

Hanokh lanaar al pi darko gam ki yazkin lo yasur mimena. **הנך לגער על פי דרכו גם כי זקין לא יסור ממנה.**
TEACH CHILDREN IN THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO, AND THEY WILL NOT STRAY FROM IT EVEN WHEN THEY GET OLDER.

Untapped Potential: The Status of Jewish Early Childhood
Education in America



JEWISH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP 2002

About **JECEP**

The Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership is a fixed term non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for and educating about the importance and purpose of early childhood Jewish education as an introduction to Jewish life, a gateway into the Jewish community, and the foundation for tomorrow's Jewish adults. JECEP is funded by the Ben and Esther Rosenbloom Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, Children of Harvey and Lyn Meyerhoff Philanthropic Fund, Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation, Jim Joseph Foundation, and Temma and Alfred Kingsley.

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Introduction

Historically, the care and education of young children was the responsibility of the family. Child care centers were designed to provide low income families with programs that offered custodial care for young children while their mothers worked (Bowman et al., 2001). These centers essentially filled a “babysitting” function and were not designed to have an educational component. In the early twentieth century, nursery schools emerged for middle and upper class families. These programs “were designed to nurture exploration and facilitate socio-emotional development” (Meisels and Shonkoff, 2000) such as separating from home, sharing, cooperation and positive self-esteem. Although nursery schools placed more emphasis on education than did child care centers, the prevailing belief was still that a child’s education began when he or she went to school at the age of 6—hence the name “preschool.”

Jewish early childhood programs first emerged in the United States in the 1930s. The primary goals of these programs were similar to those of secular nursery schools, with the additional purpose of helping the children adapt to the American culture and preparing them for school. The assumption was that families were already living Jewish lives; now they had to learn to become Americans (Rotenberg, 1977). The teachers in most of these schools had limited Jewish backgrounds. The primary feature of Jewish preschool was the location (e.g. synagogue or JCC) and the ethnicity of the population, more than the content of the program. This scenario remained constant until a decade ago.

In 1990, the National Jewish Population Study ushered in an era of greater awareness of and concern about how Jewish culture and identity are transmitted, thus causing Jewish community agencies and organizations to review and revise their missions, asking hard questions such as, “What’s Jewish about us?” or “What does the J in our agency name mean?” and using words like “renewal” and “renaissance.” Me’ah, birthright israel, STAR, Synagogue 2000, and The Florence Melton Adult Mini-School Institute are some examples of programs that were established or blossomed as a result of those questions. Many Jewish organizations now regularly incorporate Torah study into their meetings. In addition, religious schools now have more family programming and Shabbat experiences as part of the school program and more Jewish Community Centers have Jewish educators on staff. “Renaissance and Renewal” have also increased participation in day schools and Jewish camping.

The one constituency that has received little attention during this “renewal” and “renaissance” was Jewish early childhood education. The only national data on Jewish early childhood education comes from the Mandel Foundation (formerly known as the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, CIJE). In 1994, the CIJE conducted a study of religious school, day school and early childhood Jewish personnel in three communities in the United States. They found that early childhood educators had the lowest salaries, the weakest Jewish background and training, and the largest numbers of non-Jewish professionals within the three school systems. This study served as a catalyst for Jewish early childhood professionals to ask the question, “what should a quality Jewish early childhood education experience consist of?” However, there was little or no reaction, or response, from Jewish leadership.¹

In 1996, the CIJE published Early Childhood Jewish Education as part of their Best Practices Project. The report determined that a critical component of early childhood “best practice” is the knowledge and skill of the educator. “The younger the child, the more crucial is competence in the teacher” (page 6).

Except for the CIJE studies, there has been little systematic research on the Jewish early childhood profession. Some communities conduct annual early childhood professional surveys, but each one contains different kinds of information and communities generally do not report or share the data. Few communities know how many Jewish children under the age of 6 there are in their population, how many of them attend Jewish child care and education programs or how many hours children are spending in early childhood centers every week. There are no national standards for measuring the quality of a Jewish early childhood education program, although some Jewish preschools are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children² and some communities (Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Baltimore and Boston) have developed criteria for assessing the presence and quality of Judaic content in early childhood

¹ One exception is Machon L’ Morim: Bereshit, a five year intensive professional development program for early childhood educators that was funded by The Children of Harvey and Lyn Meyerhoff Philanthropic Fund. www.machonmorim.org

² The purpose of NAEYC Accreditation is to improve the quality of care and education provided for young children in group programs in the United States

programs. In direct contrast, there has been an explosion of research in the secular community in the past ten years on early childhood development and the care of young children.

This body of research came to the following conclusions:

- 1) the quality of the relationship between the child and the child care professional significantly impacts on every aspect of the child's development (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000);
- 2) the strongest predictor of a high quality early learning program is the training and compensation of the early childhood professional (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000);
- 3) while no single curriculum is best, children learn more in a well planned preschool where curricular goals are specified and followed (Bowman et al. 2001);
- 4) the biggest quality issue facing the early childhood profession is the inability to recruit and train qualified staff. (Whitebook, 1998);
- 5) the cultural context from which core values are passed on from generation to generation are defined by the relationships children have

Today, it is clear that "preschool" plays a much more important educational and cultural role than originally intended. The experiences young children have shape who they are and who they become when they are older. It is now well known that the early years of life affect brain development and lay the foundation for subsequent learning (Shonkoff, 2000). While formal schooling still begins at 6 years of age, school readiness is increasingly becoming the responsibility of the early childhood programs. Most children ages 3-6 (not yet in kindergarten) attend some form of child care/education program (Olson, 2002). Changes in the employment patterns of women and the increase of single parent families have significantly increased the demand for non-parental care and education of young children. Because the mother's educational level and employment status, as well as family income, is positively related to children's participation in non-parental child care and education programs (Kagan & Neuman, 2000), one would expect large numbers of Jewish children participating in early childhood programs.

In fact, this study suggests that approximately 100,000 Jewish children attend Jewish early childhood education programs. However, as Schick (2000) notes, it is very difficult to determine if this number of Jewish children in Jewish early childhood education programs is accurate. Nevertheless, Jewish early childhood education centers are becoming

increasingly important as they provide an introduction to Judaism and Jewish communal life and have a significant impact on the development of the child's Jewish identity. Today Jewish children are spending increasing amounts of time in Jewish early childhood programs. The care and education of a young Jewish child is no longer the sole responsibility of the parents. It is a partnership between the parents and the early childhood center.

Jewish early childhood education centers have the potential to have the same, or even greater impact than, the day schools if children spend six to eight hours a day in programs with skilled professionals knowledgeable in Judaic and early childhood development who integrate Jewish values, concepts, and Hebrew language into a curriculum that includes numerous family experiences. Jewish early childhood education impacts the entire family, not just the child, and serves as a primary gateway into the Jewish community, the synagogue and Jewish living.

The knowledge of the importance of the early years for child development and its untapped potential as a means for educating and involving children and families in the Jewish community contributed to the urgency that inspired the formation of the Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership (JECEP), a non-profit advocacy and educational organization.

The Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership (JECEP) was established in March 2001. The six funding partners were committed to ensuring that every Jewish child has an opportunity to participate in quality, innovative and meaningful Jewish early childhood educational experiences that will enable the children and their families to create permanent connections to Judaism. Two initial goals developed from that vision: first, to place Jewish early childhood education on the national Jewish communal agenda, second, to encourage federations and foundations to support and invest in Jewish early childhood education programs. JECEP recognizes the crucial role Jewish early childhood programs have among the approximately 100,000 Jewish children and their families currently participating in these programs. In most communities, Jewish early childhood education is the only formal educational venue that is not a direct recipient of Federation dollars (i.e., capitation funding for religious schools and day schools). The Jewish Community Centers Association and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations are the only national Jewish organizations that employ professional staff members whose sole responsibility is to oversee early childhood education.

Since there is no current research on Jewish early childhood education, the Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership commissioned two studies at the outset: 1) a national demographic study on Jewish early childhood education programs; and 2) an “exit survey” investigating decisions parents make regarding subsequent Jewish education after their children “graduate” from Jewish early childhood programs. These studies were commissioned for four reasons:

- to obtain information on the status of Jewish early childhood education from a large and demographically diverse sample of programs;
- to assess the extent to which Jewish early childhood programs face challenges around staffing and program quality similar to those found with secular early childhood programs;
- to ascertain the extent to which the current teaching staff in Jewish early childhood programs are well trained in both child development and Jewish studies; and
- to document the impact that Jewish early childhood programs have on the children and their families.

