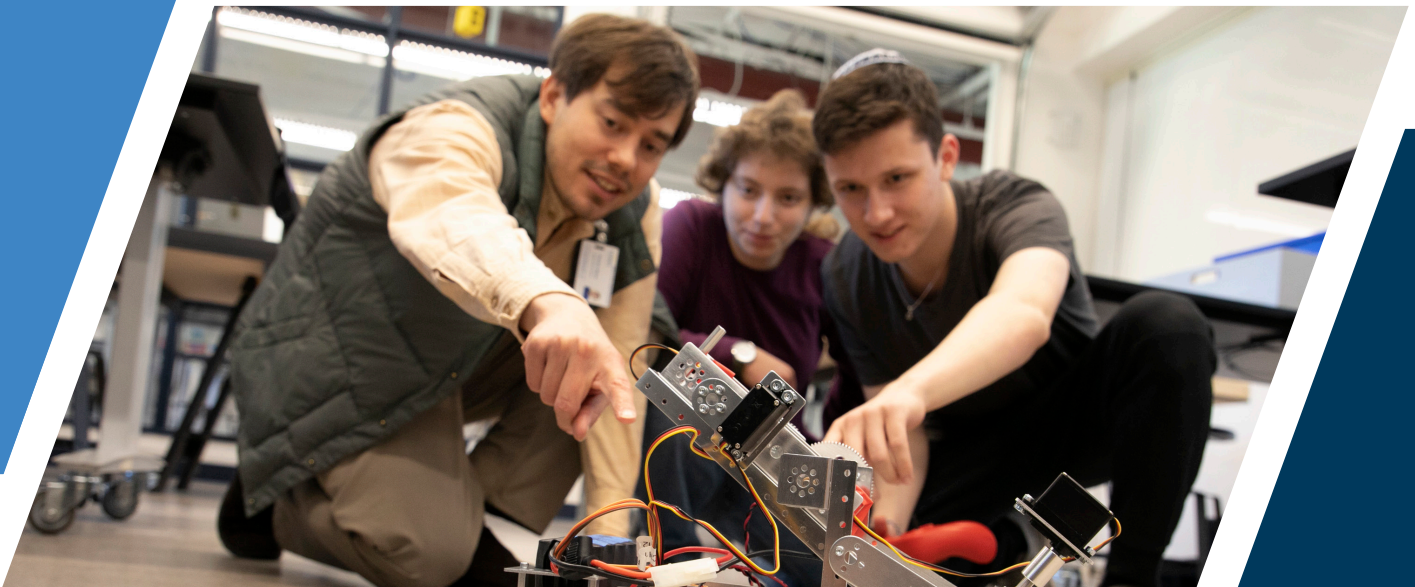


**EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS: RESEARCH BRIEF #2**

# Students' Perceptions of their Jewish Day School Climate



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## About this Brief

The Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (CASJE) is a community of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers dedicated to improving the quality of knowledge that can be used to guide Jewish education and learning. CASJE is committed to developing high quality research that is responsive to critical questions across diverse sectors in Jewish education. CASJE's programmatic and fiduciary home is located at the George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GSEHD).

Second in a series, this brief reports on findings from a secondary analysis of data collected for CASJE's Jewish Educational Leadership in Day Schools study. Together these briefs offer insight into the day-to-day experiences of Jewish day school leaders, teachers, and students with implications for practice, policy, and purpose.

Led by Dr. Michael J. Feuer, Dean of GSEHD, this work was funded by The AVI CHAI Foundation and The Mandell and Madeleine Berman Foundation. The analysis and reporting was conducted by Rosov Consulting.

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## SUMMARY

# What are Jewish day school students' perspectives on school climate?

**School climate matters.** Decades of research have shown that school climate is associated with a host of positive social-emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes among students, and with desired professional behaviors among teachers.

Qualitative studies of contemporary Jewish day school education have long identified the social, communal, and interpersonal dimensions of school climate as elements that lie at the heart of schools' appeal to parents and their contribution to students' lives.

This brief—drawing on survey data gathered from just over 4,000 students in 27 schools during CASJE's study of Jewish day school leadership—further explores these claims.

The results indicate:

- 1. Students are enthusiastic about their schools. No matter their age, they do not want to switch to another school.**
- 2. Younger students most appreciate their teachers. Older students most appreciate their peers.**
- 3. Girls are more likely than boys to see school in positive terms, a pattern that is in line with the broader literature on gender and schooling.**
- 4. Students in Conservative and Community Jewish day schools perceive the Jewish dimensions of their school climate to be less positive than do students in Orthodox day schools. These students are less comfortable with the religious practices enacted and encouraged by their schools.**

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### School Climate Matters

**Climate, whether in meteorological, educational, or economic terms, is notoriously difficult to define and complex to discern.<sup>1</sup>**

Researchers Freiberg and Stein resort to metaphor: they suggest that school climate is “the heart and soul of the school. It is ... that essence of a school that leads a child, a teacher, and an administrator to love the school and to look forward to being there each school day.”<sup>2</sup> The National School Climate Council proposes that school climate is constituted by “patterns of people’s experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.”<sup>3</sup>

**However defined, there is widespread agreement that school climate matters.**

Decades of research have found a well-established association between school climate and a host of outcomes: “social, emotional, intellectual, and physical safety; positive youth development, mental health, and healthy relationships; higher graduation rates; school connectedness and engagement; academic achievement; social, emotional,

and civic learning; teacher retention; and effective school reform.”<sup>4</sup> This incredible array of outcomes speaks to the multidimensional nature—and importance—of school climate. In Freiberg’s words, “the elements that make up school climate ... [range] from the quality of interactions in the teachers’ lounge to the noise levels in hallways and cafeterias, from the physical structure of the building to the physical comfort levels (involving such factors as heating, cooling, and lighting) of the individuals and how safe they feel.”<sup>5</sup>

**Conventionally, researchers ascribe four broad dimensions to this construct: safety, teaching and learning (academic climate), relationships (community climate), and the environment.<sup>6</sup>**

In effect, we can say that almost everything that happens in schools makes a difference to the everyday climate.

The field of Jewish education has few studies about school climate in Jewish day schools, and those studies are based on a small sample of schools. One study, for example, included a sample of six denominationally aligned day schools, and found positive student-teacher relations and high “achievement motivation,” that is, students believed they could learn and were willing to learn

1. Wang & Degol., 2016.

2. Freiberg, & Stein, 1999, 11.

3. National School Climate Council, 2007, 4.

4. Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2013, 359.

