integration Committee (now referred to as the Community Engagement Committee) because the Committee has identified a correlation between an immigrant family's successful social integration into the Canadian Jewish Community and the Jewish education immigrant children receive in this country.

A number of hypotheses have been tabled by JIAS (Jewish Immigrant Aid Services) Toronto*, based on their experience with newcomers, about why children from immigrant families are under-represented in Jewish Day Schools. These include the following:

- Immigrant families are lacking information about Jewish Day Schools
- Immigrant families are not being well-received by the individual schools that they approach
- Certain schools are not perceived to be open to welcoming immigrant students
- Some schools have added ESL support, while others have not
- Jewish Day schools are perceived as not being prepared to provide the additional support a new immigrant student may need
- The fees are too high
- The fees are unpredictable and families do not feel that they can make the commitment with the possibility of significant increases over the course of their child's education
- The subsidies are time-limited
- The cycle of registration (winter) and the cycle of immigration (summer) conflict.

Qualitative research was requested to assess the validity of these hypotheses, to identify the key reasons behind this under-enrollment, and to identify opportunities to address these issues in the future.

* JIAS (Jewish Immigrant Aid Services) Toronto is referred to as JIAS Toronto throughout the remainder of the report.

GOAL AND MANDATE

The UJA Federation's Community Engagement Committee would like to increase the number of children from immigrant families attending a Jewish Day School. The Committee mandated JIAS Toronto to lead a study to explore the immigrant's experience with Toronto's Jewish Day Schools.

Qualitative research was requested to identify the key reasons why children from immigrant families are not attending Jewish Day Schools, and to explore opportunities to effect change to ensure that a Jewish education is available for any child of immigrants who wants one.

Specific objectives of the research were:

1. To identify the factors that deter many immigrant families from enrolling their children in Jewish Day Schools;
2. To identify the factors that encourage other immigrant families to enroll their children in Jewish Day schools and to assess how well these children are coping in the System; and,
3. To determine how key administrators in the Jewish Day School System perceive and respond to the specific needs of the Immigrant community.

METHOD

For this research, two key interest groups were interviewed in December 2003: (1) Parents from Jewish Immigrant families, as well as (2) Administrators of Jewish Day Schools in Toronto.

Interviews among Parents

Parents from two key immigrant groups participated in this research – (1) a broad cross-section of parents from the Former Soviet Union (from the Eastern FSU and the Western FSU - mainly those who entered Canada via Israel) and (2) parents from South America (primarily Argentina).

Across these two immigrant populations, four sub-groups were interviewed. All were parents of school-aged children and key decision makers regarding their children's education:

- Two focus groups were conducted among parents whose children are currently enrolled in a Jewish Day School.
- Eight individual interviews were conducted among parents who approached but did not enroll their children in a Jewish Day School.
- Seven individual interviews were conducted among parents who have not approach a Jewish Day School since they arrived in Canada.
- Three interviews were conducted among parents who enrolled but have either withdrawn or are withdrawing their children from a Jewish Day School.

The sample was divided, as follows:

IMMIGRANT GROUP	# OF RESPONDENTS FROM:		INTERVIEW APPROACH	TOTAL
	THE FSU	SOUTH AMERICA		
Parents, who investigated Jewish Day Schools, but choose to enroll children in public school.	4 (All via Israel)	4	30 – 40 minute One-on-one interviews	8
Parents who did not investigate enrolling child in Jewish Day Schools	3 (2 from FSU via Israel, 1 Israeli)	4	30 – 40 minute One-on-one interviews	7
Parents whose children are enrolled in Jewish Day Schools	4 (All via Israel)	3	One 2-hour focus- group interview	7
Parents whose children were withdrawn from Jewish Day Schools	1*	2	30 – 40 minute One-on-one interviews	3
TOTAL # OF PARENTS	12	13	N/A	25

* One of our parents in the Soviet Focus Group had withdrawn her son from CHAT.

METHOD

Interviews among Educators

Eight Educators were interviewed from a cross-section of Jewish Day Schools, as follows:

Educators from Jewish Day Schools included Associated, CHAT, Bialik and USDS	5 telephone interviews, plus 1 face-to-face meeting with 3 educators/administrators	8 participants in total
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Other recruiting details

- All recruiting was managed by JIAS Toronto, with input from Dr. Seymour Epstein, UJA Federation BJE.
- Meetings with Administrators were conducted over the phone or at their offices.
- Individual in-depth interviews with parents were held at JIAS Toronto offices.
- Group discussions with parents were held at Quality Response, a focus group facility located at 2200 Yonge St, Toronto, Ontario.

Note:

- Efforts were also made to interview the Administrator from the Toronto Jewish Academy. However, the moderator was not able to co-ordinate this meeting given timing constraints of both the study and Rabbi Zaltzman.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

This research suggests that – regardless of whether parents have immigrated to Canada from South America or the FSU – five key factors determine whether or not parents will enroll their children in Jewish Day School.

These five key factors are:

1. The Quality and Quantity of Information Parents Receive Upon Arrival in Canada

Information seems to play a critical role in driving the choice for or against Jewish Day Schools.

Parents who choose NOT to send their children to Jewish Day School often appear to have incomplete or inaccurate information about their schooling options. These parents appear to rely heavily on word of mouth, and may not be very proactive about obtaining the information required to make an educated decision.

Conversely, parents who opt for the Jewish Day School System tend to have received comprehensive information early on (either from JIAS Toronto, from friends and/or from particular schools). These parents seem to be more informed about the following:

- **The Availability of Subsidies**
 - Parents who DO NOT send their children to Jewish Day Schools are often unaware that subsidies are available; or, they have limited information about the extent and nature of the subsidies.
 - Conversely parents who DO enroll in Jewish Day School typically receive at least partial subsidies. And, most are confident that these subsidies will be available as long as required.
- **The Superior Overall Education at Jewish Day Schools versus Public Schools**
 - Parents who DO NOT enroll assume that Canadian Public Schools offer an excellent (more than adequate) education for their children.
 - Conversely, parents who DO enroll are convinced that the overall standard of education is much higher in Jewish Day Schools than in Public Schools.
- **The Acceptance of Different Approaches to Judaism in Many Jewish Day Schools**
 - Parents who DO NOT enroll typically feel that the Jewish Day Schools are “too religious”, and therefore would not provide a comfortable environment for their children.
 - Parents who DO enroll recognize (from conversations with School Administrators) that - although their children may have to wear kippot and pray daily - there is a substantial group of parents who, like themselves, are culturally Jewish and not religious.

2. Reception from the Jewish Day Schools

Parents' early encounters with Jewish Day Schools often have the potential to "make or break" the enrollment decision.

- Parents whose children are currently enrolled in Jewish Day Schools tend to have been exposed to a compassionate and impressive educator early on in the process. Although a cold or insensitive receptionist may initially have greeted them, these parents quickly made contact with a more helpful, understanding educator.
- Conversely, parents who investigated Jewish Day Schools, but did not enroll, typically encountered unreceptive and unfriendly receptionists/secretaries who dispassionately handed them information without connecting them to the people who could address their key questions and concerns.

Importantly, most of the Administrators interviewed in this research were not aware of the roadblocks (i.e. insensitive office staff) that parents encounter when initially contacting their schools for information.

3. Perceived Fit in Jewish Day Schools versus Public Schools

Most new immigrants interviewed feel as different from Canadian Jewry as they do from the broader Canadian society. They perceive themselves to be more "secular" than most Canadian Jews, and fear that they are viewed as "inferior" Jews by Canadian standards.

As such - given the resources and multi-cultural environment that the Public Schools have to offer - there appears to be a tremendous pull to the Public System.

