THE JIM JOSEPH FOUNDATION
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

A Picture of Learning Coming Together:

Year 3 Learnings

December 2020

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Design Principles for Powerful Professional Development: Summative Insights Derived from the Lived Experience of the Jim Joseph Foundation Professional Development Initiative

fractal (*noun*) A curve or geometric figure, each part of which has the same statistical character as the whole. Fractals are useful in modeling structures (such as eroded coastlines or snowflakes) in which similar patterns recur at progressively smaller scales

The Jim Joseph Foundation Professional Development Initiative has taken place over the past three years on a series of registers: first, for the more than 400 educators who participated in the various program cohorts managed by 10 program providers; then, for each of the organizations who led those programs, and especially for the program directors who themselves made up a cohort of their own; and finally for the broader field of Jewish education for which this collective effort has constituted a grand, even unprecedented, experiment.
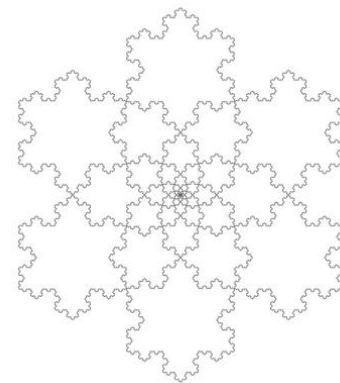
The Rosov Consulting team has tried to ensure that our evaluation work gave attention to each of these different strata, while also considering their intersections. Gathering data about the participating educators and what they gained from the programs while both facilitating and assessing the Professional Learning Community made up of the program directors, we have been able to observe at different orders of magnitude the structures (the program elements) that underpin powerful professional learning whatever the context. We have witnessed a kind of fractal phenomenon.

Our understanding of these matters draws from profoundly different data sources. Individual program **case studies** and data from **clinical interviews** have delivered insights into these experiences at the highest level of resolution even while each has been concerned with a different unit of analysis: the program, on the one hand, and the individual participant, on the other. The **Participant Audit** and the **Shared Outcomes Survey** have generated very different perspectives, helping expose cross-cutting patterns as they surface from the responses of hundreds of individuals—first, before they started the programs and then six months later. These surveys don't quite function as pre/post instruments, but they do keep separate participants' motivations and expectations, on the one hand, and the outcomes observed after the programs' conclusions, on the other. Finally, repeated interviews with **organizational supervisors** and with the **PLC participants**

make possible a kind of meta-analysis of all of the evaluation elements and offer a vantage point from which to consider the broader implications of the Initiative for the field.

The very different vistas opened up by each of these sources help us see the extent to which the delivery of meaningful professional development, whether for frontline educators or for the kinds of senior educators who participated in the PLC, involves keeping each of five strands in a state of creative tension.

1. Both utility *and* ultimate meaning: Whatever their level of seniority, participants want professional development to deliver learning of utility, what we called in our analysis of Participant Audit data learning that "enhances their professional self-efficacy." And yet, professional development assumes special significance for participants if it also allows them to experience "holistic professional growth" and if it gives them a chance to stretch, explore new ideas, and think of themselves differently. Our case studies, clinical interviews, and shared outcomes data show that these two outcomes are not mutually exclusive, as is often assumed.

2. Both personal growth *and* professional belonging: The two signature frameworks for high-quality professional development—personal mentorship and cohort-based experiences—address distinct learning needs. Professionals cherish the opportunity to grow their skills and their understanding through mentorship and thought partnership with a "significant other;" this is the most effective (although not especially efficient) means by which to learn "new ways of thinking and doing." At the same time, they celebrate professional development that introduces them into thick professional networks. These networks can function as a learning resource, but they take on greater significance when they enable educators to find a place within meaningful professional communities. Almost all our data sources (program director interviews, clinical interviews, shared outcomes survey, case studies) highlight the yin and yang of these two experiences.

3. Both diversity *and* commonality: Program participants and PLC members all noted how stimulating it was when they learned alongside people whose professional profiles differed from their own and who saw the world differently. At the same time, they were frustrated when the members of their group did not have enough in common professionally that they couldn't go beyond surface issues to questions of the deepest significance. Ensuring the best possible mix of diversity and commonality is one of the most difficult challenges for providers of professional development. It requires knowing enough about program applicants ahead of time, while also having a sufficiently deep applicant pool that potential participants can be comfortably turned away.