5. Freiberg, 1998, 22.

6. Wang & Degol., 2016.

### DATA AND METHODS

The data reported in this brief come from secondary analysis of responses to CASJE's "Conditions for Learning Survey." This instrument was originally developed by the American Institutes for Research (2014) and has been employed in hundreds of public and private schools. It was adapted for Jewish day schools for the purposes of the CASJE study with the inclusion of additional items related to the Jewish values of schools. Three age-appropriate versions of the instrument were fielded for elementary school (Grades 3-5), middle school (Grades 6-8), and high school (Grades 9-11).

The survey was fielded between 2014 and 2016. Responses were received from 1,444 third to fifth grade students at 20 schools, 1,441 sixth to eighth grade students at 20 schools, and 1,125 ninth to eleventh grade students at 11 schools. (Some divisions were in the same school. There were 27 schools in total.)

All three surveys included banks of comparable, developmentally appropriate questions concerned with the students' relationships with one another, their relationships with their teachers, their perception of academic expectations and practices in the school, and generally how comfortable/happy they felt in school. These banks of questions were presented as statements in relation to which respondents were asked questions with one of the following stems: "How much do you agree with the following statements about students in your school?" "How much do you agree with the following statements about your teachers?" or "How much do you agree with the following [with reference to the school as a whole]?" Responses in the elementary school survey were organized on a three-point scale with the options of "no," "sometimes," and "yes." Responses in the middle and high school surveys were organized on a four-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." To enable comparison across school divisions, elementary school responses were recalculated on a four-point scale.

*More information about the sample and methods can be found in Appendices A and B, respectively, at the end of the brief.*

## BACKGROUND: WHAT SHAPES SCHOOL CLIMATE?

at school. At the same time, the study also reported relatively lower levels of student caring, respect, and trust for one another. The authors attributed high levels of student stress to the demands of the dual Jewish/general studies curriculum, high academic expectations, and lack of alignment between school and home messages.<sup>7</sup>

This brief analyzes data collected from just over 4,000 students, during the course of CASJE's study of Jewish day school leadership. These data, gathered from across the divisions at 27 schools, are unusually broad and diverse. To echo Freiberg and Stein's metaphor, they allow us to uncover the beating heart of day school education as perceived by students. They open a window on what students especially appreciate about their schools.

7. Ben-Avie, & Comer, 2005.

## Five Distinct Dimensions of Day School Climate

**Students think of day school climate in terms of five broad dimensions.<sup>8</sup>**

These dimensions look different in elementary school compared to middle and high school. The dimensions of school climate in middle and high school are very similar.<sup>9</sup>

As elaborated in Exhibit 1, the dimensions of climate in the elementary divisions are:

1. teachers' support for and challenge of students;
2. the social-emotional climate among students;
3. students' attitudes toward Jewish studies and Hebrew;
4. teachers' investment in student learning; and
5. teachers' fairness with students.

The dimensions of climate in the middle and high school divisions are:

1. teachers' support for and challenge of students;
2. the social-emotional climate among students;
3. students' attitudes toward Jewish studies and Hebrew;
4. the work ethic and integrity of students; and
5. teachers' nurture and modeling of Jewish learning and Jewish values.

Exhibit 1 explains each one of the dimensions.

8. These dimensions were generated through factor analysis of 25 survey items, a method for looking at constructs underlying responses to different survey items. These items included statements such as, "My teachers really care about me," "Most students in my school stop and think before they get too angry," and "Most students in my school work hard to understand the Jewish texts that we study in our classes" (examples all drawn

from the elementary school survey). For a full list of items see Appendix B.

9. The labels given to the dimensions were generated by the research team. Appendix B shows the specific items that comprise these five dimensions and help clarify why these labels were chosen.



## Exhibit 1: Dimensions of Day School Climate

### Elementary School



#### **Social-Emotional Climate Among Students**

Students work collaboratively, respect one another, and resolve differences reasonably.

#### **Students' Attitudes Toward Jewish Studies and Hebrew**

Students are not bored in Jewish studies. They appreciate the importance of Hebrew and want to learn more about Israel.

#### **Teachers' Support for and Challenge of Students**

Teachers show care for students and academically challenge them, making classes interesting.

#### **Teachers' Investment in Student Learning**

Teachers make learning, especially Jewish learning, relevant, meaningful, and understandable.

#### **Teachers' Fairness with Students**

Teachers treat students fairly and equitably.

### Middle/High School



#### **Social-Emotional Climate Among Students**

Students get along well. They care for and respect one another.

#### **Students' Attitudes Toward Jewish Studies and Hebrew**

Students enjoy Jewish practices and rituals. They appreciate the importance of Hebrew, want to learn more about Israel, and work hard to understand Jewish texts.

#### **Teachers' Support for and Challenge of Students**

Teachers show care for students and academically challenge them, making classes interesting and making themselves available to students.

#### **Teachers' Nurture and Modeling of Jewish Learning and Jewish Values**

Teachers are good Jewish role models who meaningfully engage students about Jewish issues.

#### **Work Ethic and Integrity of Students**

Students work conscientiously, collaboratively, and honestly.

*See Exhibits B3 and B4 in Appendix B for a list of items that comprise each dimension.*

# Students Feel Generally Positive about School

Students hold positive views about the dimensions of school climate.

Across all the students surveyed, the most positively rated dimension is “Teachers’ Support for and Challenge of Students,” with a mean of 3.18 on a 4-point scale. The least positively rated dimension is that of “Students’ Attitudes Toward Jewish Studies and Hebrew,” with a mean of 2.51 among Middle/High School students—essentially the midpoint on a 4-point scale (neither positive nor negative).

Elementary school students view the dimensions of school climate significantly more positively than do middle/high school students (with the exception of “Social-Emotional Climate Among Students”).