Within the multi-cultural environment of the Public School System many assume that their children will feel more comfortable - since they're part of a larger group dealing with new language and customs. Additionally, the Public School System has specific programs to help New Canadians adjust socially and academically. Finally, many parents expressed concern that their children would feel inferior to other children in Jewish Day Schools - who they perceive to enjoy a more financially secure lifestyle. They felt that within a multi-cultural setting (public schools), their children's economic circumstances and language challenges would be more the norm.

Parents who do opt for a Jewish School education typically seem to be more financially and socially secure, and as such, these concerns do not seem to be as prevalent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE (CONTINUED)

4. Awareness of, Confidence in and Experience with Financial Assistance Programs

Economic considerations also seem to play a critical role in driving the enrollment decision.

Most parents who do not enroll their children in Jewish Day School perceive it to be unaffordable. Many do not even approach Jewish Day Schools for this reason.

- Many are not aware of the subsidies that are available.
- Some feel that the subsidies are not adequate, and that tuition is still unaffordable.
- Other parents are concerned that Jewish Day School subsidies might not be provided long-term and they do not want to risk disrupting their child's 'settling' process by having to withdraw the child in the future.
- Many are not aware of subsidies for additional expenses such as transportation.
- Finally, some parents complained that the subsidy application process is confusing and embarrassing.

Parents who opt into the Jewish Day School System are typically either able to afford the tuition themselves or they have better, more comprehensive information about subsidies and support. These parents seem secure that as long as they need support, the schools would continue to help them.

5. Degree of commitment to Jewish Education.

Importantly, most new Jewish immigrants want to become part of Toronto's Jewish Community, and most want their children to receive some Jewish education.

However, many parents claim that when they first immigrate to Canada, they have many more pressing concerns. Specifically, they need to (1) find a place to live, (2) find a job, and (3) settle their children as quickly as possible in an environment where they can learn English, make new friends, and feel comfortable and accepted.

Interestingly, Jewish Education was a key priority for some parents who enrolled in the Jewish Day School System. These parents came to this country determined to continue the Jewish Education their children were receiving in their country of origin. They wanted their children to continue to learn and reinforce Jewish customs and traditions.

Other factors that also seem to influence the enrollment decision include:

- Timing - many parents do not arrive within the enrollment window; or there is no space in school because their child is older than the 'feeder' grade (the grade where children typically enter the day school system).
- Social Network - the choices that an immigrant's friends and relatives have made often influence their choices.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - EDUCATORS PERSPECTIVE

There is a strong desire by the educators we interviewed to support the needs of immigrant families within the Jewish Day School System.

Educators consistently voiced commitment to providing a Jewish Education to all who seek it and to support the success of students. Educators expressed more understanding of immigrant economic and education needs than prospective parents realized.

However, it appears that schools may be contradicting their good intentions without realizing they are doing so.

For example, all educators we spoke to strongly claimed that every child has the right to a Jewish education. They acknowledged the economic challenges of immigrant parents and had some systems in place to help these parents apply for subsidies through the FJS. The schools even subsidized the expense of key services required by new Canadians.

- Yet, scholarships only begin once a child is in Grade 1 and parents cannot afford to send their children to a Jewish pre-school or kindergarten. There are only a limited number of spaces past Grade 1, the feeder year, and even spaces in Grade 1 are limited because of children who entered the system in Kindergarten or who have other siblings already at school. If a parent doesn't get their child into the school at a young age, the likelihood of that child getting in at a later date is minimized.
- Or, in the case of CHAT, the parents have to pay a \$500 application fee before they even find out if their child qualifies for a scholarship. If they enter the country after the application deadline, they must pay an additional late fee of \$200. The application fee is more than the new immigrant can afford to pay and this discourages many from applying.

Furthermore, educators recognize the key challenges and struggles of immigrant children, but not all schools are equipped to deal with these challenges (i.e. ESL, social service support, economic support).

None of the schools are able to deal with the desire of the immigrants from Israel (including those originally from the FSU) and South America for a more Secular Jewish Education.

However, a couple of educators recognized that this gap in the Jewish Day School System is a big deterrent for new immigrant families and they support the development of a more secular school or stream to meet this need.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - EDUCATORS PERSPECTIVE (CONTINUED)

Educators felt that the following four building blocks would be required to increase representation of new immigrants in Jewish Day Schools:

- **Increase Economic Support**

Most educators felt that increased levels of financial aid are needed to support new immigrant families. Specifically, they felt that:

- Financial assistance needs to continue for parents who are beginning to establish themselves, e.g. those purchasing a home.
- More financial assistance is required for transportation. This is a very common concern.

Educators also felt that it is essential to improve communication of these subsidies and to demystify the application process.

- They recognized that many new immigrants are deterred from investigating Jewish Day Schools because they do not know what kind of aid is available.
- And they sympathized with parents who often are intimidated or confused by the financial aid application process.

- **Improve Social and ESL Support**

Educators realized that additional ESL, HSL and integration programs are required in more Secular Jewish Day Schools - to meet the needs of the Soviet and South American populations who typically prefer a more secular approach to Judaism.

They claimed that children, particularly in the older grades, do not always have enough Hebrew or English to comfortably participate in the Jewish Day School system. And they felt that it is often too difficult to master these skills and keep up with the curriculum.

In addition, they recognized that many parents are not enrolling their children in Jewish Day Schools because of the lack of resources to manage the social adjustment.

- **Clarify the character and benefits of a Jewish School Education**

Educators also realized that many new immigrants do not fully understand the character of Toronto's Jewish community and the benefits that the Jewish Day Schools have to offer their children.

"Israelis, in particular, have the wrong information of the Jewish character of the school...they see us as too religious... And Russians don't understand what the community is about."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - EDUCATORS PERSPECTIVE (CONTINUED)

- **Create capacity in the System**

Educators indicated that at times, their schools do not have any capacity to accept new students.

"The problem is that no space is available so children aren't even interviewed."

[Importantly, not providing the opportunity for an interview deters parents from applying to schools in the future. They view this as unfriendly and a sign that the school is not interested in the immigrant community. Often the family has arrived at an awkward time of the year and must enroll their child in a public school because there is no place at a Jewish Day School. The parent would consider applying in the future, but require more information to better understand the benefits of sending their child to a Jewish Day School.]

- **Provide extended daycare because often, both parents work or the child is being raised by a single parent.**

"Children need supervision while parents are working and this is not offered at most Jewish Day Schools. We have an after school program, but it runs only until 4:15pm."

VALIDATION OF HYPOTHESIS

HYPOTHESIS	RELEVANCE	CONCLUSIONS
Immigrant families are lacking information about Jewish Day Schools	True	Key information that is essential to convey includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educational philosophy of school 2. Opportunity for secular Jews to feel welcome within the school community 3. Reassurance that financial aid is offered; what is required to apply; and reassurance that aid does not necessarily stop as income increases and that there is a long-term commitment to each child's education
Immigrant families are not being well-received by the individual schools that they approach	Yes and No	For the most part, once parents meet the principal or key leaders within the school, they feel welcomed. BUT... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reception by the office manager/workers can be chilly. Prospective parents do not always have the opportunity to meet with someone who can address questions and concerns. Often they are told that there are no spaces available and they are sent away. • Interviews regarding financial aid are sometimes awkward and extra sensitivity is required to help parents through this process.
Certain schools are not perceived to be open to welcoming immigrant students	True	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents felt that some Jewish Day Schools are not willing to support new students through language and social adjustment. • Only Bialik is perceived to offered secular Jewish education, although USDS suggested a program to accommodate the need to welcome and meet the education needs of the culturally defined Jewish student. • Nearly all schools encountered in a prospective parent's exploration had at least one office manager who seemed unfriendly, uncooperative and unwilling to help.
Some schools have added ESL support, while others have not	True	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDS and Leo Baeck do not offer ESL support. Students are encouraged to learn English first before applying to these schools.