The national demographic study was designed to collect descriptive data about early childhood programs from Orthodox,³ Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Jewish Community Center, and Independent Jewish early childhood programs. The study addresses the major issues in early childhood education programs as well as issues relevant only to the Jewish community. These include:

- number and ages of children, Jewish and non-Jewish, enrolled in the sample centers
- number of hours children spend in centers
- number of professionals, Jewish and non-Jewish, in centers
- secular and Judaic credentials and compensation of the early childhood professionals
- extent of the similarities and differences between the affiliations in all areas studied.

This study does not directly assess the quality of the sampled programs. Rather, where appropriate, the results are compared to those on early learning centers and early childcare research in the secular community.

This report contains this introduction, an overview of the survey design and methodologies, and five sections discussing findings. Section I addresses the characteristics of the student population, including enrollment and the number of hours that children attend center programs. Section II discusses basic characteristics of the programs, including educational and religious philosophy and mission statements. Section III addresses characteristics of the professionals (teachers and assistants), their credentials, salaries, benefits, age, years of teaching and staff turnover. Section IV examines directors’ credentials, salaries and career plans. Section V closes the report with conclusions and policy recommendations.

Central findings from this study include:

- 77% of the total sample population is Jewish. Jewish enrollment varies considerably depending on the affiliation.
- More than one third of the sample population, majority of whom are between 2 and 4 years of age, spend 30+ hours a week in Jewish early childhood centers.
- Program enrollment peaks at four and then drops significantly
- 88% of the sample early childhood centers have some Jewish education as part of their mission. The rest do not mention Jewish or Judaism at all.
- Overall, 69% of the early childhood professionals are Jewish; 30% of teachers and 33% of assistants are not.
- 45% of the teachers’ highest level of Judaic education was an afternoon Hebrew school.
- The average teacher’s salary is \$19,400 for a 10 month contract. Teachers and assistants are rarely offered benefits.

The findings in this report should direct our attention to the critical importance of the issues facing Jewish early childhood education and provide a basis for advocacy, education and strategic planning.

³ Schools affiliated with Torah Umesorah.

Survey Design and Methodology

The Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership currently has 1,082 early childhood centers in its database. In June, 2001, surveys were sent to the directors of 300 centers spanning the range of affiliations including Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Community/Independent, and JCC/Y's. By July, 80 schools had returned the surveys. The first stage of follow up began in mid-July, only to find that most schools were closed for the summer and the directors were unavailable until the end of August. At the end of August, surveys were again sent to schools that had not responded and follow-up phone calls were made. Many directors indicated they were too busy preparing for the opening of school and would complete the survey in September. September 11th, coupled with the High Holidays, interfered with the responses. At the end of October a third effort to obtain more responses was attempted. By the end of November one hundred and fifty-two (152) centers in 28 states (encompassing all regions across the country—Northeast, Northwest, Midwest, Southeast and Southwest) completed and returned the survey.

The primary reasons for non-response to the survey fell into three categories: the survey was too long and they were too busy; there was a new director who did not know the information; or contact information was incorrect. Response rates by affiliation ranged from 23% (Reconstructionist) to 67% (JCC/Y) (Figure 1). One reason the JCC response rate was so high may have been because the survey was discussed and distributed at the annual JCCA early childhood directors' meeting. Higher response rate for the JCC-affiliated schools means we can have more confidence in the representativeness of the survey results in that category. For this reason, it is especially important to take note of differences in survey responses across affiliations.

Although we must be cautious in interpreting the results, we have no information that leads us to think the respondents were systematically different from non-respondents within any of the affiliation groups. The sample represents 20-30% of the total number of Conservative, Reform and JCC centers and only about 10% of the Reconstructionist, Independent and Orthodox affiliated centers.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of enrollment by affiliation. Conservative, Reform and JCC schools constitute approximately 75% of the sample centers, with the JCC/Y affiliated centers enrolling the largest percentage of children, followed by centers affiliated with the Reform Movement. Three centers (as indicated by "other") chose not to align themselves with any affiliation.

The sampled centers employ 117 directors, 35 director/teachers, 1,637 teachers and 856 assistants, and enroll 16,408 children ages birth-6 years. There is an average of 11 teachers and 6 assistants per school.

Figure 1. Percentage of Responses by Affiliation

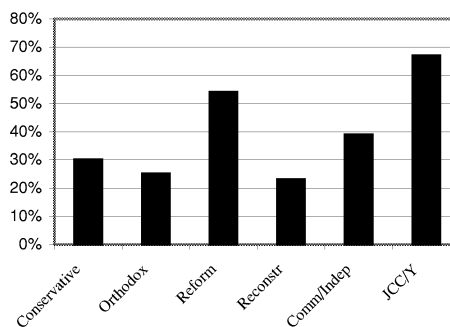
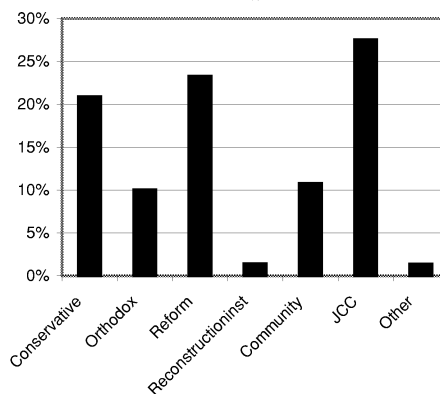


Figure 2. Percentage of Enrollment by Affiliation



Section I: Student Population

The most important and decisive age in education is early childhood. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Yesodot ha-Chinnukh. Bebe-Berak: Netzach

Enrollment Data/Student Population

Large numbers of children participate in Jewish early childhood programs. While these data do not allow for an accurate projection of the total national Jewish preschool population, there are approximately 100,000 children between birth and 6 years of age in Jewish early childhood programs, including 31,000 day school kindergarten children (Schick, 2000). New York City alone services 33,684 Jewish preschool children. This is double the number reported in *Time to Act* (1991) and only a small percentage of the total Jewish population of children birth to 6 years of age, which is approximately 700,000 (Keysar et al., 2000). As a comparison, Hillel currently estimates there are 400,000 college-age students in the United States (Hillel.org).

This study sampled 152 centers in 28 states. These centers enroll 16,408 children between birth and 6 years of age (including kindergarten). Figures 1 and 2 show the enrollment for the total number of children by age and the percentage of children enrolled by age. There is no difference in patterns of enrollment between the total sample of children and the sample of Jewish children. These figures indicate that the majority of children range from 2 to 4 years of age. Enrollment patterns are consistent across affiliations, except for Orthodox schools. Figures 3a-3f show enrollment by affiliation.

The enrollment data also show the general trend of enrollment peaking at 4 years of age, with fewer children enrolled in early childhood programs as they approach kindergarten age. There are several deviations from this general pattern. First, children in Orthodox early childhood programs have roughly equal numbers of 4 and 5-year-olds enrolled. Second, children in Conservative affiliated programs have roughly equal numbers of 3 and 4-year-olds. Third, Reform affiliated schools peak at 3 years of age.

It is interesting to note that there are more 2-year-olds in the sample centers than 5 and 6-year-olds. In the general community, the numbers are about the same (4 million per age group beginning at infancy) (NCES, 1995). There could be several reasons for the decrease in enrollment of 5-year-olds, the most plausible being that parents choose public kindergarten programs over Jewish kindergarten programs.

Consequently, only 34 of the sample schools indicated they have a kindergarten program. Preliminary findings from the Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership's Exit Survey indicate that approximately 75% of children completing a 4-year-old Jewish early childhood education program enroll in public kindergarten programs (Beck, 2002). Public 3 and 4-year-old programs have the potential to have the same impact and dramatically limit enrollment in this core Jewish early childhood population.