This finding is consistent with the broader literature on school climate that may reflect the more critical demeanor of older students or may indeed indicate a less-positive school climate in the higher divisions.<sup>10</sup>

## Exhibit 2: Elementary Students Offer a More Positive Assessment of Climate Dimensions

ELEMENTARY		MIDDLE/HIGH	
Teachers' Support for and Challenge of Students	3.18	Social-Emotional Climate Among Students	2.95
Students' Attitudes Toward Jewish Studies and Hebrew	2.97	Work Ethic and Integrity of Students	2.75
Teachers' Investment in Student Learning	2.88	Teachers' Support for and Challenge of Students	2.74
Teachers' Fairness with Students	2.84	Teachers' Nurture and Modeling of Jewish Learning and Jewish Values	2.7
Social-Emotional Climate Among Students	2.81	Students' Attitudes Toward Jewish Studies and Hebrew	2.51
Average Mean	2.97	Average Mean	2.74

Responses for the elementary school items were on a 3-point scale of 1 = *No*, 2 = *Sometimes*, and 3 = *Yes*. They were rescaled to a 4-point scale to allow comparison to the middle/high school items (with 1 representing *Strongly Disagree* and 4 representing *Strongly Agree*).

10. Esposito, 1999.

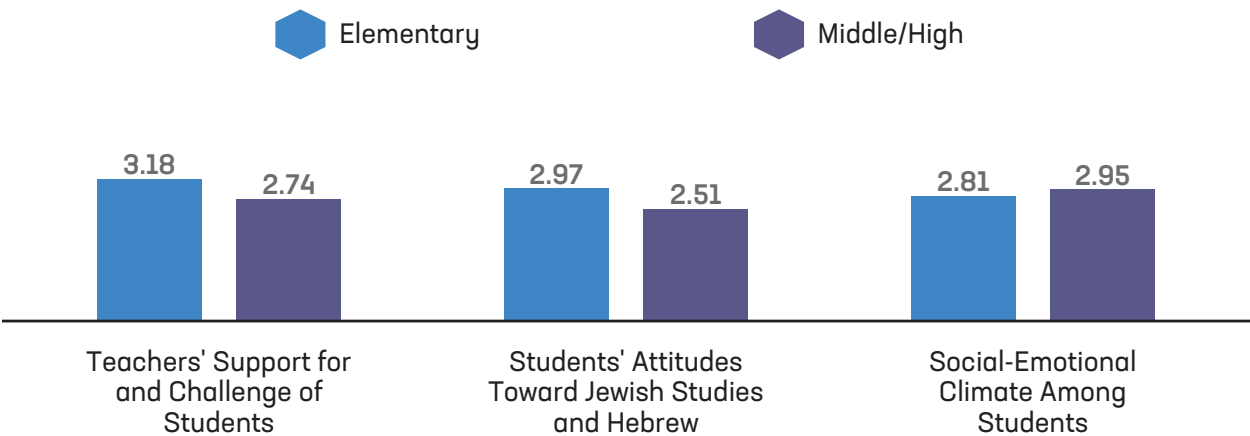
# Two Microclimates: Elementary School and Middle/High School

What elementary and middle/  
high school students like  
about school varies greatly  
(see Exhibit 3).<sup>11</sup>

Middle and high school students experience their relationship with their peers (the “social and emotional climate among students,” 2.95) as the most positive aspect of school climate and identify their peers’ attitude toward Jewish studies (“students’ attitude towards Jewish studies and Hebrew,” 2.51) as the least positive dimension.

Elementary school students perceive their teachers’ care and academic engagement with students ( “Teachers’ Support for and Challenge of Students,” 3.18) as the most positive dimension of school climate. While the social and emotional climate among their peers is somewhat positive (“Social-Emotional Climate Among Students,” 2.81), this is the least positive dimension of the three dimensions of school climate that can be directly compared across divisions.

Exhibit 3: What Students Like about School Varies Greatly Across Divisions



10. Esposito, 1999.

11. This finding reports dimensions of school climate that can be directly compared across elementary and middle/high school divisions, where the factors—the analytical constructs—are similar.

## **Students are Enthusiastic about their Schools: Younger Students Love their Teachers, Older Students Love their Peers**

**Overall there was strong agreement among students about what elements of their school climate were the most positive. And, those elements were also highly rated (with a mean score above 4 out of 5).**

Younger students regard their teachers as making the greatest positive contribution to their school experience; apart from one item conveying that they wouldn't want to switch schools, the other highest rated items are all concerned with the efforts of teachers. Older students also convey that they wouldn't want to switch schools, but their positive assessment of school stems first and foremost from their relationships with their peers, and only then from the efforts of their teachers.

**This positive social and emotional climate seems to be the special sauce in the Jewish middle and high school experience.**

In elementary school, the social and emotional climate is a positive component of the context, but it does not stand out as being especially important. Data from an ongoing study of more than a thousand Jewish students in the United Kingdom confirm the noteworthiness of this finding. The intense social climate of Jewish high schools sets them apart from the independent non-Jewish schools with which they compete.<sup>12</sup>

### **Exhibit 4: The Most Positive Aspects of School Vary by School Division**

#### **ELEMENTARY**

Teachers and other staff help students

Teachers care about students

Students are happy staying in the school they attend

Teachers help students do better on their schoolwork

Teachers push students to explain their thinking

#### **MIDDLE/HIGH**

Students care about each other

Students are happy staying in the school they attend

Students treat one another with respect

Students get along well

Teachers push students to explain their thinking

12. In interviews, Jewish students at non-Jewish schools make a distinction between their school friends and their close friends out of school; the primary concern at school is to achieve academic success. The students in Jewish schools lead much more integrated and intense social lives. They enthuse about the social environment at school even while they seek to do well academically (Pears Foundation, 2019).

**Lukewarm About the Jewish Climate:  
It's Not the Fault of the Teachers**

**Students' lukewarm perceptions of the Jewish dimensions of the climate are not, in large part, about the role of their teachers, whom they generally view positively (see Exhibit 5).**

Almost all teacher-related items received a mean score between 2.70 and 2.97. The lukewarm student response (ranging from 2.22 to 2.76) is much more about how they themselves react to the Jewish content of school life.

**These responses are consistent with what is known from other studies, that older students are ambivalent about learning Hebrew and engaging in prayer, but relatively interested in learning more about Israel.<sup>13</sup>**

These responses may reflect the diverse profile and motivations of families who send their children to Jewish day schools and their incomplete alignment with the school's Jewish mission, practices, and curriculum priorities, as much as it does about the quality of what they experience in school.