VALIDATION OF HYPOTHESIS

HYPOTHESIS	RELEVANCE	CONCLUSIONS
Jewish Day schools are perceived as not being prepared to provide the additional support a new immigrant student may need	True	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public schools are perceived as much more sensitive and equipped to deal with these issues. • Assimilation is an issue and concern. Parents are looking for reassurance that if their child attends a Jewish Day School, they will still have the skills to master their future in the broader Canadian society.
The fees are too high	True	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if the immigrant family comes with some savings, the economic uncertainty of not having a job makes it a clear choice to send children to public school.
The fees are unpredictable and families do not feel that they can make the commitment with the possibility of significant increases over the course of their child's education	True	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are also concerned that their child will feel disadvantaged because they cannot afford or provide the luxuries that other parents can provide, e.g. clothes and vacations.
The subsidies are time-limited	True	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a big issue. There is no reassurance that financial support will last once the family begins to establish themselves financially.
The cycle of registration (winter) and the cycle of immigration (summer) conflict.	True	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New immigrants want their children settled as soon as possible, so if they don't arrive within the enrollment window, they often put their children in public school. When they see that the child is functioning well and making friends, they are loath to remove them and once more disrupt their settling in process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide better and more complete information prior to or soon after arrival in Canada:

Parents need better, more comprehensive information sooner. If possible, consider developing more thorough communication in the language of the immigrant population, and make sure this information is received before the immigrant settles in Toronto, or shortly after.

This communication should...

- Demonstrate the value of a Jewish education in terms of quality of education as well as the long-term benefits of helping children function more effectively in the greater Canadian community.
- Indicate the educational philosophy and approach of the various schools. Where applicable, help families identify schools that offer a more secular approach to Judaism, and remind them that many families in these schools embrace a similar “secular” philosophy.
- Clearly outline the process for applying to these schools.
- Indicate the criteria for financial support and how to apply for this support - including documentation required for application.
- Identify the type of academic support offered to new Canadians. Indicate how the child is supported through his/her adjustment period and whether ESL and HSL are offered.

Develop a central source of information - with the comprehensive information immigrants need about Jewish Day Schools.

- Make this information available to parents via the Internet before they arrive in Canada.
- Ensure that this information is also available in hard copy in places where newcomers are bound to seek information - such as JIAS Toronto, JIS, etc.

The research also strongly supports JIAS Toronto’s recommendation to invest in an education consultant who would be available to immigrant families through JIAS Toronto.

- The consultant should be available to discuss a newcomer’s education interests and help them choose a school, liaise with the school and support the parent and child through the interview process. It is also recommended that the consultant follow-up with the family and school to ensure the immigrant’s needs are being met.

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

2. Expand financial support:

Parents need financial support and reassurance that this support will continue, even as their resources increase.

- Expedite the financial assessment process for new arrivals who seek immediate registration. There should be less than a week between applying for financial assistance and receiving word on the child's status. Families tend to want to see their children immediately settled.
- Waive the deposit fee for applications for newcomers or charge a nominal amount. Newcomers require encouragement, their financial status is often tenuous, and the application fee is a deterrent to enrolling. Furthermore, these parents are generally not "shopping around" for a Jewish Day School – instead, they tend to be committed to the schools they apply for (if the fees can be agreed upon).
- Importantly, waive late application fees. Newcomers are not late and therefore this fee should not be applied.
- Create a foundation that will ensure long term Jewish education for immigrant children. Parents need the re-assurance that they will be able to afford to send their child to a Jewish Day School for all of the child's schooling.
- Ideally, ensure that financial assistance continues for people who are beginning to establish themselves, e.g. purchase a house. Make sure prospective parents know this option is available.
- Make transportation subsidies more available to parents.

3. Make the new Immigrant feel welcomed/Accommodate specific needs:

- Advertise in native language newspapers.
- Do not discourage potential applicants - even if there are no spaces available. Make sure all staff is welcoming and helpful to the enquiring immigrant. Speak to parents even if there are no spaces available. Help them with their education planning.
- Be sensitive to the fact that new immigrants do not always know the questions to ask and require many answers. Make sure they can meet with a decision maker, even if there are no spaces available. There are always other children in the family or other opportunities to apply.
- Help parents prepare for interviews. Offer contact with an educational consultant through agencies serving newcomers, such as JIAS; or distribute school information through JIAS for allowing opportunity to discuss with case-workers and prepare for interviews.
- Save spaces for newcomers at schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

4. Accommodate the immigrant with programs that will help the integration process:

- Offer more ESL and HSL resources at more schools.
- Develop day care systems that are open late enough for parents who work. Children need supervision while their parents are working and this is not offered at many Jewish Day Schools.
- Establish a strong student support system independent of schools, providing tutors for Hebrew, English, Math – Tutoring is very expensive and extra support is often needed.

5. Develop new schools or programs that integrate the secular Jew and provide Jewish education outside the day school system:

- Create a special Judaic studies course/stream in the new school campus being built in Richmond Hill where a lot of Israeli families are settling. This could take into account the Israeli and South American approach to Jewish Education (i.e. strong Jewish identity, with a strictly secular focus).
- Create an outreach program to bring the immigrant community closer to each other and closer to Canadian Jews, e.g. youth groups, summer camps. The objective would be to build basic knowledge and sense of belonging to the Jewish community, particularly for families who cannot afford to join a synagogue.
- Develop some kind of initiation process – a Welcome centre; buddy up families so they can learn cultural norms. . Or have Family Mentors who are a resource to new families.
- Develop Jewish Enrichment programs outside of the Day School System (after school or on weekends) for families who do not want to or cannot send their children to Jewish Day Schools. This seems to be particularly important for those who do not belong to a Synagogue. Many of immigrants would like to find a Program where their children can socialize with other Jewish children and learn about their Jewish heritage.

6. Other considerations:

- Provide access to non-academic streams in the Jewish Day School System. Not all Jewish children are academically focused. Some have learning issues to contend with, others are more interested in trade-focused education . Currently, the Jewish Day School System does not accommodate these specific needs. (A number of immigrant children are coming from these types of specialized schools in their country of origin).
- In addition, more information should be made available about Special Needs programs available in the Jewish Day School System (for parents whose children have special needs).

DETAILED FINDINGS: THE NEW IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

Most of the new immigrants interviewed indicated that - for the first few months following their arrival in Canada - their main focus was on creating a stable and secure situation for the family.

They consistently mentioned the following three pillars that need to be established before stability and security can be achieved:

1. Finding a place to live;
2. Finding a steady source of income; and
3. Getting their children settled (which means enrolling them in school, ensuring that they are learning English and encouraging them to make friends).

Not only is each pillar a major endeavor unto itself, but also all three are interconnected and required immediately. Furthermore, these major decisions are being made in an atmosphere of emotional turmoil and uncertainty.

The South American Experience

For most South American immigrants, their challenged economic situation seems to have deeper implications than simply not having money to spend freely. Many of these parents are also dealing with the loss of dreams.

- A good proportion of these parents have lost the opportunity to practice their professions.
- They have drastically altered their way of life.
- They have lost the closeness of their extended families.

They may have begun to lose these resources while still residing in South America and their children may have had to deal with this altered state of existence for some time.

This situation is demoralizing for many parents and most want to protect their children from the sadness of these circumstances. Settling their children in school as quickly as possible is particularly important to these parents who need to focus their emotional energy on finding a job, finding a home, and dealing with their new identity.

Many of these parents are attracted to the Public School System, which they believe it is full of families like themselves. While the other new immigrants in the Public Schools may not be Jewish, they too are seeking financial and social security. Some children encounter other Jewish immigrants who speak Spanish, or other cultures with similar experiences and values.

THE NEW IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

The Russian Experience

Most Soviet Jews who immigrated to Canada in the past few years spent several years in Israel. These immigrants came to Canada to fulfill their dreams and improve their economic prospects.