Figure 1. Total Enrollment by Age

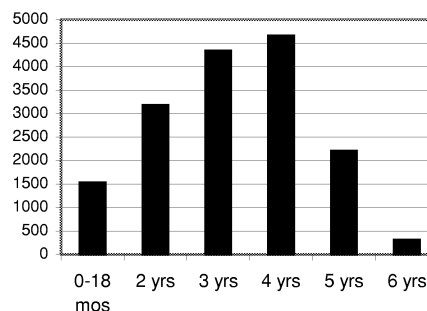


Figure 2. Percentage Enrolled by Age

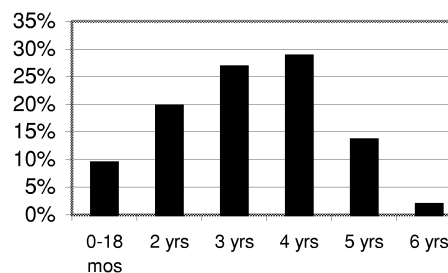


Figure 3a.
Orthodox Enrollment

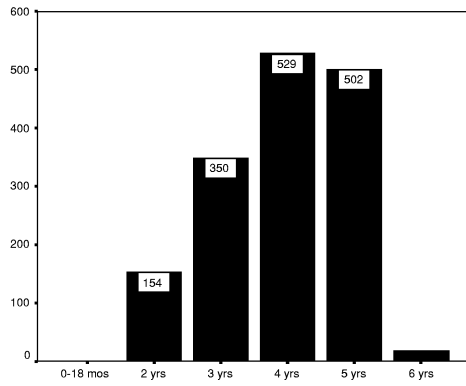


Figure 3d.
JCC/Y Enrollment

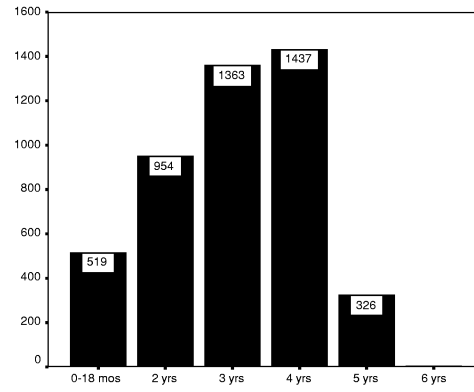


Figure 3b.
Conservative Enrollment

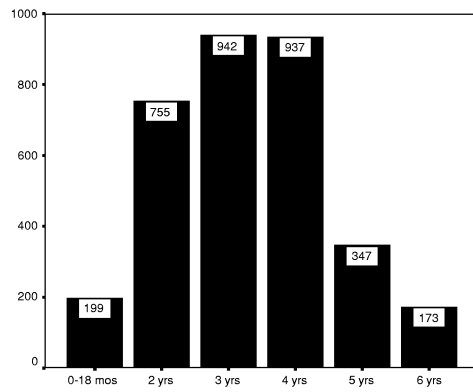


Figure 3e.
Community/Independent Enrollment

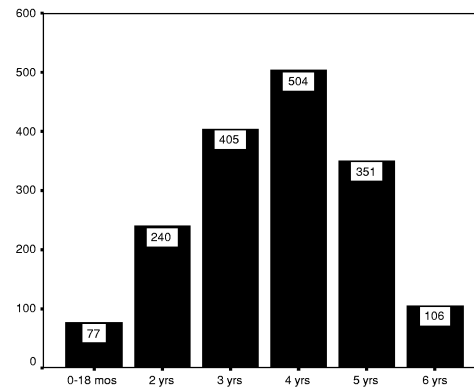


Figure 3c.
Reform Enrollment

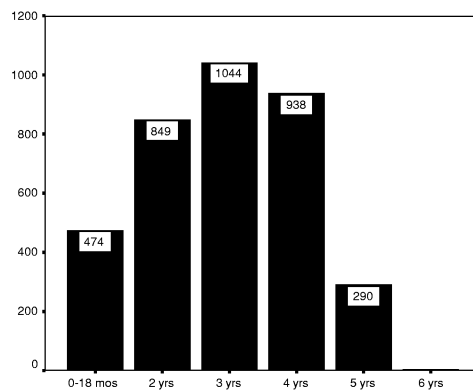
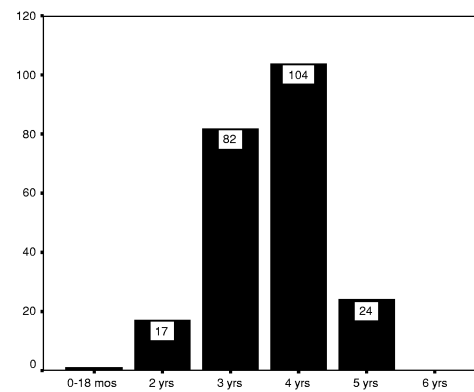


Figure 3f.
Reconstructionist Enrollment

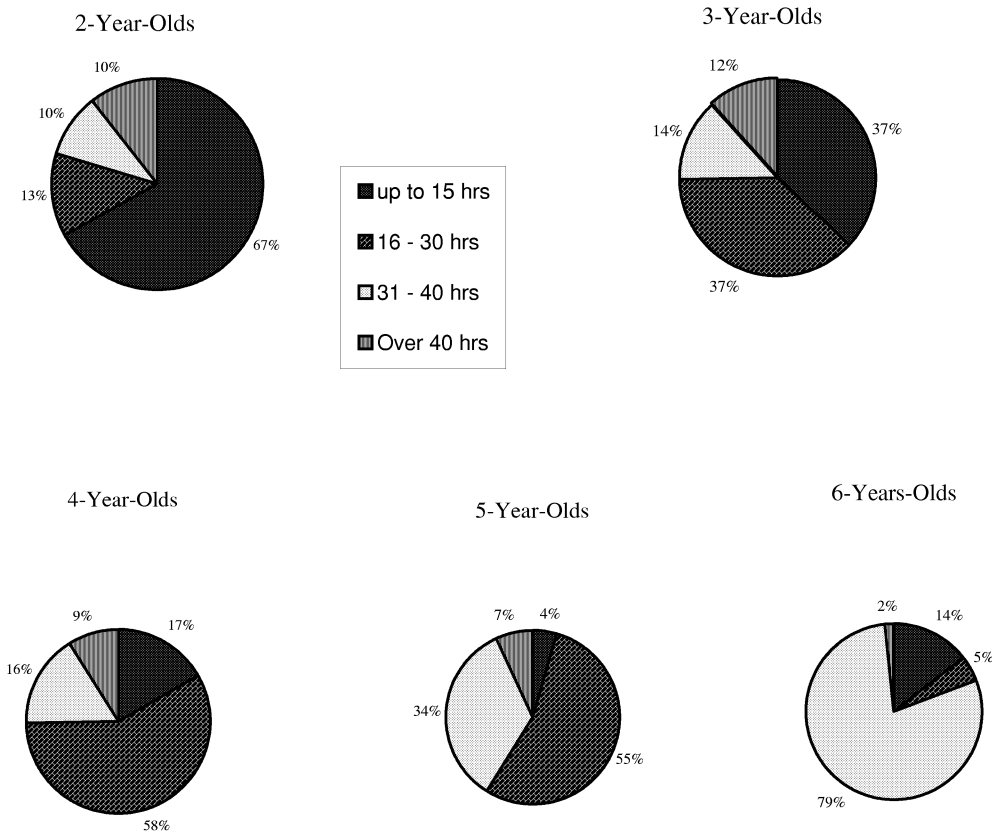


The lack of Jewish kindergarten programs becomes even more critical when one considers that synagogue religious schools generally begin their formal program when children are in the second grade of secular school. (The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism’s recently revised guidelines may begin to address this problem for its schools.) Eighty-three percent (83%) of 4-year-old children spend 16 hours or more a week in a Jewish educational environment (Figure 4) and then have between none and at most 2 hours of Jewish education a week until they are 8 years old and enter religious school, where they generally receive between 4 and 6 hours of Jewish education a week.

The number of hours that young children spend in the early childhood programs is staggering in its own

right. Figure 4 shows the number of hours children spend in their early childhood centers by the age of the child. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the total sample spend 30 hours or more a week and 10% spend 40+ hours a week in Jewish early childhood centers. When viewed by age, 67% of 2-year-olds spend 15 hours or less and 20% spend 31+ hours in Jewish early childhood centers. In comparison, the U.S. Department of Education Early Childhood Program Participation Component (1995) reported that 24% of 2-year-olds spend less than 15 hours a week in nonparental childcare while 51% spend 35+ hours a week. Sixty-three percent (63%) of 3-year-olds spend between 16 and 40+ hours a week in Jewish early childhood centers compared to 73% in the secular community.