**Exhibit 5: Lukewarm Perceptions of Jewish Climate in Middle/High School are More About Fellow Students than Teachers**

My teachers: Are good role models of Jewish life.	2.97
Most students in my school: Are very interested in learning about Israel.	2.76
My teachers: Take the time to talk to me about Jewish ideas and practices.	2.75
My teachers: Often connect what I am learning to life outside the classroom.	2.72
My teachers: Often connect what we learn in Jewish studies to what is going on outside of class.	2.7
Most students in my school: Enjoy Jewish practices and rituals.	2.55
Most students in my school: Model the Jewish values they learn in class.	2.52
Most students in my school: Work hard to understand Jewish texts.	2.52
My teachers: Do a great job teaching students what is special about Shabbat.	2.5
Most students in my school: Feel that Hebrew is an important language to know.	2.47
My teachers: Often give assignments that help me learn how to live Jewish life.	2.46
Most students in my school: Appreciate the way we do tefillah (prayer) at our school.	2.22

13. See Pomson and Wertheimer (2017) about Hebrew; Lehmann (2010) about prayer; and Pomson, Wertheimer & Hachohen Wolf (2014) about Israel in day schools.

# Additional Influences on the Climate: Denomination and School Size

## Denomination Makes a Difference<sup>14</sup>

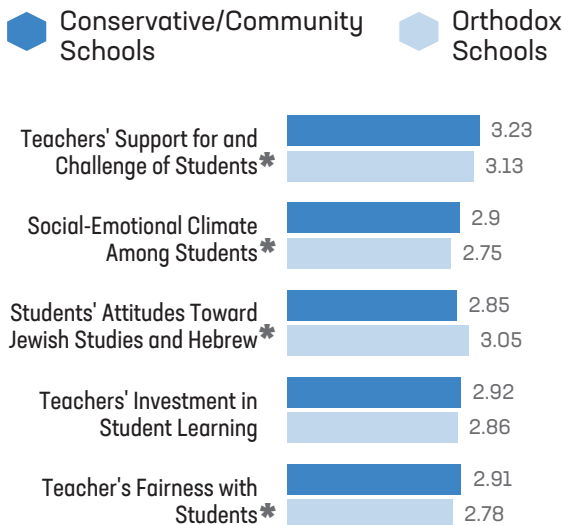
Elementary, middle, and high school students in Conservative and Community schools rate the climate dimensions associated with Jewish studies (“Students’

Attitudes to Jewish Studies and Hebrew” and “Teachers’ Nurture and Modeling of Jewish Learning and Jewish Values”) less positively compared to the same students in Orthodox day schools (see Exhibit 6).

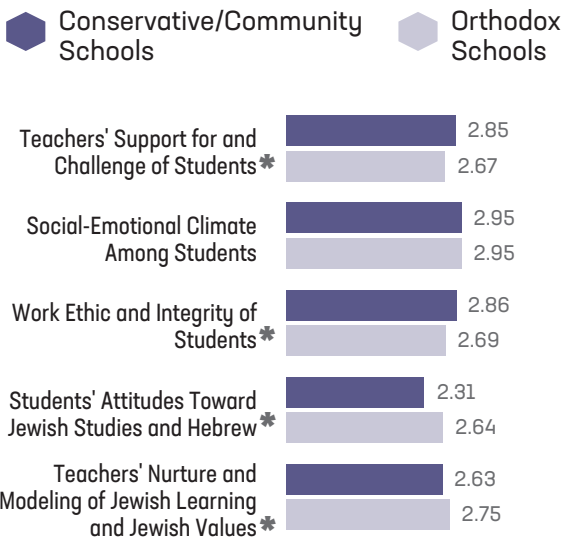
These students, it seems, are less positive than their peers in Modern Orthodox and Orthodox schools with the religious practices enacted and encouraged by their schools. Students in both Conservative and Community elementary and middle/high schools rank the Jewish

### Exhibit 6: School Denomination Makes a Difference

#### Elementary



#### Middle/High



\* Statistically significant difference between Conservative/Community and Orthodox schools, at  $p < .05$ .

14. 62% of the elementary school respondents and 61% of the middle/high school respondents attend Modern Orthodox or Orthodox schools (grouped together as Orthodox schools). Otherwise, respondents attend Conservative-affiliated or non-denominational Community schools (grouped together as Conservative/Community schools).

## FINDINGS: WHAT ARE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL CLIMATE?

dimensions of school climate least positively among the five dimensions assessed.

Somewhat puzzling, denomination also seems to make a difference in how students rate other dimensions of climate: students from Conservative and Community elementary schools give a significantly more positive assessment to “Teachers’ Support for and Challenge of Students,” “Social-Emotional Climate Among Students” and “Teachers’ Fairness with Students” than do students from Orthodox schools. Likewise, students in the middle and high school divisions at Conservative and Community schools rate “Teachers’ Support for and Challenge of Students” and “Peers’ Work Ethics and Integrity” significantly higher than do students from Orthodox schools. These patterns can’t be attributed to a “misalignment” between the students’ Jewish outlooks or home practices and those of the school, as might be the case with respect to the less-positive assessment of Jewish dimensions of the culture. This is a phenomenon that should be explored by further research.

### School Size Matters

**Elementary school students from smaller schools with fewer than 400 students report a significantly more positive “Social-Emotional**

**Climate Among Students” than do students in larger schools with more than 500 students (see Exhibit 7).<sup>15</sup>**

The broader literature on school climate points to mixed conclusions with respect to the relationship of climate to school size, with the strongest case being made for an indirect deleterious effect of size on climate.<sup>16</sup> While none of the schools in the CASJE data set could conventionally be described as large (i.e., with more than 850 students at the elementary level and more than 2,000 in high school<sup>17</sup>), size does seem to make a difference in this context.

**In middle and high school, students in smaller schools have significantly more positive attitudes about “Teachers’ Support for and Challenge of Students,” “Students’ Attitudes Toward Jewish Studies and Hebrew,” and “Teachers’ Nurture and Modeling of Jewish Learning and Jewish Values” than do students in larger schools.**

At the same time, students in larger schools are significantly more positive than those in smaller schools about “Work Ethic and Integrity of Students.”

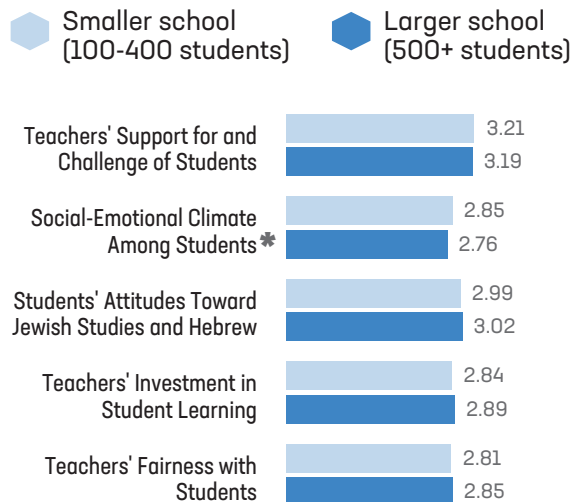
15. There aren’t any schools in the sample with between 401 and 500 students.