Most were quickly absorbed into the large and growing FSU/Israeli community, where they found many of the resources they needed to ease their transition in this new country. In particular, these families have had access to a social network of immigrants with a shared background, language, culture and values – replete with information (opinions galore) about everything they need to get started, including Jewish Day Schools, Public Schools, neighborhoods, shopping, etc.

Most of their children were educated in Israel, where they learned to read, write and communicate in Hebrew. This is where their children established their secular Jewish identity.

With this backdrop, many of these families do not seem to feel the need to focus their resources on strengthening their children's Jewish identity. Instead, they take for granted that their children's "Jewishness" has become part of who they are.

Many choose to rely on the recommendations of their landsmen to determine where to send their children to school. Their first priority is finding a place where their children will have a good education, in an environment where they can feel comfortable and at home (i.e. with an immediate social network). Once their children are settled in a school and on the road to learning English and making friends, these parents can focus their energy on finding work.

PROFILE OF PARENTS WHO ENROLL THEIR CHILDREN IN JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

The following factors seem to determine which new immigrants will enroll their children in Jewish Day School versus those who opt for the Public School System:

- Immigrant families who enroll their children in Jewish Day Schools tend to be very committed to giving their children a Jewish Education.

Most of these parents enter the country with the intention of sending their children to Jewish Day School. They want to ensure their children stay connected to their Jewish heritage and become part of the Jewish community. These parents perceive the Jewish School System to be an important conduit for Jewish growth.

Administrators of Jewish Day Schools described parents who enroll as follows:

"We have seen Russians coming with our name on scraps of paper they got in displaced camp in Italy. Generally, they come via Israel where they have been 10 – 15 years."

"[They] are looking for a social community and a means to instill Jewish values in their children."

"The people who come are looking for a way of connecting with their heritage. They are coming because of a cultural affiliation. They may not have a Judaic background but have vague memories and a need to pass on knowledge."

- Most of the parents who enroll believe that the standard of education in Jewish Day Schools is higher than in Public Schools.

"They come because of word of mouth about the quality of education. They hear it's an outstanding school. Russians tend to be drawn by the level of education – they tend to be more academically oriented. They are also interested in the Jewish education." – School Administrator

"Many people after CHAT go to university and have an easy time. CHAT's reputation is very high. My children are very smart and need that stimulation." - Parent

- Parents who enroll tend to have been advised by a trusted friend or relative to send their children to a particular Jewish Day School.

"They hear about the school through word-of-mouth -- friends who send their own kids to Associated." - School Administrator

**PROFILE OF PARENTS WHO ENROLL THEIR CHILDREN IN JEWISH
DAY SCHOOL - CONTINUED**

- **Parents who enroll are not intimidated by the cost of sending their children to Jewish Day School.**

Some who enroll can afford the tuition. Others receive subsidies, and they are confident these subsidies will continue as long as required.

- **Parents who enroll tend to have positive encounters with key school leaders early on in the application process, and they are able to make an educated decision from the outset.**

These parents were fully informed about the school they chose, they were impressed by the school's approach and they were reassured that their children's needs would be accommodated. They perceived that their children would fit into the school's community - even if some of the school's Jewish practices differed from those practiced at home.

PROFILE OF PARENTS WHO WITHDREW THEIR CHILDREN FROM JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

A small number of our respondents had withdrawn their children from Jewish Day Schools because their child had a learning or social issue that could not be addressed by the school. Either:

- The schoolwork was too advanced (particularly due to language issues),
- The workload was too overwhelming, or
- Their child was not happy socially and had not made connections with other children. In one situation, the child was the only immigrant in his class. This family had only been in the country a short while and was anxious to see the child feel socially and academically secure. In another situation, the child had not made any connection to his schoolmates.

PROFILE OF PARENTS WHO DO NOT ENROLL THEIR CHILDREN IN JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

Parents who opted for the Public School System identified the following key barriers to enrolling their children in a Jewish Day School:

1. Most perceived Jewish Day School tuition to be unaffordable.
2. Most were unaware of subsidies, or they felt that the subsidies wouldn't be sufficient to make Jewish Day School a financially viable option.
3. Many of those who approached Jewish Day Schools for information described a cold, unpleasant reception.
4. Most did not receive comprehensive, accurate, sensitive information about the Jewish Day School System.
5. For many, the timing of their arrival in Canada conflicted with the enrollment window. And, once their children were settled in Public School, these parents were reluctant to make another change and switch them to Jewish Day School.
6. Many assumed that the Canadian Public School System is strong and more than adequate for their children.
7. Many felt that the Jewish Day Schools are "too religious." They would prefer a more secular approach to Jewish Education - similar to the approach that they experienced in South America or Israel.
8. Although most want their children to have a Jewish Education of some sort, it was not at the top of the priority list when they first came to Canada.

Each of these barriers is described in detail in the pages following.

BARRIER #1
PERCEPTION THAT JEWISH EDUCATION IS NOT AFFORDABLE

The decision to consider Jewish Day Schools as an educational option is a very complex one that –for new immigrants - is often driven first and foremost by a family’s economic circumstances.

In fact, the perceived expense of a Jewish Education and the potential financial strain that it could put on the family seemed to be the greatest deterrent to enrollment.

- High tuition costs seemed to deter many immigrant families from even approaching Jewish Day Schools.
- This also seemed to be a key reason why many parents who investigated this option decided not to enroll.

“From the beginning, we think about money. I’m looking for a job. There are other things to think about [besides Jewish Day School]. First we need to stabilize our lives.”

Importantly, tuition does not seem to be the only economic deterrent to considering Jewish Day Schools.

- Even those who were aware of subsidies worried about not having enough money to afford the types activities, clothes and other expenses that would be required to make their children feel comfortable in the Jewish Day School System.
- Parents also worried about other school-related expenses – such as transportation, books, materials, etc.

“The economic level of other kids would make our children feel different. We did not want our daughter to feel self-conscious. She had begun to feel like this in Argentina and we wanted to avoid any negative self-opinion based on our economic circumstances.”

“We did not want our daughter to feel that others could afford clothes that we could not. Our daughter was nervous that she would feel the same as she had felt in Argentina.”

BARRIER #2

LOW AWARENESS OF FINANCIAL AID OR INSUFFICIENT SUBSIDIES

Many parents were not aware of or did not understand the extent of financial aid available to them. As such, they did not perceive a Jewish Education to be a viable option.

- Most parents who applied for Jewish Day School but decided not to send their children had little or no information about subsidies.
- Some were offered subsidies, but these subsidies were not adequate. These parents worried about the financial strain of the additional expense of school.

"Associated only offered a small discount."

- Others were concerned that the subsidies would only be available for a limited time. They worried that eventually they would be forced to take their child out of the Jewish Day School - disrupting their lives and their education once again.

"We think we can qualify for a scholarship, but we don't want to be bound by it. At some point it can change or stop and we would be limited and the kids might end up having to leave."

Parents who applied for financial aid often described the process as confusing or embarrassing.

- A number of parents were uncomfortable with the detailed and sensitive questions about their financial situation.

"I felt uncomfortable because they ask everything about your money situation. They asked us about a house or apartment in Argentina. It made us feel badly. There were three people questioning us who were hard and direct."

- One person described his confusion and frustration finding the correct transcripts for the school and his perception that all the school seemed to be interested were papers and not his child. (The school would not interview his child until the appropriate papers were located).

"We heard about Associated through a friend who sends their kids there. It's a beautiful school, but I didn't like the people I met in the office. The first time I went there I talked to the Director. He filled out all the information about my daughter. I thought I was accepted. Then he sent me the next day to the tuition office. I found out I couldn't get in."

BARRIER #3

POOR RECEPTION AT SCHOOLS

A parent's initial exposure to the Jewish Day School(s) seemed to have a significant impact on their interest in enrolling their children. Many of those who opted out of the System described very unpleasant experiences when seeking information from Jewish Day schools.