Figure 4. Time Spent in Centers



One would expect older children to spend greater amounts of time in centers than younger children. However, most 2-year-old programs are 2½ to 3 hours long, two to three days a week. That means they attend “preschool” between 5 and 9 hours a week. Even if they attend “preschool” five days a week for 3 hours each day they are only in the center 15 hours a week. Therefore, 2-year-olds who spend more than 15 hours a week in a center are generally in before and after school programs. Twenty percent (20%) of 2-year-olds are in Jewish early childhood centers over 30 hours a week. The data also indicate that 81% of 6-year-olds are spending more than 30 hours a week in the centers, an additional 2 hours a day in either before school care, after school care or some combination of both. Young Jewish children are spending the same amount of time in early

childhood centers as older children spend in Jewish day schools.

Another enrollment issue facing Jewish early childhood education is the non-Jewish student population. Figure 5 compares the percentage of Jewish children to non-Jewish children enrolled in the centers by affiliation. The percentage of Jewish children is greater than the percentage of non-Jewish children across affiliations. However, the Jewish enrollment varies considerably depending on the affiliation. JCCs’ Jewish enrollment is only 12% higher than the non-Jewish enrollment, while the Orthodox centers show approximately 97% Jewish enrollment compared to about 3% non-Jewish. This poses a problem for many directors, who wonder how much Jewish education they can include as their non-Jewish population increases.

Figure 5. Jewish and Non-Jewish Students by Affiliation

	total	Jewish	Non-J	% Non J
Conservative	3371	3041	330	9.79%
Orthodox	1615	1566	49	3.03%
Reform	3754	3146	608	16.20%
Reconstructionist	227	202	25	11.01%
Community/Independent	1821	1525	296	16.25%
JCC/Y	5399	3036	2363	43.77%
Other	221	171	50	22.62%
Total	16408	12687	3721	

A third issue involves enrollment trends. Figure 6a compares total enrollments by affiliation for 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 with the current year's enrollment. These figures show a slight increase in total enrollment across affiliations. Figure 6b compares Jewish enrollment for the same period. It appears that there were drops in Jewish enrollment in Community/Independent and JCC/Y centers, with the drop being more noticeable for the former. Data from the 152 centers also show that the 99-00 school year average percentage of Jewish children compared to the total number of children in the sample was 81%, and in the 00-01 school year it was 77%.

Figure 6a. '99-'00 and '00-'01 Enrollment Comparison

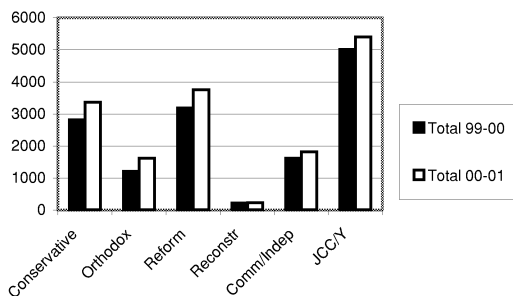


Figure 6b. '99-'00 and '00-'01 Jewish Enrollment Comparison

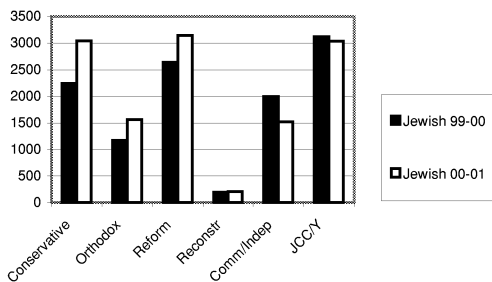


Figure 7a. '00-01 and '01-02 Comparison of Expected Enrollment

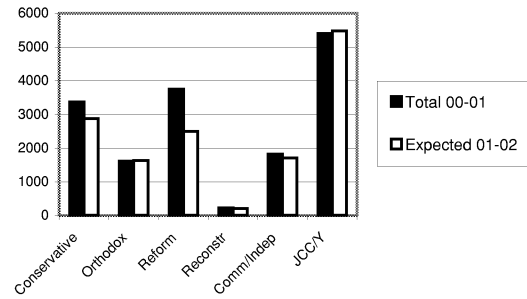
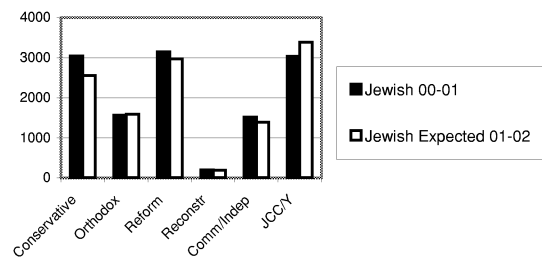


Figure 7b. '00-01 and '01-02 Comparison of Expected Jewish Enrollment



This is in direct contrast to the national trends that suggest early care/education enrollment continues to increase, especially for infants and toddlers, the fastest growing subgroup of children in early care and education programs (Kagan and Newman, 2000). Enrollment in early care centers in the United States increased 19% between 1997 and 1999. At the same time, enrollment in centers operated by religious facilities increased by 26% (Neugebauer, 2000). The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York noted a 12% increase in enrollment in 2001 and a decrease in enrollment in 2002. While they do not have data to explain the decrease, they attribute the decrease of 2,576 children, the majority of whom are 4-year-olds (1,374), to universal pre-k programs. The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education in Philadelphia notes an 8% decrease in enrollment in early childhood programs over the past years. The implications of these data is alarming. The disparity between these data requires further investigation.

Figure 7a shows the 2000-2001 versus expected (2001-2002) enrollment by affiliation for the total sample. Figure 7b shows the 2000-2001 versus expected (2001-2002) Jewish enrollment by affiliation. The findings indicate most directors anticipate a decrease in both overall and Jewish expected enrollment. The two exceptions are Orthodox centers, which anticipate steady enrollment, and JCC centers, which anticipate an increase both in overall and Jewish enrollment.

Section II: Program Characteristics

Chinnukh begins at the very moment of birth... therefore our contact with the child must be well thought out and planned. Sotah 47a

The school mission statement and educational philosophy drive the curriculum, dictate the culture and reflect the professionalism of the school. One expectation for accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children* is a clear articulation of the program's philosophy. Two-thirds of the centers have a mission statement. Of the approximately 45% of directors who supplied a mission statement, 88% of those statements made explicit reference to some form of Jewish content to their mission. This raises the question of what distinguishes a Jewish early childhood education center from a secular early childhood education center, if it is not the Jewish content.

Programs that intend to instill Jewish values consistent with a specific denominational philosophy need to have professionals knowledgeable of that given philosophy. Half of the directors did not know or did not respond to the question that asked if the teachers' personal religious beliefs matched the school's religious philosophy. The majority of the directors did not feel it was important for teachers' beliefs to be consistent with the school's religious philosophy. Schools affiliated with the Orthodox movement have a higher percentage of directors who believe that a teacher's personal religious beliefs are consistent with the schools. Of those directors who responded, between 20% and 65% of the staff's personal views match the school's religious philosophy. As expected, schools affiliated with the Orthodox movement had the highest rate of consistency between the professional's personal religious views and the school's religious philosophy. The weakest relationship was among the JCC schools.

It is also important for directors to have a definitive educational philosophy for the school. *Eager to Learn* (Bowman, et al, 2001) stated that while no single curriculum or educational philosophy is best, children learn more in a well planned preschool where curricular goals are

specified and followed. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the directors stated the educational philosophy of their school was "play" and 49% stated "other." While this does not preclude these schools from having clearly articulated curricular goals, it does raise questions as to what the goals are. Only a few directors indicated a specific educational philosophy for their school (4% Constructivist, 2% Montessori and 8% Reggio). Having a distinct articulation of educational philosophy was not unique to any affiliation. This finding suggests that there is a potpourri of educational methodologies present in any given school. This fact may play an important role in planning professional development programs.