16. Bear, G.G. et al (2017); Wang, M. & Degol, J.L. (2016); Goldkind, L., & Farmer, G. L. (2013).

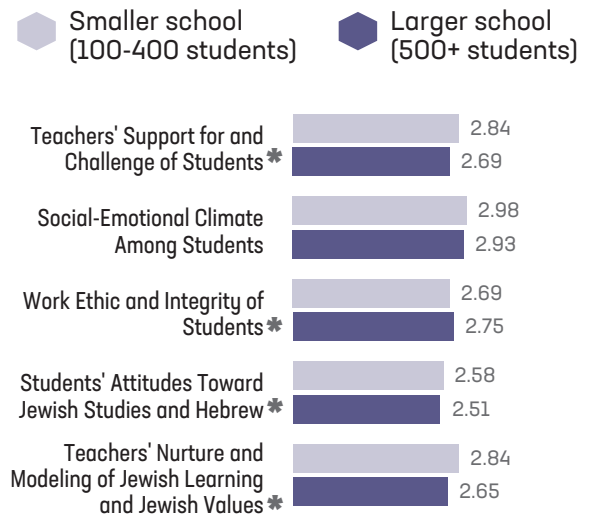
17. Brosnan, P., & McDonough, J. (2006).

## Exhibit 7: School Size Relates to Student Assessment of School Climate

### Elementary



### Middle/High



\* Statistically significant difference between smaller and larger schools, at  $p < .05$ .

There is no difference with respect to the social-emotional climate among students.

While one can readily imagine that more intimate settings might nurture more positive social-emotional climates, it is not clear why they should also be related to more positive attitudes among students to Jewish studies and Hebrew. These findings are not completely intuitive and suggest a need for circumspection or at least a search for relevant mediating variables.

### It's Different (Actually Better) for Girls

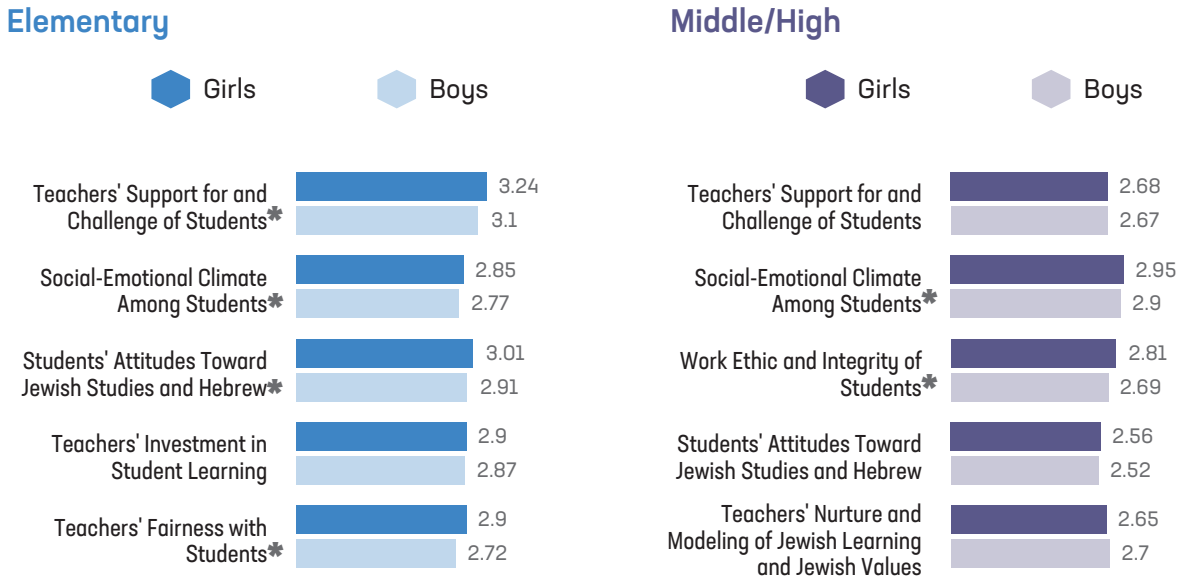
**Girls in elementary schools are significantly more positive than boys about school climate except with respect to "Teachers' Investment in Student Learning."**

While it's well established that girls are academically more successful than boys, and also experience more stress at school in the process, it has not been categorically established whether there is a relationship between gender and perceptions of school climate.<sup>18</sup>

18. Pomerantz, Raby & Harris, 2017.



# Exhibit 8: Elementary Girls are More Positive about School Climate than Boys; Differences Become Less Pronounced in Middle/High



\*Statistically significant difference between girls and boys, at  $p < .05$ .

Nevertheless, much recent research does point to the conclusion that girls have a more positive perception of school climate than do boys.<sup>19</sup>

## The data in this study generally align with these recent assessments.

At the elementary level, girls are significantly more positive than boys about all of the climate dimensions apart from “Teachers’ Investment in Student Learning.” Girls in middle and high school are significantly more positive than boys about the “Social-Emotional Climate

Among Students” and “Work Ethic and Integrity of Students.” The differences between genders with respect to the other climate dimensions are not statistically significant (see Exhibit 8). School denomination does not influence these gender differences.

19.Wang et al, 2010; Fan et al, 2011; Gordon & Fefer, 2019.

### What Matters Most in Day Schools?

Qualitative studies of contemporary Jewish day school education have long identified the social, communal, and interpersonal dimensions of school climate as lying at the heart of their appeal to parents and their legacy to students. The nurturing of belonging, trust, and safety is central to the promise of Jewish day schools and enable these schools to develop a sense of shared community.<sup>20</sup> The data in this study add nuance to these claims. They make clear that girls are more likely to view school climate more positively than boys; so do younger students compared to older ones. These data also demonstrate that while most day school students, whatever their age, would not want to switch out of their schools, what students find to be positive about their schools differs depending on the age of the students.

These age differences provoke important questions:

1. Broader research indicates that older students tend to be less positive about school climate than younger ones, but **what contributes to older students in**

this sample being so much less positive about climate dimensions associated with Jewish studies and Hebrew? It does not seem to be their assessment of their teachers' contribution to school life, which is in fact quite positive.