- Many parents claimed that, at the outset, their enquiries were handled by office managers or administrators who did not encourage and/or were not qualified to answer questions.
- Additionally, information was only available in English and many of the parents had not mastered the language sufficiently to comprehend the materials.

Even when the reception was more welcoming, most Jewish Day Schools still did not seem to be sensitive to the more personal and customized approach required by many of these new immigrants.

"The school [CHAT] was not welcoming. It was difficult to get an appointment to seek out more complete information. They didn't send us much relevant information. What they told us was that we would have to spend \$500 to apply plus \$200 for a late fee because it was August when we arrived. Then, after applying and spending the money, which we couldn't afford, we would have to take an examination that would assess whether we would qualify for aid or not. So we would spend \$700 just to know if we were qualified for aid. There was no one to talk to. The key person was just too busy. All we wanted was an hour of their time to clarify our understanding. But all we were given was a folder with information."

"[Describing a tour of Bialik] I didn't understand everything at the time. The information wasn't very deep. I saw some classrooms, library, and computer lab. I didn't have the opportunity to ask many questions because we were with another couple and felt embarrassed because of our language barriers. We didn't feel comfortable asking about financial information in front of the other people. They were kind, though."

Some were given the impression that the Jewish Day School(s) could not accommodate their children's needs.

"We sent an email to Leo Baeck about our concern regarding our daughter's language. They replied that there was no ESL classes and that they don't really have immigrants. They suggested that she learn English first. That led to the decision to concentrate on learning English."

BARRIER #4
LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

Importantly, throughout this research, both Parents and Educators indicated that there is a lack of quality information about Jewish Day Schools available to Jewish immigrant families.

Specifically, there appears to be a need to increase the amount of information available, and to ensure that the information that is provided is sensitive to the unique needs and perspectives of the immigrant populations. For instance, many new immigrants found it difficult to understand the materials that they were given since they were only available in English.

"[New Immigrants] don't have enough info about Jewish Day Schools – They need it in Russian and advertised on Russian language TV or Russian newspapers. We need to advertise the curriculum and that financial assistance is available." – Jewish Day School Director

Before arriving in Canada, most of the immigrant families we spoke to had little information regarding Jewish Day Schools or private schools in general.

- A few (mostly South American parents) had either searched the Internet or visited Jewish Day schools prior to immigrating.
- However, the majority relied mainly on word of mouth from friends and relatives.

The key sources of information about Jewish Day Schools appeared to be as follows (in apparent order of importance):

1. Word of Mouth

While South American parents appeared to be more proactive and investigative regarding Jewish schooling for their children, both immigrant populations (particularly those from the FSU) appeared to rely heavily on friends and relatives for information.

"I didn't know what school to send my children to or what you need. I made contact with a friend in Mississauga for information."

Importantly, in some cases (particularly among FSU respondents), these contacts did not have first hand knowledge of the Jewish Day schools. As such, the information these parents received was often incomplete or even erroneous.

BARRIER #4 (CONTINUED)
LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

2. JIAS TORONTO

JIAS Toronto appeared to play an important role in raising awareness of Jewish Day Schools among many new immigrants - particularly those from the FSU.

However:

- Many immigrants were so overwhelmed by their circumstances that they did not think of probing for details about Jewish Day Schools during their meetings with JIAS Toronto.

"If I know what to ask, I would ask. But I didn't even know what to ask."

"We really did not ask [JIAS Toronto] about schools. We had heard Public Schools were good and we didn't worry."

- Despite the information that new immigrants may have received from JIAS Toronto, many still relied mainly on friends and family for details about Jewish Day Schools.
- Those who leveraged JIAS Toronto as a resource about Jewish Day Schools were not always able to act on this information because of:
 - Timing

"I am only finding out things now [from JIAS Toronto] at the end of the semester. It's the middle of the year. What am I supposed to do?"

- Other factors

"I went to JIAS Toronto and they sent us to Associated, but there was no room for our son - only for our daughter. Our son was going to have to go to another campus and we didn't want to separate them. They suggested a bus, but it was private and we couldn't afford it."

- Some South Americans did not perceive JIAS Toronto to be a good source of information about Jewish Day Schools since they felt that it is mainly geared toward helping the Russian community.

BARRIER #4 (CONTINUED)
LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

1. The Internet

Prior to immigrating to Canada, some South American parents searched the Internet for information about Jewish Day Schools.

Importantly, the information that they obtained over the Net was often incomplete and confusing – sometimes leading to incorrect assumptions and at times, influencing the parent’s decision to opt out of the Jewish Day School system.

“I searched the Internet and found a list of Jewish schools with small descriptions. Some said humanistic/equalitarian. That didn’t mean anything to us.”

“We learned about Bialik on the UJA website. We looked to see whether it was Reform or Orthodox because we didn’t want a religious school.”

2. Visits to Jewish Day Schools

Parents, who made the effort to visit Jewish Day Schools prior to immigrating left with little information to base their decision on.

A few South Americans attempted to visit Jewish Day Schools prior to settling in Canada. These immigrants wanted to assess the appropriateness of these schools for their children.

Unfortunately, many of these visits were ill timed and unsuccessful.

- Some visited Toronto over the holidays, when the Jewish Day schools were closed. These parents did not get the opportunity to see the schools.

“During our exploratory trip we made an appointment at Bialik. They also had sent us some emails. It was March Break and the school was closed.”

- Others were not able to meet the appropriate contacts during their short stay.
- One couple managed to arrange a tour of Bialik when visiting Toronto. However, the school invited a Canadian couple to join their tour. As such, the immigrant couple felt too embarrassed to ask personal questions about subsidies, etc, during their tour.

BARRIER #5 TIMING

Timing appears to play an unfortunate role in determining whether or not many Jewish Immigrant families consider Jewish Day School for their children. Specifically:

- **Timing of arrival in Canada often conflicts with the enrollment window.**

Many families who were interested in providing their children with a Jewish education did not arrive at a convenient time for applying to Jewish Day Schools, so they enrolled their children in Public School.

"When we got our visa we had to come quickly, so we had to come in the middle of winter. We were told that there would be no chance to get into a Hebrew school mid-year, so the children went to Eglinton Public School because they could start mid-year. I figured we'd worry about Hebrew school the next year."

- **A successful start in Public School seems to deter parents from reconsidering Jewish Day School.**

Once their children are enrolled in the Public School system, established in a routine, and starting to make friends and connections, parents are reluctant to make further changes – to disrupt their children's lives once more.

As long as the child is happy, making progress and learning English, most parents want to avoid any additional upheavals. These parents are concerned that switching their children to yet another school would do more harm than good.

"Now I don't want to take the children from [Public] school. It would be difficult for them. They just made friends."

"I am sure my son does not want to change. There has been so much trauma – too much change already."

"At this point in time, considering all [the changes] the children have had to go through, we want something stable. We want the same thing for our children every year. They don't want another change. They say, 'Too much change already!'"

"When we first came we stayed in one of my daughter's schoolmate's basement for three weeks. So our daughter went to her friend's public school. When we moved, we asked the director to keep her because we did not want to change her when we moved."

BARRIER #6

PERCEPTION THAT CANADIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE ADEQUATE, AND IN SOME WAYS, SUPERIOR TO JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS

Many new immigrants assume that Canada's Public Education System is strong and more than adequate for their children.

- All respondents we talked to had expected Canada to offer excellent Public education for their children.

"We didn't really ask [JLAS Toronto] about Jewish Day Schools because we had heard the public schools are good and we didn't worry so much."

- These new immigrants quickly learned that Toronto is a multi-cultural society, with Public Schools that are geared to help children from diverse parts of the world settle in quickly with their ESL programs.
- The Public Schools also demonstrated a strong sensitivity to and accommodation of diverse cultures.
- And friends and family who were already settled in Canada reinforced these perceptions.

Furthermore, many new immigrants described positive experiences dealing with Toronto's Public Education System.

All respondents whose children were attending Toronto public schools spoke positively of the Toronto education system.