At this point we do not have data on the Jewish content in the classroom i.e., the extent of the Jewish content, how is it being transmitted and the outcomes of the programs. The data also do not speak to the quality of the Jewish early childhood programs. Traditionally, "quality" in early childhood education has meant ensuring that children are cared for in safe and nurturing environments. Only a few states have educational standards for early childhood programs and/or training requirements for early childhood professionals. The *Cost, Quality, Outcomes* study reported that seven out of ten early childhood centers are mediocre (1995). As more states look to the preschools as preparation for elementary school, states are developing specific goals and evaluation tools for their early childhood centers and requiring increased training for early childhood professionals. However, many Jewish early childhood education programs are exempt from these regulations as they are affiliated with religious institutions. Jewish early childhood centers are going to need to at least meet, or more likely, exceed the state requirements if they are going to recruit families lured by public preschool education.

* The purpose of NAEYC accreditation is to improve the quality of care and education provided for children in group programs in the United States.

Section III: Early Childhood Professionals

Those who uphold the community are like stars forever. Who are they? The ones who teach the young Baba Batra 8B

It is clear that the responsibility for raising young Jewish children is a partnership between the parents and the early childhood professional. Current research indicates that the most consistent finding on developmental science is that knowledgeable and trained early childhood professionals are the key to both the quality of early childhood programs and to the social-emotional development of the child (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). The relationship young children develop with their primary caregiver plays a significant role in their overall development, including cultural behaviors and beliefs (Bowman et al., 2001).

This survey reports on 1637 teachers (including 35 directors/teachers) and 856 assistants. Figure 1 compares the total number of teachers to the total number of assistants by affiliation. The figures show that generally centers employ more teachers than assistants. Ninety-eight percent (98%) are women. Overall, 69% of the early childhood professionals are Jewish; 30% of teachers and 33% of assistants are not. This is significantly different from the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education *The Teachers Report* (1994) that reported overall only 10% of the early childhood teachers in the three communities they surveyed were not Jewish.

Figures 2a and 2b compare Jewish teachers and assistants to non-Jewish teachers and assistants across center affiliations. In general, there are more Jewish teachers and assistants than their non-Jewish counterparts. The JCC centers have the closest ratio of Jewish to non-Jewish teachers, and the same percentage of Jewish to non-Jewish assistants.

Figure 1. Total number of Teachers to Total Number of Assistants

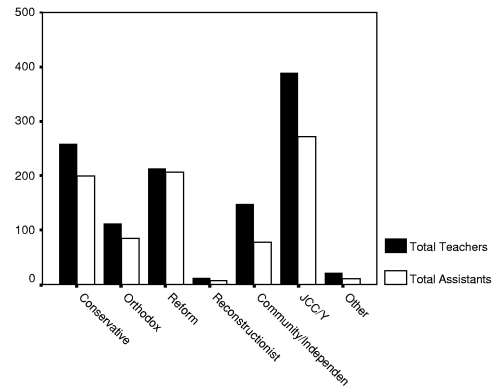


Figure 2a. Percentage of Jewish/Non Jewish Teachers by Affiliation

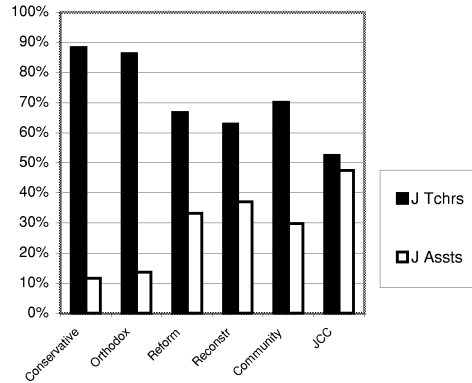
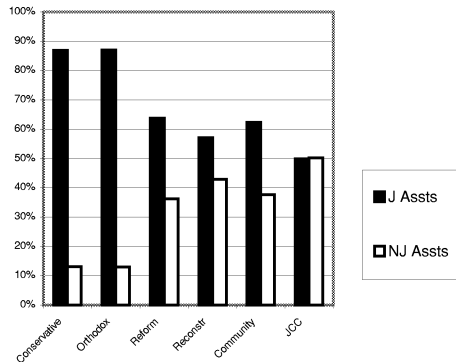


Figure 2b. Percentage of Jewish/Non-Jewish Assistants by Affiliation



Age of Professionals

Figure 3a shows the age ranges of the teachers in the sample centers. The majority of the teachers are between 30 and 60 years of age. In terms of affiliation breakdown, the exception to this pattern are teachers in the Orthodox affiliated early childhood centers (Figure 3b). Almost twice as many teachers in centers affiliated with the Orthodox are in their twenties compared to the sample as a whole. Moreover, the age range of teachers in Orthodox centers is more evenly spread compared to the sample as a whole. The study does not provide any data to explain this finding.

Figure 3a. Age range of teachers

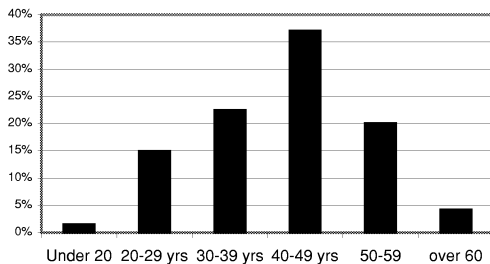
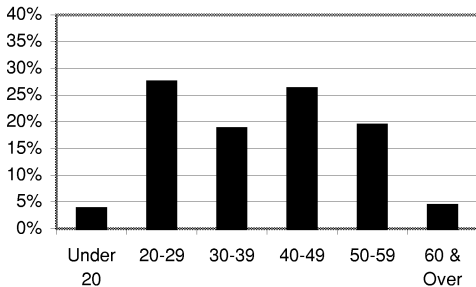


Figure 3b. Range of Orthodox Teachers



Length of Time Teaching

Figure 4a shows the length of time teachers in the sample have been teaching. The findings show that 75% of teachers have been teaching less than 14 years. The pattern shows a decline, with fewer teachers having taught for long periods of time. The exception to this pattern is with teachers in Conservative affiliated early childhood centers, as shown in Figure 4b.

The data also suggest that approximately 50% of the teachers are relatively new to the field. Both findings contradict anecdotal information that most early childhood educators are in their 40's and 50's, have been teaching for 15 years or more and may not be amenable to the new methodologies as they have been in the field for a long time and are "set in their ways."

Figure 4a. Number of years teaching

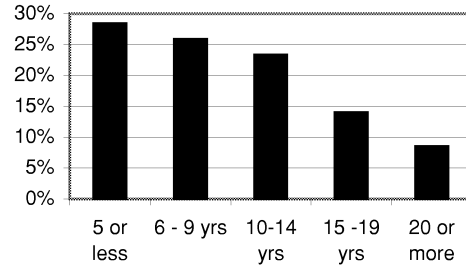
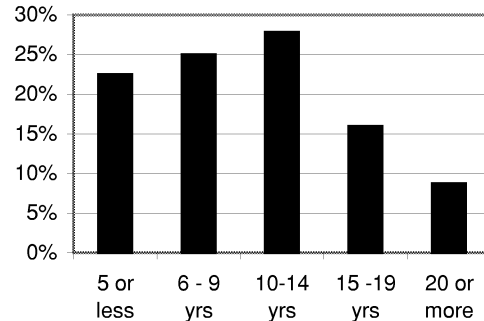


Figure 4b. Number of Years Teaching -Conservative



Secular Education Level of Professionals

Research has found that one of the strongest predictors of high-quality early-learning programs is the preparation and compensation of early childhood educators and their responsiveness and sensitivity to the children in their care. The National Research Council has recommended that all young children in center-based programs be taught by a teacher with a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early childhood (*Quality Counts*, 2002)

Nationally, less than half of early childhood professionals have bachelor's degrees (*Quality Counts*, 2002). In many states, individuals who work with young children are not required to hold any certificate or degree, and ongoing training requirements are minimal. On the other hand, every state requires kindergarten teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree and a certificate in elementary or early childhood education. The pattern that emerges from this study is that the majority of Jewish early childhood assistants have high school diplomas or BA/BS degrees in a field other than early childhood education. Overall, the sample of assistants' level of secular education, as reported by directors, is similar to secular early childhood professionals.

By contrast, and contrary to national trends, Jewish early childhood teachers predominantly have a BA/BS or MA/MS (Figure 5a). However, it is important to note that less than half of the teachers have either a BA/BS or MA/MS in early childhood education. While this is well above the national level, it is still troublesome.