2. **What explains the lukewarm perception older students have of the Jewish climate of their school?** Does it reflect a lack of alignment between students' orientation to Jewish life and that of their schools?
3. **Is it possible that other aspects of the school culture and climate—such as their close sense of fellowship with their peers—draw and keep students in day school to the degree that students are willing to bracket their ambivalence about aspects of Jewish life at school unless asked about it in a survey?** Certainly, the relatively positive assessment of social-emotional relations with their peers compared to their attitudes to Jewish studies and Jewish life can be seen both as a cup half empty or half full. It may suggest an opportunity to strengthen and improve a climate students already overall view as positive.

20. Pomson & Schnoor, 2014.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The general impression created by these findings is that students enjoy their time in Jewish day school. Older students especially appreciate the social environment, and all students appreciate the efforts and authenticity of their teachers. Students seem to recognize that their teachers work hard to make their Jewish education compelling and relevant. These findings do not reveal what students take away in terms of Jewish and general learning from this experience, but they do imply that day school alumni will look back on this time of their lives with fondness. In the final analysis, whatever their denominational orientation, these schools are experienced as places that foster community.



## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR FURTHER EXPLORATION

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### For Practitioners

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What actions can teachers take to improve students' experience of the Jewish dimensions of schools?

What can be done to improve boys' experience of school in the particular context of the Jewish day school?

### For Researchers

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Students evidently appreciate the efforts of their teachers. What then accounts for their less enthusiastic responses about other aspects of day school climate?

How does denomination make a difference to students' perception of school culture beyond the specifics of Jewish studies and Jewish practice at school?

### For Policy Makers

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The social dimensions of Jewish high school are evidently of special appeal, but what to do about the limited appeal of the schools' Jewish cultural and religious content? Aren't these part of the very *raison d'être* of day school education? How might we strengthen the Jewish aspects of schools that shape students' assessment of their climate?

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## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The Conditions for Learning survey was fielded between 2014 and 2016. Responses were received from 1,444 third to fifth grade students at 20 schools, 1,441 sixth to eighth grade students at 20 schools, and 1,125 ninth to eleventh grade students at 11 schools. (Some divisions were in the same school. There were 27 schools in total.) Exhibit A1 shows how these data break down by the specific combinations of divisions.

**Exhibit A1: Breakdown of Data Received by School Division**

	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS			NUMBER OF STUDENTS		
	Orthodox Schools	Non-Orthodox Schools	Total	Orthodox Schools	Non-Orthodox Schools	Total
Elementary	0	2	2	0	68	68
Middle	0	1	1	0	63	63
High	4	1	5	607	188	795
Elementary + Middle	5	8	13	987	1,072	2,059
Middle + High	0	1	1	0	162	162
Elementary + Middle + High	5	0	5	863	0	863
Total	14	13	27	2,457	1,553	4,010

Exhibit A2 shows the distribution of students by grade level. The distribution of the elementary school students is quite balanced with about a third of the respondents in each of the grades (37% in 3rd, 33% in 4th, and 30% in 5th). Grade information for middle and high school students is limited given that 60% of the students had missing data (i.e., they did not report their grade). Yet, the distribution of grades for middle and high school students who did report their grade is quite balanced, as well.

**Exhibit A2: Students by Grade**

	n	% including Missing	% excluding Missing
3rd	523	13.0%	21.1%
4th	473	11.8%	19.1%
5th	437	10.9%	17.6%
6th	160	4.0%	6.4%
7th	208	5.2%	8.4%
8th	159	4.0%	6.4%
9th	161	4.0%	6.5%
10th	208	5.2%	8.4%
11th	152	3.8%	6.1%
Missing	1,529	38.1%	
Total	4,010	100.0%	100.0%

## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

As shown in Exhibit A3, the distribution of gender across the different divisions is evenhanded with half identifying as girls and half as boys. As with the grade information, gender information was not reported by 62% of the middle and high school students.

**Exhibit A3: Students by Gender**

	GIRLS		BOYS	
	n	%	n	%
Elementary School	718	50.4%	708	49.6%
Middle/High School	468	50.2%	465	49.8%
Total	1,186	50.3%	1,173	49.7%

School size information was provided by the schools' principals and is only available for 10 elementary schools (out of the 20 in this division) and 12 middle/high schools (out of the 25 schools in this combined division). A total of 1,742 of the respondents (43% of the sample) are missing school size data. Exhibit A4 shows the distribution of students by school size for students for whom data are available. As can be seen, three quarters of the students are from large schools with over 500 students enrolled.

**Exhibit A4: Students by School Size**

	ELEMENTARY		MIDDLE/HIGH		TOTAL	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
101-200 Students	28	3.2%	157	11.2%	185	8.2%
201-300 Students	150	17.4%	99	7.1%	249	11.0%
301-400 Students	76	8.8%	43	3.1%	119	5.2%
401-500 Students	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
501+ Students	610	70.6%	1105	78.7%	1715	75.6%
Total (excluding missing)	864	100.0%	1404	100.0%	2268	100.0%



## APPENDIX B: MEASURES AND METHODS

The elementary school Conditions for Learning instrument included three demographic questions (school name, student gender, and student grade) and 25 statements for which students had to pick between 'Yes,' 'No,' and 'Sometimes.' The middle school and the high school versions included similar demographic questions and 38 statements for which a 4-point agree/disagree scale was used. Six items in the elementary version and nine items in the middle/high versions were worded negatively and were reverse-coded for the purpose of creating aggregate measures, such that higher scores represent more positive attitudes. To enable comparisons across the elementary school version and the higher divisions versions, we rescaled elementary students' responses to fit into a 4-point scale. Exhibit B1 provides the frequencies and item statistics for the elementary school students (negatively worded items are presented in their original form). Exhibit B2 provides the frequencies and item statistics for the middle school and high school students combined (negatively worded items are presented in their original form).