- They complimented the Public System for its ability to support newcomers and help children adjust quickly to their new environment.
- Many felt that the multi-cultural environment, combined with the abundance of other new immigrants also adjusting to this new country and learning this new language, made it easier for their children to adjust.
- These parents felt that even though their Jewish children may be different from their classmates, they are still dealing with the same issues as their peers from other backgrounds.

This seemed to create a bond and a sense of belonging.

BARRIER #7
**THE DESIRE FOR A MORE SECULAR APPROACH TO JEWISH
EDUCATION**

Perception of Toronto's Jewish Day Schools

None of the immigrants we spoke to found any resemblance between the Canadian Jewish Day School system and the education systems they were familiar with (in Israel or South America).

- Both of these Systems were perceived to take a more secular approach to Judaism than ANY of the Jewish Day Schools in Toronto.
- Even Bialik - which most closely resembles the schools the immigrants experienced in their countries of origin - was considered by many to be more 'religious' than the schools in the 'old country'.

A concern expressed by those who rejected the Jewish Day School System – whether they considered it or not - was the importance of not compromising their way of practicing or acknowledging Judaism.

- They wanted to make sure that they would not be perceived as 'lesser' Jews to their children.

"We ruled out CHAT. It's not secular. It seems to have a double message. You have to wear a kippah. They suggest you not have parties on Saturday. They seem to push more in a religious direction. We are not like that at home. We don't want the children to question us in a religious sense, especially if they are learning one thing at school and we don't do it at home."

"I've heard people saying the more religious you are, the better Jew you are. It's like a competition."

- And they didn't want to feel like outsiders in their Jewish community.

"We like the synagogue we are going to, but the services are different here - the songs...the times. We feel we are not in the same 'square'. We are out of the square."

BARRIER #7 (CONTINUED)
**THE DESIRE FOR A MORE SECULAR APPROACH TO JEWISH
EDUCATION**

South American Immigrants

Most of the South American immigrants we spoke to were educated in Jewish Day Schools themselves, and most had sent their children to Jewish Day Schools before immigrating to Canada. These Schools had evolved from an environment where the South American Jew was an outsider.

Along with extended families, South American Jewish Day Schools provided a safe and satisfying social context in a bigger social milieu that was not always accepting of Jewish people. These schools were perceived to provide excellent standards of education.

These schools conveyed Judaic customs and values as follows:

- Hebrew, history, music, customs were integral to the curriculum.
- Learning Torah was not a strong focus.
- Students did not wear kippot or other garments associated with Judaism. In fact, the South Americans were very conscious of not looking different to the outside world, so dressing to distinctly identify themselves as Jews seemed to be innately uncomfortable to most.

South Americans who experienced this school System emerged with a strong, but secular Jewish identity

Importantly, this sense of not wanting to look or seem different to outsiders seemed to be a very strong instinct that made many South Americans felt very uncomfortable with the Canadian Jewish Day School System and reinforced the feeling of being an outsider.

FSU Jewish Immigrants

Soviet Jews who had lived in Israel expressed similar desires for a secular Jewish education and similar discomfort with the Jewish Day Schools in Toronto.

- These immigrants also wanted a more secular approach to their children's Jewish education than any of the Jewish Day Schools are offering.
- Moreover, they wanted to reinforce their children's Jewish identity, but were not interested in a deeper knowledge of Torah.

For these immigrants, religious garb of any kind (including kippot) signals "these people are more observant than I feel comfortable with."

BARRIER #8

JEWISH EDUCATION IS NOT AT THE TOP OF THE PRIORITY LIST

Many parents claimed that when they first immigrated to Canada, they had many more pressing concerns than ensuring that their children received a Jewish education. First and foremost, they want their children to feel settled and secure.

So, parents were focused on the following:

- Identifying a place to live.

A number of people based this choice on their impressions of the public schools. A few even visited the Public schools in the area before signing apartment leases. Most were aware that children went to school in the neighborhoods where they lived, so this made settling in the right neighborhood imperative - whether they hoped to send their children to Jewish Day School or not.

- Finding a job; establishing economic and emotional security.

A lot of energy is put into finding a job. Often, both parents are looking for work, so they have little time or energy to explore the options at Jewish Day Schools. If their children are settled in a school, learning the language and making friends, then parents feel they can pay attention to the immediate need to find work.

OTHER BARRIERS

Other miscellaneous barriers that were mentioned included the following:

- One child was accepted to a school and another was not.
- Children were accepted at different campuses and it was too difficult for the parents to manage transportation.
- Children had special education needs that they were not sure Jewish Day Schools could handle, e.g. learning disabilities or the desire for more technical education.

A KEY OPPORTUNITY

Importantly, most parents who were not sending their children to Jewish Day School claimed that it is very important to them to continue some form of Jewish Education and to reinforce their children's Jewish identity.

These parents are hoping to build a sense of community, and most were hoping to find after school programs and centres where they can meet other Jewish families - where their children can socialize with other Jewish children and learn Jewish traditions as well as Hebrew.

"Because I am Jewish I want my children to know who they are and their history."

"It's important for my daughter to be connected with Jewish children. Her close girlfriend is also from Israel. They find each other."

"Religiousness is less important for us. Language, identity and holidays are more important."

THE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE

The educators we talked to strongly affirmed that every Jewish child has the right to a Jewish education and that no child should be refused. The following are some common perspectives held by educators:

1. The interviewing process is supportive

Contrary to the experiences described by most parents, the Administrators of Jewish Day Schools believe that the Schools are supporting the parents through the interviewing process, helping them to understand what to do.

They also believe that the application process is not difficult.

"When parents come for an interview, their English is usually good enough or they bring an interpreter. Our coordinator will contact the family to follow through with the interview."

2. Schools understand and can accommodate the unique social and academic needs of immigrant children:

Educators recognize that immigrant children have unique challenges. Although all schools cannot accommodate all needs, educators believe there are sufficient systems in place at Associated and CHAT to address these.

Some challenges identified by educators include:

- **Social Adjustment:**

"At first, they have no friends. Socializing is a big issue, especially when they come to school without friends or language. They look different in terms of dress. They need a lot of support, love and attention. This helps."

At Associated, these challenges are dealt with through ESL support and the assistance of a part-time social worker that works with Russian families. This social worker is committed to integrating Russian-speaking families into the school routine. However, she only deals with Russian-speaking families. South Americans, Israeli's and people from non-Russian speaking FSU families have no such resource.

"We have a coordinator who purely works at integrating Russian-speaking families. She explains Canadian ways regarding dress and assimilating. Teachers consult with the coordinator. In the past, when there were larger numbers of students, she held information evenings to explain holidays. Mostly she deals with issues as they come up. We ensure that all Russian immigrants are contacted. We feel there is a need for this kind of service - someone to advocate for the child."

THE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE

It is easier if the child is coming into the school in grades 1 and 2. After grade two it is much more difficult. Social setting is important – how their peers accept the child socially. If they are accepted socially, they are fine.

- Language Adjustment

It is understood that the FSU students coming through Israel have their own unique problems dealing with the various languages in their lives:

“There are a few [students] with academic issues. There are new ESL problems. We have Hebrew-speaking children with Russian speaking parents. They are struggling with language.”

Several, but not all, schools have some type of specialist who works with students. The child will be drawn out of class an average of 3 times a week for a period. Most of the time, the child is with other children interacting in English. English is learned more easily because it surrounds the children and they are adaptive.

ESL and HSL are offered to students in a few schools, but, as we see in the public school system as well, support can be given for only a limited time because of the needs of other children. But ESL support is not withdrawn totally until the child is ready to continue without it.

“After the first year they [the school] may take the child out of ESL because of the demand on the system. They may stay a 2nd year – most need that. The child’s involvement is modified depending upon progress.”

Overall, educators feel the children have the opportunity to be happy at Jewish Day Schools and that the schools will support any challenges they may encounter.