A slightly different pattern emerges when comparing educational levels of before school and after school caregivers. Figure 5b shows relatively high levels of education for both groups. No clear pattern of differences emerges between the two groups that can be easily explained.

Figure 5a. Teachers & Assistants Highest Level of General Education

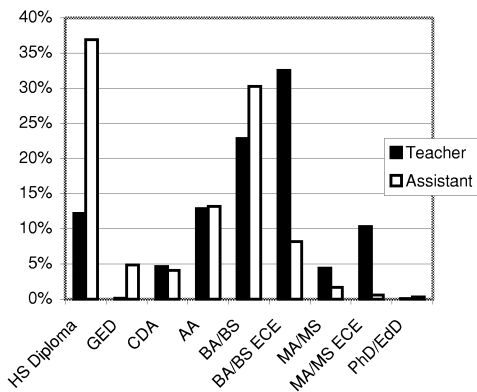
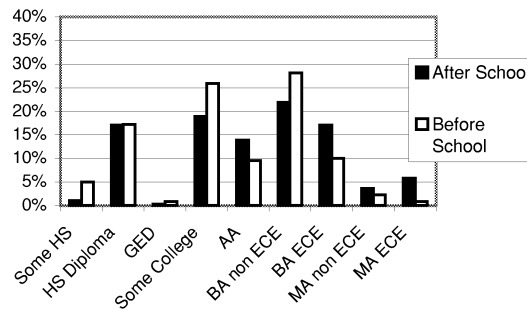


Figure 5b. Before & After School Caregivers Highest Level of Education



Jewish Education Levels of Professionals

The Jewish education level of the early childhood professional differs significantly from their secular education levels. The following figures (Figures 6a-6f) describe the Jewish educational levels of the teachers as reported by the center directors. Figure 6a reports on the Jewish educational level of teachers in the total sample. When viewed across affiliations a surprisingly large percentage of the directors report they do not know the level of Jewish education of their teachers, except for the Orthodox and Community/Independent centers. When the Jewish educational level is reported, the general pattern indicates that most teachers have received an afternoon Hebrew school education at the elementary level.

Figure 6a. Teacher Jewish Education Level (total)

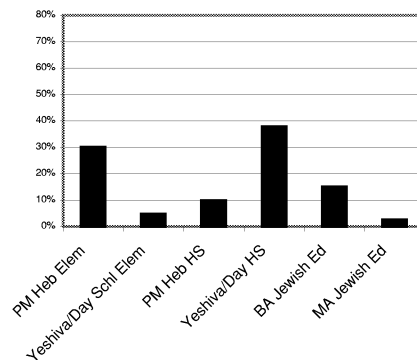


Figure 6b. Teacher Jewish Education Levels (Orthodox)

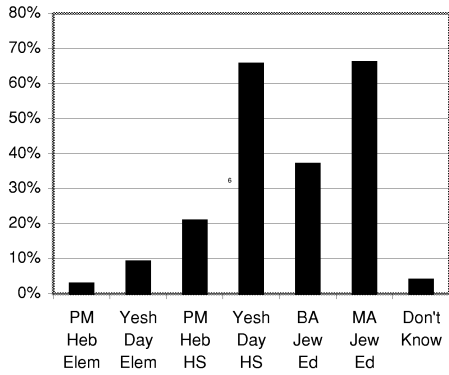


Figure 6e. Teacher Jewish Education Levels (Reconstructionist)

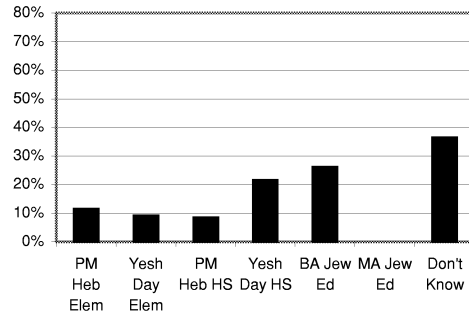


Figure 6f. Teacher Jewish Education Levels (JCC)

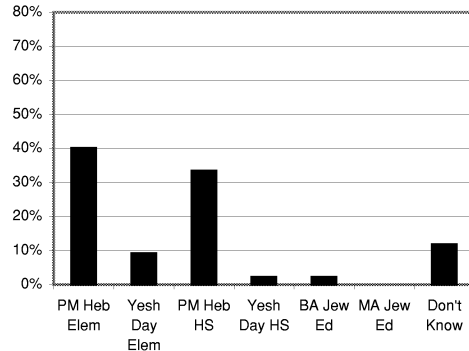


Figure 6c. Teacher Jewish Education Levels (Conservative)

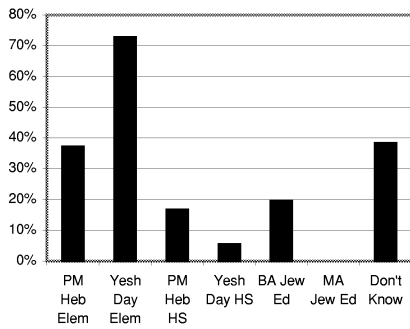


Figure 6d. Teacher Jewish Education Levels (Reform)

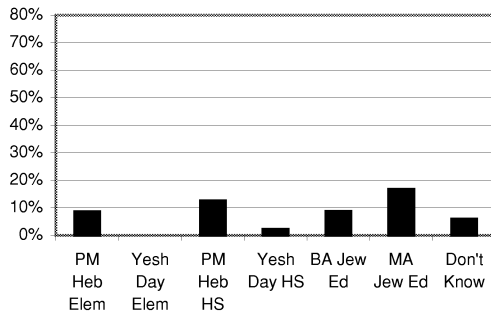
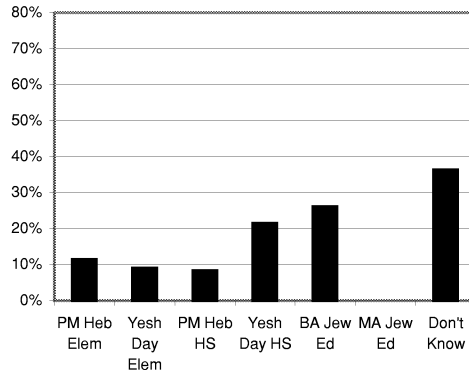


Figure 6g. Teacher Jewish Education Level (Community)



This is consistent with the 1998 CIJE *Teachers Report* and the Alliance for Jewish Education 2000 Personnel Study. The data suggests that the majority of teachers in Orthodox and Community/ Independent affiliated centers have received Yeshiva High School Education. The JCC centers have the largest percentage of teachers whose highest level of Jewish training is the elementary level. The data do not provide information to explain why Community/ Independent center early childhood professionals have Yeshiva High School education.

These findings raise a number of issues and questions. Most children acquire skills from the environment and relationships they have with their caregivers. Therefore, to be an effective teacher of the Jewish culture, the caregivers must have substantive Judaic knowledge and live in the culture. How can early childhood professionals adequately inculcate Jewish values when 30% of the teachers are not Jewish and the majority have no formal Jewish education beyond the Hebrew school education they received between 1950 and 1970? What, then, distinguishes a Jewish early childhood education program from a secular early childhood program?

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention are priority issues for all Jewish educators. The following charts relate to the problem of teacher and assistant attrition and the reasons given by directors for teachers leaving their jobs. When directors were asked the reasons teachers left, 16% did not respond. This may indicate that the directors do not know the reasons why their teachers are leaving or choose not to specify the reasons. It is, therefore, unclear whether this information is an accurate representation of the teachers' reasons for leaving and where they go. Figure 7 shows the number and reason early childhood teachers left the field as reported by the directors. The most frequently cited reason was taking a position in the public schools. It is likely that this is due to higher salaries and better benefits that teachers would enjoy in the public schools, but it is not possible to directly test this assumption with the current data.

With respect to the reasons the assistants left the field, 30% of the directors did not respond when asked why their assistants left. However, unlike the teachers, among those responses that were given, "entering a new field" was the most frequent.