**Exhibit B1: Item Statistics for the Elementary School Version**

	No	Sometimes	Yes	N	M	SD
Teachers and other staff in this school are willing to give students help.	1%	28%	71%	1,430	3.55	0.71
My teachers really care about me.	5%	22%	73%	1,421	3.52	0.85
My teachers help me do better on my school work.	4%	31%	65%	1,423	3.40	0.86
My teachers ask me to explain my answers.	2%	45%	53%	1,434	3.26	0.81
Most students in my school work hard to understand the Jewish texts that we study in our classes.	7%	40%	53%	1,430	3.19	0.94
Most students in my school do their best, even when their school work is hard.	6%	43%	52%	1,423	3.19	0.90
Most of the students in my school do their part when we work together on a group project.	6%	45%	49%	1,429	3.15	0.90
My teachers notice if I have trouble learning something.	10%	38%	52%	1419	3.14	1.00
Most students in my school treat each other with respect.	8%	49%	43%	1,436	3.02	0.93
Teachers and other staff in this school are fair to all students.	6%	55%	40%	1,437	3.01	0.87
Most students in my school feel that Hebrew is an important language to know.	16%	41%	44%	1,420	2.92	1.07
Most students in my school are very interested in learning about Israel.	13%	49%	38%	1,424	2.88	1.00
My teachers want us to talk with others about things we are studying.	17%	45%	39%	1,420	2.82	1.07
My teachers take the time to talk to me about Jewish practices.	18%	42%	40%	1,407	2.82	1.10
The homework I get from my teachers helps me learn.	19%	43%	38%	1,427	2.79	1.10
My teachers give me work that is interesting.	15%	61%	24%	1,427	2.63	0.93
My teachers often connect what we learn in Jewish studies to what is going on outside the classroom.	22%	47%	31%	1,403	2.62	1.09
Most students in my school try to talk to other students if they are having a problem with them.	22%	51%	28%	1,434	2.59	1.05
Most students in my school stop and think before they get too angry.	25%	59%	17%	1,432	2.38	0.96
Most students in my school get mad when they disagree with people.	23%	54%	23%	1,431	1.51	1.01

## APPENDIX B: MEASURES AND METHODS

	No	Sometimes	Yes	N	M	SD
My teachers treat some students better than others.	38%	34%	28%	1,426	1.35	1.21
Students at my school are teased, picked on, made fun of, or called names.	41%	42%	17%	1,433	1.13	1.08
I am bored in Jewish studies classes.	38%	50%	12%	1,436	1.12	0.99
I am bored in general studies classes.	37%	57%	7%	1,434	1.05	0.88
I wish I went to a different school.	65%	31%	3%	1,433	0.57	0.83

Notes: Before presenting all these items, students were given the following instruction: "Please mark whether you agree with these statements about your school." The mean and standard deviations are on the new scale of 4 points.

### Exhibit B2: Item Statistics for the Middle/High School Versions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N	M	SD
My teachers: Often require me to explain my answers.	2%	12%	64%	23%	2,541	3.07	0.63
My teachers: Encourage students to share their ideas about things we are studying in class.	4%	15%	58%	24%	2,553	3.01	0.73
My teachers: Are good role models of Jewish life.	5%	17%	55%	23%	2,518	2.97	0.77
My teachers: Really care about me.	6%	19%	50%	25%	2,515	2.94	0.82
My teachers: Give me feedback on my assignments that helps me improve my work.	5%	21%	55%	21%	2,539	2.91	0.76
Most students in my school: Do their best, even when their school work is difficult.	3%	19%	63%	15%	2,544	2.91	0.66
In my school...I can get extra help at school outside of my regular classes.	6%	18%	57%	19%	2,518	2.89	0.78
Most students in my school: Treat each other with respect.	4%	21%	64%	12%	2,534	2.85	0.66
My teachers: Encourage students to share their own interpretations of Jewish text.	7%	20%	55%	18%	2,546	2.84	0.79
Most students in my school: Try to do a good job on school work even when it is not interesting.	5%	22%	61%	12%	2,532	2.81	0.70
Most students in my school: Are very interested in learning about Israel.	4%	31%	52%	15%	2,532	2.76	0.73
My teachers: Take the time to talk to me about Jewish ideas and practices.	7%	26%	51%	16%	2,528	2.75	0.80
My teachers: Often connect what I am learning to life outside the classroom.	8%	27%	52%	14%	2,547	2.72	0.80
My teachers: Often connect what we learn in Jewish studies to what is going on outside the classroom.	8%	27%	50%	14%	2,545	2.70	0.81
My teachers: Help me make up work after an excused absence.	9%	29%	45%	18%	2,521	2.70	0.86
In my school...Adults in this school are usually willing to make the time to give students extra help.	14%	29%	49%	18%	2,514	2.68	0.83

## APPENDIX B: MEASURES AND METHODS

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N	M	SD
Most students in my school: Do their share of the work when we have group projects.	8%	27%	57%	10%	2,541	2.68	0.75
Most students in my school: Try to work out their disagreements with other students by talking to them.	8%	32%	53%	8%	2,514	2.61	0.74
Most students in my school: Do all their homework.	7%	37%	49%	8%	2,512	2.57	0.73
My teachers: Often assign homework that helps me learn.	12%	33%	45%	11%	2,531	2.56	0.83
Most students in my school: Enjoy Jewish practices and rituals.	9%	37%	46%	9%	2,524	2.55	0.78
Most students in my school: Model the Jewish values they learn in class.	9%	37%	47%	8%	2,524	2.52	0.76
Most students in my school: Work hard to understand Jewish texts.	8%	39%	47%	7%	2,553	2.52	0.74
My teachers: Do a great job teaching students what is special about Shabbat.	14%	35%	38%	14%	2,527	2.50	0.89
Most students in my school: Feel that Hebrew is an important language to know.	10%	40%	41%	8%	2,537	2.47	0.79
My teachers: Often give assignments that help me learn how to live Jewish life.	11%	41%	39%	10%	2,526	2.46	0.81
Most students in my school: Say mean things to other students when they think the other students deserve it.	13%	41%	39%	8%	2,528	2.43	0.81
In my school...When students in this school already know the material [they get] more advance assignments	16%	43%	35%	8%	2,530	2.32	0.82
In my school...Adults in this school apply the same rules to all students equally.	23%	39%	31%	8%	2,530	2.23	0.88
Most students in my school: Appreciate the way we do tefillah (prayer) at our school.	22%	42%	29%	8%	2,532	2.22	0.86
In my school...Adults in this school are often too busy to give students extra help.	20%	53%	22%	5%	2,542	2.12	0.79
Most students in my school: Think it's OK to fight if someone insults them.	22%	50%	24%	5%	2,523	2.11	0.79
Most students in my school: Just look out for themselves.	20%	55%	23%	3%	2,520	2.09	0.74
Most students in my school: Think it's OK to cheat if other students are cheating.	31%	44%	25%	6%	2,532	2.05	0.82
Most students in my school: Don't get along together very well.	24%	62%	13%	1%	2,536	1.90	0.63
Most students in my school: Like to put others down.	31%	51%	15%	2%	2,552	1.89	0.74
In my school...I wish I went to a different school.	41%	39%	14%	7%	2,458	1.87	0.90
Most students in my school: Don't really care about each other.	33%	55%	11%	1%	2,551	1.80	0.68

Notes: Question stems were: "How much do you agree with the following statements about students in your school: Most students in my school...", "How much do you agree with the following statements about your teachers: My teachers...", and "How much do you agree with the following: In my school..."