4. Both space *and* structure: Some of the case studies show that participants struggle when given too much space to figure out things for themselves. Some PLC members were also frustrated that they weren't bound more closely together with their fellow cohort members through a stronger set of shared obligations. Too much structure and too many obligations quickly become constricting, especially in programs that run over long periods of time. Professional development programs face two challenges: they're competing for attention with the demands of their participants' day jobs—they can't ask too much of them; and they're

serving adult learners who often want space to figure out things for themselves—they don't want to be infantilized. The sweet spot between too much structure and too much space is likely different for each individual participant.

5. Both work *and* play: Professional development provides a valuable break from routine. Of course, if it didn't go deeper than being a time-out, its value would be limited. People want to be taken seriously, and they (usually) relish intense, intellectually stimulating work. And yet if the experience is too intense—a case of all work and no play—it would disappoint, too. Participants in cohort programs enjoy the opportunity to kick back and get to know their peers in social settings, especially over meals. These encounters are what underpin the formation of strong professional communities. Again, finding the right balance is as much art as science.

Of course, there's a gigantic literature about best practices in professional development. These five insights drawn from our work are not intended to ignore what is already well established. We're hopeful, though, that just as the learning derived from self-discovery is typically more powerful than learning derived from instruction, so the insights we've drawn from our own lived experiences and from the instruments created specifically for this purpose carry a special force. We're hopeful they can serve the Jim Joseph Foundation as it pursues its ongoing efforts to elevate and enhance the field of professional development in Jewish education.

Participant Audit:
Who's Participating in Professional Development and Why

We have now finished collecting "audit" data about the profiles and motivations of participants in the 10 programs in the Jim Joseph Foundation's Professional Development Initiative. In total, we have gathered data from just over 400 individuals over the course of three years.

With no further cohorts due to start, we now have an opportunity to take stock of the personal and professional profiles of those recruited by the programs and what motivated them to take part. We can then explore whether deeper analysis of these data yields insights of significance about what various populations seek from professional development experiences in Jewish education. Finally, while we have tended to avoid probing differences between the participants in the various programs, now that a full data set is available, we can investigate such differences when meaningful.

Most participants (70%) are women, a balance that probably reflects the make-up of the field. Most (64%) were under the age of 40 at the start of their program. They are fairly well-educated too, with about two-thirds having received an advanced degree of some kind. The great majority (92%) identify as Jewish, almost all of whom (92%) experienced some form of Jewish education during their school years. In fact, about a third experienced more than seven years of day school education, quite a sizeable minority. The participants with more intense Jewish educational backgrounds were more heavily concentrated in Ayeka, Makom/Moishe House, Next Gen, and YBC.

In terms of their professional profiles, the great majority (91%) are working full-time, a finding of interest in a field where overall about a third of employees are part-time. This seems to confirm that part-timers receive fewer opportunities to experience intensive professional development or are less inclined to do so. (SVARA, with 8 part-timers out of their total 20 participants, was the only program where there was a higher concentration.)

Slightly less than half of all participants (41%) do not have any managerial or supervisory responsibilities; they are "frontline" staff. The majority of these individuals (60%) have been in their sector for 5 years or less. By contrast, the majority of those who have supervisory responsibilities (60%) have been in their sector for more than 5 years, and 39% of them have been in their sector for more than 10 years. Overall, almost half of all participants (46%) consider themselves well established in their field. A minority (fewer than a fifth) can be classified as being in the earliest stages of their careers.

In previous years, we bemoaned the fact that new arrivals in the field of Jewish education were not generally taking part in these programs and seemed to be missing out on experiences that might have cemented their

interest in committing to the field. Now, informed by emerging data from our "On the Journey" study for CASJE that shows the positive relationship between professional development and professional retention, we're wondering whether these programs may be playing a different, and no less important, role in cementing the readiness of more established educators to stay in the field.

Participants' motivations for taking part in programs have been highly consistent over the three years. The top three motivations have been: "increased personal growth," "increased professional skills and capacities," and "increased opportunities for reflection on [one's] work." Overall, participants enrolled expecting to grow professionally in many ways, including increased confidence to do their work well, being better able to manage challenges at work, and gaining more knowledge of the content of their work. When it comes to material outcomes, however, only a small proportion of survey respondents (less than 20%) explicitly indicated that they signed up for programs expecting to increase their salary or job security, or secure potential promotion. Nevertheless, more than half of the participants (59%) did anticipate that as a result of participating in a program they would "enhance [their] professional credibility, in order to obtain a more senior position in the future."