“At CHAT, no child is turned away and everything is done to support the student’s success. It is a desirable school because of its high academic standards. Children who come, stay - particularly if interested in a university education. CHAT has a higher acceptance rate than most schools. There is a high ratio of guidance counselors to students. And the ESL teachers counsel as well. Other kids have come in with similar experiences and support the new arrivals. So kids who speak the same language adopt these kids. Generally, the kids adjust well and do well.”

THE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE

3. Subsidies are inadequate

It appears that most of the families from the FSU are experiencing financial issues. The educators we spoke to indicated that, realistically, paying school fees is a big challenge and it is what often leads to children being withdrawn from school – even when aid is given.

"It is extremely expensive to attend a Jewish Day School. You must earn \$17,000 to have one child in school because of the net cost."

Money is offered on a sliding-scale basis according to UJA Federation guidelines. The money offered is often not enough for parents as well as not enough to cover the child's education and the extra expenses required to support the children.

As families become established, they may receive less aid because they have more money, which means lower aid. However, parents begin to consider other needs of the family such as owning a house.

"Never enough. Families who are established before they send children to school have an easier time."

It's not only tuition that needs to be subsidized, but it is also money for transportation and other key expenses.

"They need more financial assistance to subsidize school fees. And they need more services subsidized like Bus Service. They don't have enough access to transportation. It would help to bus children to school."

Educators did not always realize when their own schools were putting up economic roadblocks. For instance, CHAT, a school that prides itself on its efforts to offer a Jewish Education to everyone, charges \$500 - \$700 to apply. This creates a huge barrier for immigrant families without any established means of support.

THE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE

Schools believe they understand and accommodate financial concerns more than parents realize. Educators believe they are making additional efforts to support the opportunity for immigrant children to be educated.

"They believe private school will cost too much when that is not so. No one is turned away from CHAT."

"All parents who qualify for financial aid are interviewed by board members. They come to an agreement after the review. The review accounts for lifestyle and struggles (allowing for the need to establish themselves in homes, etc.) Takes in consideration life struggles."

"Once the parents agree to an amount they can afford, the school applies to the BJE to supplement the funding. But this supplement is based on a formula that doesn't count all of the schools expenses as essential. The shortfall is divided among all the parents. As the population of subsidized children increases, this puts an extra burden on the parents who are also subsidizing."

4. Withdrawals Among The Immigrant Population Are In Proportion To The Norm

It was believed that retention is normal with the rest of the school population and is based on difficulty dealing with the double curriculum more than financial circumstances.

Parents are also having increased difficulties dealing with obligations to work and pick up their children from school. This becomes even more difficult when parents have children at two separate campuses. Transportation scholarships are available, but families have to demonstrate that they are not physically able to take their child to school.

A change in values, as families become assimilated, contributes to withdrawal from the Jewish Day School system. There is a desire to belong to the Canadian Community. It is no longer enough to make connections with Jewish roots. Being established in this new country, whether it is having a job or new friends has become a greater barrier to getting immigrants to enroll in Jewish day school.

"In the past few years there have not been as many Russians applying as years before. The Russian community wanted to find something they longed for and something they belonged to. It is best if it were free or not expensive. Now they want to become Canadians and belong to this larger community."

"There are Russians who are applying, but they are not representative. There is a shift in where this community wants to belong. Russians are befriending non-Jewish Russians because of language and cultural familiarity and commonality."

THE EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE

Children themselves sometimes insist on withdrawing from the Jewish Day School system as they gain independence or experience discomfort of their own individuality.

"The older the child, the greater the issues, especially at the middle school age – issues with socializing, gender issues (male-female interaction) and self-esteem. Children sometimes feel they are misfits – outsiders."

Finally, not all children are able to cope with the academic and social demands of a school, particularly in high school. Some succeed, some struggle. Unless a child is suffering emotionally or losing self-esteem, the schools encourage the child to stay and they support the child academically.

5. Israeli Enrollment Is A Big Issue

Although not part of the mandate of this study, we asked educators why Israelis tend to be particularly under-represented in the Jewish Day School System. Educators recognized that this is a big issue. The Israeli population represents a 'larger market share'. Educators recommend the following:

"A major source of children is the Israeli community and they are not having anything to do with the day schools. We need an outreach program to bring this community (and others as well) closer – youth groups, summer camps, so they have a basic knowledge and sense of belonging."

"The Israeli population is a 'larger market share'. We need to advertise in the Israeli and Russian newspapers in addition to the Canadian Jewish News."

OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATORS

- Educators mirrored many of parents' concerns, but did not realize that their receptiveness to and understanding of the immigrant population was not fully understood by prospective parents. This misconception of educator empathy is a missed opportunity.
- Associated reported an increase in enrollment of Russian families coming through Israel, versus only two families from South America. They indicated that most of the children from the FSU are coming through Israel, where they have already experienced some Jewish education.
- Prospective parents require more guidance and encouragement from the broader community (outside schools) to encourage enrollment in Jewish Day Schools.
- One principal believes that JIAS Toronto is not encouraging parents to send their children to school because of the academic and economic challenges this presents.

"Numerous immigrants have told me that JIAS Toronto has told them not to bother going to Jewish Day Schools. There's too much work and they don't need the Hebrew."

APPENDIX - DISCUSSION GUIDES

DISCUSSION GUIDE - IMMIGRANTS WITH CHILDREN CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN A JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

- Introduction
 - Moderator introduces self and explains a bit about the process – the special room with two-way mirror and recording devices; explains that anything recorded is used for report writing purposes only; all information is confidential; all opinions are valued, no matter how different; and that the topic of discussion will be how they made the decision to send their children to the particular schools they attend. *“I need you to go back in your memory and recreate the experience you had when selecting the schools your children are attending – all the things that influenced your decision. I will ask lots of questions so I can come away from this meeting as knowledgeable as possible.”*
 - Respondents introduce themselves to the group – name, number of children and name of schools their children are currently enrolled in.
- The Selection Process
 - Please compare public school/secular education versus Jewish education? What are the advantages of each? Disadvantages? Value of each?
 - Why choose one system over the other? What are the deciding factors?
 - I want to understand how you made your decision to send your child to the school he/she is now attending. Let’s try to recreate the whole decision making process. First, of all, at what time of year did you arrive in Canada?
 - Were any of your children enrolled in school before coming to Canada? What kinds of school – public? Day schools?
 - When you arrived in Canada, did your child go to school right away? Was it the school he/she is attending now?
 - Were there other schools that you considered sending your child to? What were they?
 - Why were you considering these schools? What was it about them that put them on your list of schools to consider?
 - Why did you choose not to send your child there?
 - How did you first find out about each of these schools?
 - At the very beginning, what did you know about these schools? Where did you get this information?
 - At this point, what was important to you? What were all the things that you wanted in a school? What were all the things you were considering?
 - What did you do next to find out about these schools?
 - (Probe) Did you visit these schools? What was your impression of the school? What was your impression of the teachers and administration?
 - Did you feel your were well-received by the school? Were they helpful?
 - What helped you to decide to send your child to that school?
 - Was there any point where you felt this might not be the best situation for your child? Or that you could not send your child there?
 - What made you realize that this was the right school for your child?
 - And how has the experience been? Anything that surprises you?

- Has this experience met your expectations?
- Is there anything that could be improved for your child? For you?

- Opportunity for Change
 - One of the things I've been asked to do is to identify ways of making the selection process easier for parents. This is your opportunity to think of ways of improving things.
 - Would you say that you had knew enough about the different Jewish Day Schools in Toronto to help you select the best one for your child? How could this have been improved for you? Would you have wanted more information? What kind of information would have been good to have?
 - How is your child doing with the language differences? Do you feel your child is getting the right support regarding ESL?
 - Is the school able to help your child make the adjustment into the new system and new culture? How are they supporting your child?
 - Are there enough opportunities for financial support? Is this an issue? How?