## APPENDIX B: MEASURES AND METHODS

We conducted three separate factor analyses for each of the versions using maximum likelihood extraction method with Oblimin rotation. The 25 items on the elementary school version loaded onto five factors (see Exhibit B3). Factors were correlated with one another to a medium degree ( $.24 < r_s < .58$ ,  $p_s < .001$ ).

### Exhibit B3: Elementary School Factors

<b>Teachers' Support for and Challenge of Students</b> ( $\alpha = 0.79$ )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>My teachers help me do better on my schoolwork.</li><li>My teachers really care about me.</li><li>My teachers give me work that is interesting.</li><li>The homework I get from my teachers helps me learn.</li><li>My teachers notice if I have trouble learning something.</li><li>I am bored in general studies classes.</li><li>Teachers and other staff in this school are willing to give students help.</li><li>I wish I went to a different school.</li></ul>
<b>Social-Emotional Climate Among Students</b> ( $\alpha = 0.71$ )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Most students in my school treat each other with respect.</li><li>Students at my school are teased, picked on, made fun of, or called names.</li><li>Most students in my school stop and think before they get too angry.</li><li>Most students in my school get mad when they disagree with people.</li><li>Most students in my school do their best, even when their schoolwork is hard.</li><li>Most of the students in my school do their part when we work together on a group project.</li><li>Most students in my school try to talk to other students if they are having a problem with them.</li></ul>
<b>Students' Attitudes Toward Jewish Life at School</b> ( $\alpha = 0.65$ )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Most students in my school feel that Hebrew is an important language to know.</li><li>Most students in my school are very interested in learning about Israel.</li><li>Most students in my schoolwork hard to understand the Jewish texts that we study in our classes.</li><li>I am bored in Jewish studies classes.</li></ul>
<b>Teachers' Investment in Student Learning</b> ( $\alpha = 0.59$ )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>My teachers take the time to talk to me about Jewish practices.</li><li>My teachers often connect what we learn in Jewish studies to what is going on outside the classroom.</li><li>My teachers want us to talk with others about things we are studying.</li><li>My teachers ask me to explain my answers.</li></ul>
<b>Teachers' Fairness with Students</b> (Split Half Reliability = 0.69)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>My teachers treat some students better than others.</li><li>Teachers and other staff in this school are fair to all students.</li></ul>

Both the middle school and the high school items loaded on the same identical five factors, and thus these versions were combined for further analysis. Three of the 38 items did not load on any of the factors and were excluded from further analysis. [21] Exhibit B4 shows the alignment of the items with the factors. Factors were correlated with one another to a moderate degree ( $.26 < r_s < .61$ ,  $p_s < .001$ ). Of note, three of the factors included items that were similar in content to the elementary school items and hence were given the same names.

## APPENDIX B: MEASURES AND METHODS

### Exhibit B4: Middle/High School Factors

#### Teachers' Support for and Challenge of Students

( $\alpha = 0.82$ )

In my school...Adults in this school apply the same rules to all students equally.  
In my school...Adults in this school are often too busy to give students extra help.  
In my school...An adult at this school has helped me plan for life after high school.  
In my school...I can get extra help at school outside of my regular classes.  
In my school...When students in this school already know the material [they get more].  
My teachers: Encourage students to share their ideas about [class things].  
My teachers: Give me feedback on my assignments.  
My teachers: Help me make up work after an excused absence.  
My teachers: Often assign homework that helps me learn.  
My teachers: Often connect what I am learning to life outside the classroom.  
My teachers: Often require me to explain my answers.  
My teachers: Really care about me.  
In my school...I wish I went to a different school.

#### Social-Emotional Climate Among Students

( $\alpha = 0.80$ )

Most students in my school: Don't get along together very well.  
Most students in my school: Don't really care about each other.  
Most students in my school: Just look out for themselves.  
Most students in my school: Like to put others down.  
Most students in my school: Say mean things to other students.  
Most students in my school: Think it's OK to fight if someone insults them.  
Most students in my school: Treat each other with respect.

#### Students' Attitudes Toward Jewish Studies and Hebrew

( $\alpha = 0.80$ )

Most students in my school: Enjoy Jewish practices and rituals.  
Most students in my school: Appreciate the way we do tefillah (prayer) at our school.  
Most students in my school: Model the Jewish values they learn in class.  
Most students in my school: Feel that Hebrew is an important language to know.  
Most students in my school: Work hard to understand Jewish texts.  
Most students in my school: Are very interested in learning about Israel.

#### Work Ethic and Integrity of Students

( $\alpha = 0.72$ )

Most students in my school: Do their best, even when their schoolwork is difficult.  
Most students in my school: Try to do a good job on schoolwork even when it is not interesting.  
Most students in my school: Do all their homework.  
Most students in my school: Think it's OK to cheat if other students are cheating.  
Most students in my school: Try to work out their disagreements with other students.  
Most students in my school: Do their share of the work when we have group projects.

#### Teachers' Contribution to Jewish Life at School

( $\alpha = 0.83$ )

My teachers: Take the time to talk to me about Jewish ideas and practices.  
My teachers: Often give assignments that help me learn how to live Jewish life.  
My teachers: Do a great job teaching students what is special about Shabbat.  
My teachers: Often connect what we learn in Jewish studies to what is going on outside of class.  
My teachers: Encourage students to share their own interpretations of Jewish texts.  
My teachers: Are good role models of Jewish life.

## APPENDIX B: MEASURES AND METHODS

Item ratings within each factor were averaged to create factor scores. When comparing factor scores between categorical groups (i.e., gender, grade, school denomination, and school size) we used the procedure of MANOVA (multiple analysis of variance). Significant differences noted in text are at the conventional level of  $p < .05$ .



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