Further probing these motivations through Factor Analysis reveals that fundamentally people were drawn to the programs by two, not mutually exclusive, motivations: what we characterize as "**holistic professional growth**" (a desire to stretch, explore new ideas, and assume new roles) and "**professional self-efficacy**" (an interest in learning new practices, gaining new knowledge, and acquiring new leadership skills). These two concepts capture a great deal of what attracted educators. Across all of the cohorts, participants articulated a strong appetite for the former (3.67 on a scale of 1 to 5) and even more did so for the latter (4.13 on a scale of 1 to 5).

In probing these patterns, we wondered whether specific subpopulations were spurred more by one or the other of these motivations. We found a mixed picture: women were significantly more motivated than men by both concerns. Similarly, those who are less well established in their positions were also more strongly motivated by both concerns. At the same time, participants' age, length of their tenure, or whether they are exclusively engaged in frontline work did **not** make a significant difference to their interest in these outcomes. We are therefore inclined to infer that while respondents might not explicitly state that they signed up for a program in the hope of achieving greater job security, those who were less secure in their jobs, and especially for women, hoped to get much more out of these programs.

It seems that the various programs attracted people with differing professional interests. Consistently, participants in the HUC Executive MA program, JCCA's Sheva early childhood program, and JFNA's Next Gen program signed up with significantly higher expectations across a number of measures than did recruits to other programs. This finding echoes the fact that these three programs tended to promise the most "transformative" outcomes to their participants: not just growth but also career advancement.

By contrast, participants in the various cohorts of M^2, Makom/Moishe House, and the Yiddish Book Center seem to have expected the least in terms of professional growth. Again, this makes sense. Most of M^2's programs were quite short, Makom/Moishe House participants did not think of themselves as professional educators, and YBC participants tended to come with very specific expectations for subject matter knowledge growth. In all three cases, participants seem to have signed up with relatively modest or focused expectations, even if ultimately their own growth might have exceeded what they expected.

Taking Stock

Overall, in terms of who they recruited, the 10 programs in the Professional Development Initiative mirrored the sectors they serve. In most cases, the programs drew relatively settled professionals rather than newcomers. Their participants tended to see professional development as a means by which, in the long run, to advance their careers and, in the short term, to grow personally and professionally. These aspirations seem to reflect the tenor of what the programs promised their participants: professional growth rather than professional transformation. There was more at stake for the women who took part and for those who were less well established professionally; these populations enrolled with higher expectations. And as we have learned from our Shared Outcomes Survey, expectations are often related to outcomes.

We do not know if our findings would have been different if a higher proportion of participants had been at earlier stages in their careers. Perhaps, they would have expected more both in terms of growth and advancement. As it is, the programs seem to have been relatively successful in drawing to them individuals well aligned with what they were offering. They did not over promise. As a consequence—and as we have seen through other data we gathered such as clinical interviews, outcomes surveys, and program director interviews—participants were highly satisfied with what they experienced. People got what they came for!

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"Taking a Journey While Staying at Home": The Subtle Shifts in a Jewish Professional Trajectory

Each year, since the start of the Jim Joseph Foundation Professional Development Initiative, our team has conducted one-on-one "clinical" interviews with participants in each of the 10 participating programs. As we have written previously, this strand of our work has provided an opportunity to observe in unusually intense fashion the extent to which participants in professional development experiences grow as learners and as professionals, and how, in turn, their learning and growth see expression in their workplaces and their lives.

As was the case last year, the interview script was designed to remind interviewees about what they had previously said and invite them to reflect on the extent to which their thinking and professional lives had changed since the last conversation. At the same time, thanks to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's interviews provided an opportunity to explore the extent to which our interviewees' work as Jewish educators had been impacted by forces we could barely have imagined when we started this project.

In the first year, we completed 30 interviews in total, including three participants from each of the 10 programs. This year—in our third round of interviews—we managed to interview 26 people, a robust rate of sample retention. As in the past, the interviews typically lasted 45-to-60 minutes. Complicating matters in methodological terms, some of the interviewees were still participating in the same program they were in when we first interviewed them (at this time just those in the JCCA Sheva program), while others had completed their PDI program more than a year previously, and in one case (M^2) more than two years ago.