Figure 7. Reasons Professional Left the Field

Reason	Teachers	Assistants
Public School	84	24
Retire	51	13
New Field	55	49
Start Family	53	20
Illness	17	14
Other Reason	108	34
No Response	24	45

Following the question of turnover, it is important to know the length of time it takes center directors to rehire staff. It takes most center directors from one to eight weeks to rehire staff. The data do not distinguish between rehiring teachers versus rehiring assistants. The majority of the directors were able to hire new staff within four weeks after a position was open. However, only 40% were very satisfied with the new staff's early childhood qualifications. Fewer were satisfied with their Judaic qualifications. The overall level of satisfaction with both sets of qualifications is mediocre. The *Then and Now* study (Whitebook, 2000) also found that "new teaching staff was significantly less well educated than those they replaced."

Salaries and Benefits

One of the possible reasons for the difficulty in recruiting qualified staff may relate to the poor salaries of the early childhood professionals. Overall, the majority of teachers earn from under \$10,000 to \$29,000 over the 10-month period (Figure 8). The average salary is \$19,400. This is consistent with findings from the UJA Federation of Bergen County and North Hudson's Jewish Educational Services 2001 Survey of Salaries.

It is also consistent with early childhood professionals in the secular community. According to the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, the annual salary of preschool teachers in 1999 averaged \$19,610 (Jacobson, 2002). The United States pays about as much to parking-lot attendants and dry-cleaning workers as it does to early childhood educators. In comparison, the average elementary teacher's salary was slightly less than \$40,000 and barely kept pace with the cost of living in the 1990's www.washingtonpost.com, (4/8/02). The salary pattern of Jewish early childhood educators depends on the denominational affiliation of the teacher. For example, Figure 9 shows that most teachers in Orthodox affiliated early childhood centers earn between \$20,000 and \$49,000. By contrast, teachers in Community/Independent early childhood centers (Figure 10) earn salaries that are more evenly spread across the categories.

Figure 8. Teacher Salaries - 10 month contract (total)

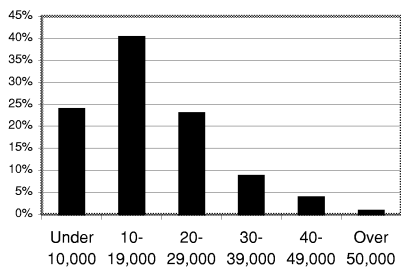


Figure 9. Teacher Salaries 10 month Contract (Orthodox)

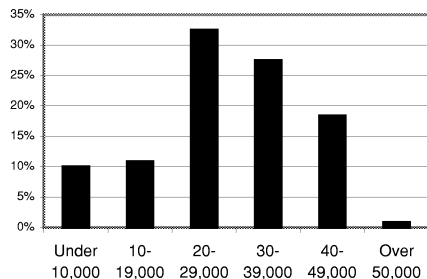
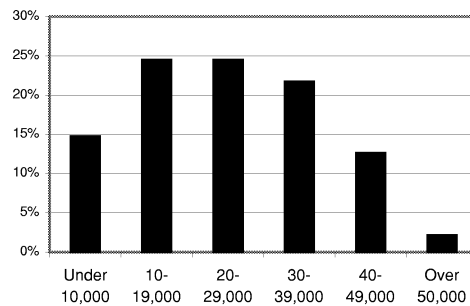


Figure 10. Teacher Salaries 10 month contract (Community)



The majority (59%) of assistants, on the other hand, earn less than \$10,000 for a 10-month contract. This pattern also depends on the denominational affiliation of the center. In comparison, the average annual salary of child-care workers in 2000 in the secular community is \$15,430 (*Quality Counts*, 2002). The National Council of Jewish Women's 1999 report *Opening a New Window on Childcare* stated the salaries for teacher aides in 1970 were \$3,000 a year. Adjusted for inflation, that would amount to \$12,404 today. That means teacher assistants have received no real wage increase in nearly three decades.

Most benefits are not offered to teachers regardless of the affiliation of the center. Some exceptions emerge. Most centers offer their teachers funding to attend conferences. Many centers offer health care plans to their teachers. However, with the exception of Community/Independent and JCC/Y affiliated centers, most centers do not offer benefit plans (particularly pensions and life insurance) to their teachers.

Section IV: Directors

Keep therefore the words of this covenant Deut 29:8

The study sampled 117 directors and 35 teacher/directors. The vast majority (93%) of directors are Jewish and are well educated. Figure 1 shows that 91% have either a bachelor's or master's degree in education. Figure 2 shows that 78% have early childhood education training (41% have an MA and 37% BA). In the secular community, 77% have completed a bachelor's degree and 71% have participated in a supervised teaching practicum. (Whitehook, 2000). However, only 7 directors indicated they had a certificate in educational leadership.

In direct contrast to the advanced training in early childhood education and child development, center directors indicated modest levels of Jewish education. Figure 3 shows that more than half (67%) of the directors report having the equivalent of a high school diploma in Jewish education. Thirty-two percent (32%) have no formal Jewish education after completing an afternoon elementary school program and only 18% have a bachelor's or master's degree in Judaic Studies.

Of those directors who responded, the majority are between 50 and 59 years of age. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the directors plan to continue in their current position. Seventy two percent (72%) have no plans to retire. We calculate that within 10–15 years, 79% of the directors in this sample will reach retirement age.

Directors' salaries, while better than those of teachers and assistants, are still low (Figure 4). While this does not seem to impact on the turnover rate for directors, it is unclear what impact this will have on recruiting new ones.

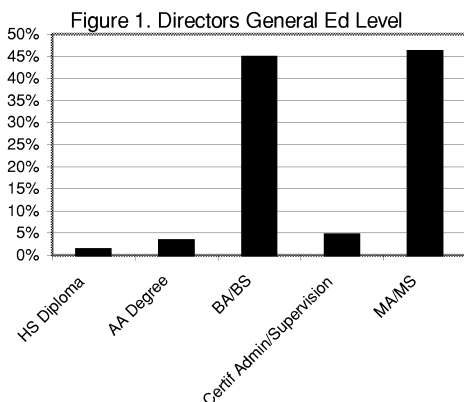


Figure 2. Directors' Level of ECE Education

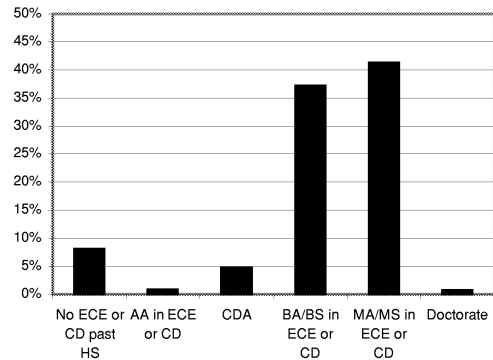


Figure 3. Directors' Level of Jewish Education

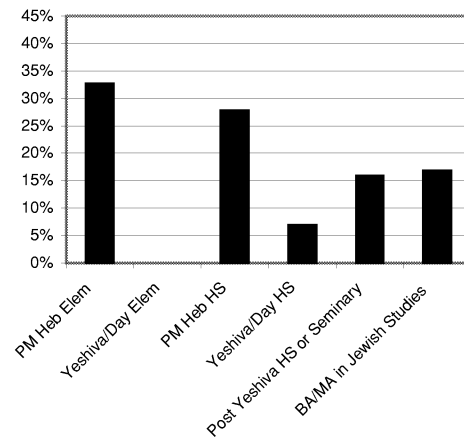
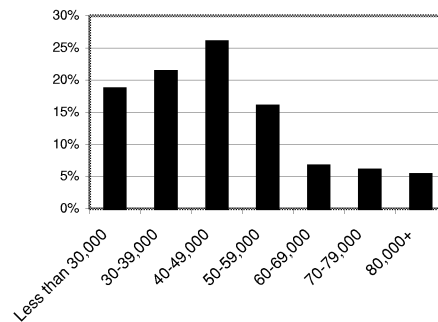


Figure 4. Director's Salary Range



Section V: Conclusion

Historically, the primary role of early childhood centers was providing part-time programs that offered safe and nurturing environments for young children while their mothers worked (Bowman, 2001). The curriculum focused on developing the social-emotional skills of children, such as separating from home, sharing, cooperation and positive self-esteem. The traditional, and currently predominant, belief that formal schooling begins at six years of age is obsolete. Formal schooling begins the moment a child enters into a non-parental educational center, whether at 3 months or 3 years of age. New understandings about the development and transmission of cultural behaviors and beliefs suggest that the early years of a child's life shape the identity of the child. Experiences that children have when they are young unequivocally affect brain development and lay the foundation on which subsequent learning builds. Furthermore, research has consistently demonstrated that knowledgeable and well-trained early childhood professionals are the key to both the quality of early childhood programs and to the social-emotional development of the child. Most children acquire skills from their environment and the relationships they have with their caregivers. The child's primary provider significantly affects the overall development of the child, including cultural behaviors and beliefs (Shonkoff, 2000).