Discussion Guide – Immigrants Who Considered Enrolling Child in a Jewish Day School

1. Introduction

- Moderator introduces self and explains a bit about the process – the note taker is taking notes for me to remember the interview so I can write a report; all information is confidential; all opinions are valued and helpful; and that the topic of discussion will be how they made the decision to send their children to the particular schools they attend. *“I need you to go back in your memory and recreate the experience you had when selecting the schools your children are attending – all the things that influenced your decision. I will ask lots of questions so I can come away from this meeting as knowledgeable as possible.”*
- Respondent introduction - name, number of children and name of schools their children are currently enrolled in.

2. The Selection Process

- I want to understand how you made your decision to send your child to the school he/she is now attending. Let's try to recreate the whole decision making process. First, of all, were any of your children enrolled in school before coming to Canada? What kinds of school – public? Day schools?
- At what time of your did you arrive in the country? Did your child go to school right away? Was it the school he/she is attending now?
- Were there other schools that you considered sending your child to? What were they?
- Why were you considering these schools? What was it about them that put them on your list of schools to consider?
- Why did you choose not to send your child there?
- How did you first find out about each of these schools?
- At the very beginning, what did you know about these schools? Where did you get this information?
- At this point, what was important to you? What were all the things that you wanted in a school? What were all the things you were considering?
- What did you do next to find out about these schools?
- (Probe) Did you visit these schools? What was your impression of the school? What was your impression of the teachers and administration?
- Did you feel your were well-received by the school? Were they helpful?
- What helped you to decide to send your child to the school he/she is attending? What were all the things that made you realized that
- Were there schools that you would have preferred to send your child to, but couldn't or didn't for some reason? (Probe why)

3. Jewish Day Schools:

- Please compare public school/secular education versus Jewish education? What are the advantages of each? Disadvantages? Value of each?
- Why choose one system over the other? What are the deciding factors?
- Did you ever consider sending your child to a Jewish Day School? Why? Why not? What would have made you consider sending your child to a Jewish Day School?
- Did you have any information about Jewish Day Schools when you arrived in this country? What did you know? Anything else?
- Where did you get your information re: Jewish Day Schools?
- Did you visit any Jewish Day Schools? Which ones? Why those?
- What was your impression?
- How were you greeted? Did you feel welcome? Were they helpful?
- What made you decide not to send your child to a Jewish Day School? (probe) What were all the things that were keeping you from sending your child there?
- What would you have need to happen for you to consider sending your child to a Jewish Day School?

4. Opportunity for Change

- One of the things I've been asked to do is to identify ways of make it more attractive for recent immigrants to send their children to Jewish Day Schools. We would appreciate any ideas you might have from your own experience that would help to make these schools an option for parents to consider.
- Would you say that you had knew enough about the different Jewish Day Schools in Toronto when you first arrived?
- How could this have been improved for you? Would you have wanted more information? What kind of information would have been good to have?
- Were there any particular concerns you had – such as support from the school regarding dealing with English or cultural differences?
- What kind of financial support would be helpful? What is your impression of the Jewish Day School System's ability to support new Canadians? Are there enough opportunities for financial support? Is this an issue? How?

Discussion Guide - Immigrants Who Did Not Consider Enrolling Child in a Jewish Day School

1. Introduction

- Moderator introduces self and explains a bit about the process – the note taker is taking notes for me to remember the interview so I can write a report; all information is confidential; all opinions are valued and helpful; and that the topic of discussion will be how they made the decision to send their children to the particular schools they attend. *“I need you to go back in your memory and recreate the experience you had when selecting the schools your children are attending – all the things that influenced your decision. I will ask lots of questions so I can come away from this meeting as knowledgeable as possible.”*
- Respondent introduction - name, number of children and name of schools their children are currently enrolled in.

2. The Selection Process

- I want to understand how you made your decision to send your child to the school he/she is now attending. Let's try to recreate the whole decision making process. First, of all, were any of your children enrolled in school before coming to Canada? What kinds of school – public? Day schools?
- At what time of your did you arrive in the country? Did your child go to school right away? Was it the school he/she is attending now?
- Were there other schools that you considered sending your child to? What were they?
- Why were you considering these schools? What was it about them that put them on your list of schools to consider?
- Why did you choose not to send your child there?
- How did you first find out about each of these schools?
- At the very beginning, what did you know about these schools? Where did you get this information?
- At this point, what was important to you? What were all the things that you wanted in a school? What were all the things you were considering?
- What did you do next to find out about these schools?
- (Probe) Did you visit these schools? What was your impression of the school? What was your impression of the teachers and administration?
- Did you feel your were well-received by the school? Were they helpful?
- What helped you to decide to send your child to the school he/she is attending? What were all the things that made you realized that
- Were there schools that you would have preferred to send your child to, but couldn't or didn't for some reason? (Probe why)

3. Jewish Day Schools:

- I am interested in your perspective of public school/secular education versus Jewish education? What are the advantages of each? Disadvantages? Value of each?
- Why choose one system over the other? What are the deciding factors?
- Did you ever consider sending your child to a Jewish Day School? Why? Why not? What would have made you consider sending your child to a Jewish Day School?
- Did you have any information about Jewish Day Schools when you arrived in this country? What did you know? Anything else?
- Where did you get your information re: Jewish Day Schools?
- What is your impression of Jewish Day Schools?
- What is the benefit of sending your child to the school s/he attends rather than a Jewish Day School?
- What are all the things that keep you from sending your child there?
- What would you have need to happen for you to consider sending your child to a Jewish Day School?

4. Opportunity for Change

- One of the things I've been asked to do is to identify ways of make it more attractive for recent immigrants to send their children to Jewish Day Schools. We would appreciate any ideas you might have from your own experience that would help to make these schools an option for parents to consider.
- Would you say that you had knew enough about the different Jewish Day Schools in Toronto when you first arrived?
- How could this be improved for you? Would you have wanted more information? What kind of information would have been good to have?
- Were there any particular concerns you have – such as support from the school regarding dealing with English or cultural differences?
- What kind of financial support would be helpful? What is your impression of the Jewish Day School System's ability to support new Canadians? Are there enough opportunities for financial support? Is this an issue? How?

Telephone Discussion Guide – Education Directors

- Hi, my name is Fran Greenbaum/Lee Rand and I have been asked by the JIAS Integration Committee to conduct a research project that identifies ways to increase the number of children from immigrant families attending a Jewish Day School. The study is intended to explore the immigrant's experience with Toronto's Jewish Day Schools and your experience and perspective will be very helpful. May I have 20 minutes of your time for a telephone interview, either now or sometime later this week? (Arrange for an interview.) (If more info is needed) – The questions I will ask probe the needs of these children, what resources we have to help them and what else is required to better reach and serve this immigrant community.
- We specifically want to look at the Former Soviet Union and South American immigrant experience. First of all, I am interested in your observations about these two different communities and their experience within the Jewish Day School System. What have your observations been?
- Tell me about your experience with these communities, are they seeking information from your school?
- Are they coming for interviews? What are their questions and concerns during the interview process?
- And what about the experience of the children themselves once they have enrolled within the system. Once in the school, is their experience different in any way from other children? Are the challenges as an educator different than with other children? (Probe resources, language needs, teacher involvement, support available)
- How does your school deal with ESL issues? What support do immigrant children receive? (Frequency, teacher/student ratio)?
- What about financial issues, what financial support is available to immigrant families? In your opinion and is this sufficient?
- What do you think are the primary roadblocks to FSU and South American families not enrolling their children to the same degree as we have seen other immigrant groups?
- Is there anything you would recommend that would help these communities see the value of a Jewish education?
- And just a few questions about the Israeli population...Are you attracting this group of immigrants to the schools? How? Why are they not coming in greater proportions? What needs to be done to attract this group?