These understandings regarding early experiences in child growth and development are critically important as a backdrop for examining the following key results and policy implications of this study.

Young children are spending increasing amounts of time in Jewish early childhood centers. Jewish early childhood centers are becoming increasingly important as they not only serve as the introduction to Judaism and Jewish communal life, but are becoming the primary place, in addition to the home, where Jewish identity is formed. Today children are spending increasing amounts of time in Jewish early childhood programs. Twenty percent (20%) of 2-year-olds, 25% of 3 and 4-year-olds and 41% of 5-year-olds spend between 30 and 40 hours a week in Jewish early childhood centers. The relationship young children develop with their primary caregiver plays a significant role in their overall development, including cultural

behaviors and beliefs (Bowman et al., 2001). The care and education of a young Jewish child is no longer the sole responsibility of the parents; it is a partnership between the parents and the early childhood center. Our preschools have the potential to provide a quality Judaic and developmentally appropriate education that fosters the child's Jewish identity and lays the foundation for future Jewish experiences and involvement in the Jewish community. Recognizing the partnership between the early childhood center and the family, Jewish early childhood education has the additional potential of impacting on the Jewish identity of the family. This is a crucial distinction between Jewish early childhood education and religious schools, or even, day schools. This increases the importance of Jewish early childhood education as a key gateway into Jewish family life, synagogue membership, day school enrollment and adult education. Early childhood centers that have a strong Judaic curriculum also have the potential not only to increase parent interest in day school education, but also may increase the Judaic content in religious schools as children are exposed to Jewish concepts and values at a younger age. As children spend longer periods of time in the early childhood centers, the centers need to ask themselves numerous questions, including 1) What are viable options of a developmentally appropriate Jewish early childhood education? and 2) Given the importance of parents in the lives of young children, what kinds of learning experiences can be created to foster the partnership between the home and the early childhood center?

Large numbers of children participate in Jewish early childhood programs, but even larger numbers do not. In *The Next Generation*, Keysar (2000) suggests there are almost 700,000 Jewish children ages birth through 6 years of age. The largest cohort of children under the age of 18 (33.6%) in the 1990 Jewish National Population Study were children between birth and 4 years of age. Furthermore, infants and toddlers are the fastest growing group of children in the United States. When kindergarten age children are included, the percentage increases significantly. In comparison, there are 400,000 college age students in the United States (www.hillel.org). This means that the early childhood population (birth-6 years of age) is greater than that of the

college age population. This study suggests there are approximately 100,000 Jewish children attending Jewish programs. The survey data suggest that Jewish early childhood programs are attracting only a small percentage of the potential population between birth and 6 years of age, and the enrollment in Jewish early childhood programs is decreasing while enrollment in secular early childhood programs is increasing. Enrollment patterns need further research.

Enrollment in Jewish early childhood centers peaks at 4 years of age and then drops dramatically. This study does not have data on where the children go after they leave the centers; however, it is assumed the majority enroll in public kindergarten programs.* This study reported that only 32 out of 152 centers had kindergarten programs. This is a very troubling finding as many religious schools do not have kindergarten programs. Even if they do, they meet for 2 hours once a week. This implies that these children participate in a Jewish educational environment between 30 and 40 hours a week during their preschool experience and then nothing, or at best, two hours a week the next year, their kindergarten year. Also, if parents are choosing public kindergarten over Jewish kindergarten programs and day schools, then public 3 and 4- year-old programs have the potential to also dramatically negatively affect enrollment of 3 and 4-year-old children in Jewish early childhood centers. We must be able to demonstrate that Jewish early childhood education provides an exceptional, nurturing, developmentally appropriate secular and Judaic early childhood education. Otherwise, only families most committed to Clal Yisrael, will enroll in Jewish early childhood education centers.

Jewish early childhood educators are underpaid. Salaries for Jewish early childhood educators, like those of early childhood educators more generally, are too low. Most early childhood teachers have a bachelor's degree, earn \$14 an hour and have few if any benefits. The professionals in these centers are responsible for the care and education of our children, our future. Few people would entrust their legal affairs or their medical needs to anyone but a highly trained and experienced professional. This is not to say that the current

Jewish early childhood professionals are not caring, nurturing and dedicated to Judaism and the Jewish people. In fact, it is just this dedication and feeling of community that brought them to the field and enabled them to stay when the salaries and benefits are so poor (CIJE, 1998). However, as the role of the early childhood professional shifts from being a part-time caretaker/educator to the primary caretaker/educator, and from supplementing experiences in the home to being the primary provider of experiences, our educators need to be well trained in child development and early childhood pedagogy.

One reason for the lack of specialized early childhood Judaic training is that there are only a few Jewish early childhood degree granting programs in the United States. Individual communities have professional development opportunities through their Central Agencies/Bureaus of Jewish Education, but these programs are sporadic, and generally offered once a year for a short period of time with little or no follow up. (Miller, 2001) Some communities (i.e. Baltimore, Florida and Cleveland) are beginning to collaborate with local universities and create certificate and degree granting early childhood programs that have a complementary Judaic component. But too few programs are available. As public 3 and 4-year- old programs begin to emerge, the demand for early childhood professionals will dramatically increase. Currently, almost one third of the professionals who leave the field went to the public schools. We need to provide professional development training for our current faculty and we need to increase our salaries to retain and attract the best and the brightest. Otherwise, only very special individuals will stay in the Jewish early childhood profession. Fewer still will enter the field.

A significant number of professionals in Jewish early childhood education are either not Jewish or have no formal Jewish education after the age of thirteen. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the early childhood professionals are Jewish; 30% of teachers and 33% of assistants are not. Forty-five percent (45%) of the teachers' highest level of Judaic education was an afternoon Hebrew school. These findings raise two fundamental questions. First, what is the role of a Jewish early childhood education center? Second, what do early childhood teachers need to know and be able to

* The Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership is releasing a study Summer 2002 that addresses this issue.

do to successfully fulfill the role of the Jewish early childhood center?

While the majority (88%) of the schools have Jewish education as part of their mission, this study does not directly access the extent, prominence, or quality of the Jewish content in the early childhood programs. If, in fact, the transmission of cultural behaviors and beliefs occurs during the first years of life, then increasing the numbers of children participating in Jewish early childhood centers as well as investigating the amount and quality of Judaic content in early childhood centers should be placed on the Jewish communal agenda.

V'shinantam l'vanekha וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבִנְיָךְ

The imperative to teach our children is one of the distinguishing features of the Jewish community. Jewish education shapes who we are and how we behave.

Jewish education is an essential ingredient for identity development and attainment. Traditionally, the family has been responsible for identity formation and the transmission of values. However, in an era of mixed marriages, single parent families, and dual career families, more children are spending increasing amounts of time in Jewish early childhood education centers. These centers, and the early childhood professionals, are becoming a major influence on the identity development of the children and their families.

If the role of a Jewish early childhood education center is to socialize Jewish children into Jewish identity it seems most likely that to be an effective transmitter of Jewish knowledge and culture, caregivers must have substantive Judaic knowledge and lead active Jewish lives. "Improving the quantity and quality of professional development for teachers, along with enhancing the conditions of employment, is the strategy most likely to improve the quality of the teaching force (in Jewish schools)" (CIJE, 1994).

Jewish early childhood education centers are the perfect opportunity to shape the Jewish identity of young children and their families and to lay the foundation for subsequent Jewish involvement and experiences. However, without recognizing that early childhood education is valuable, without pedagogic and Judaic professional development, and without equitable compensation, we will not be able to provide quality secular and Judaic early childhood programs.

How a culture treats its youngest members has a significant influence on how it will grow, prosper, and be viewed by others (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). The future of the American Jewish community depends on the quality of our early childhood centers and the professional staff caring for and educating our children.

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