Distinguishing Professional Growth from Professional Advancement

As we noted in previous years, when we started this work, we somewhat expected that people would embark on a professional journey in which their PDI program experience would either jump-start or at least add fuel to an upward professional trajectory. As the years have gone by, we have seen that the reality is more complex or at least more subtle. In-depth qualitative interviews help shine a light on nuances that can easily be overlooked.

To start with, these professional development experiences have not in large part been about professional advancement. Only two programs—HUC's Executive MA and JCCA's Sheva program—articulate their goals as cultivating field leaders or institutional leaders. Implicitly, these two programs are positioned as providing a springboard to more elevated professional positions, and they seem to have recruited people interested in such outcomes. In this respect, these programs seem to be outliers.

> *From the time that I started the course, my title changed—I was the director of youth and education, now I have a broader portfolio including adult education. I got more leadership skills, it helped me identify my*

> *professional voice so that I can articulate my vision better and navigate working with leadership in a more professional way. —HUC*

> *I went to my first retreat a week before I just started this job as a director. So, my whole growth in this position is aligned with my growth at Sheva. I had lots of ideas and no experience. I accepted the position partly contingent to being a part of Sheva, because I didn't have any professional experience for this role. The program has been invaluable. My success is due to Sheva. —Sheva*

Alumni of other programs may have advanced too, but their career moves were not preordained or even planned a long time in advance. Overall, about a third of those we interviewed (10 people) have transitioned to new roles, typically in the same organization and occasionally elsewhere. Those who have advanced in this way don't talk about their professional development programs as having *propelled* these changes. They're more likely to depict their programs as having *enabled* the change, especially when the change may not have been planned or might have been precipitated by other factors, such as COVID-19, for example.

> *I was not looking for a new job. I was happy teaching full time at the synagogue prior to this, I saw the job posting [for Director of Congregational Learning] and it was just so in line with where I wanted to go eventually, but I didn't expect it to happen so quickly. It's a rare opportunity and I decided to try. … It's a big job, but it made me feel I can do it because of what I learned at SVARA. —SVARA*

> *My official title is the teen division director, overseeing the teen department, but because of COVID I'm wearing multiple hats. I oversaw the day camp over the summer, I'm overseeing "all day at the J" for the kids who are learning virtually. Also serving at a leadership capacity in one of our locations. I'm in these roles because of COVID, but I also have the skill set to do these things. I hope to advance in this area, I had a conversation with our leadership to find a new role for me to grow into to cover the gaps. It's not yet finalized. —Gen Now*

> *I was not 100% happy where I was at the Federation. Too much responsibility too quickly without an exit strategy or support from the leadership. … It happened to be that by accident I fell into this development position [at a congregation]. The Fellowship helped encourage me make the change in recognizing there are a lot of opportunities to make a difference without being stuck in a workplace that's not positive. Change happens so slowly at the Federation and I had no hope for it to change. The fellowship helped me appreciate and understand my own value and gave me additional confidence in what I can accomplish."*
> *—Next Gen*

People report having benefited, often profoundly, from these professional development experiences (as will be seen below), but that is not the same as professionally advancing. An alum of HUC's EMA captures well how professional growth does not have to mean moving out or up from wherever you started. As this interviewee beautifully expresses it, it can involve taking a journey while staying at home:

> *I used to have a dilemma in my professional life: should I stay as a classroom teacher which I like, or should I look for a promotion into administrative role? … The program taught me that I need to find what works for me and not what the expectation of others is. Within every role I can find a way to make an impact on the community that's important to me. If I like [local community] and I feel good here, I shouldn't be looking for something else. I need to find a way to grow within the place I'm in. So I decided to stay here as a teacher and found a way to push for this title [Director of Jewish Life and Learning],*

where I can find things I want to do to make a different impact, beyond the students, but also with other teachers and parents. ... I found a journey while staying home. —HUC

When people have not changed positions at all—which is just under half of the sample—they talk about an expansion in the content of their roles as compared with when they started the program. They describe doing their work differently, with more sophistication and with an expanded skill set. They have not been standing still, but their job responsibilities are more or less what they were before.

I'm doing the same thing differently, I'm changing my classroom. There's also a piece of reflection of practice, time to think about pedagogy—I find it exciting. I need to be reminded to pay attention to not just the content, but also the process. How do we engage the learner, create space and independence for them? —SVARA

These patterns help sharpen a conception of professional development as about growing where one is, seeing things differently, and being empowered. Professional development refreshes and renews, but it is not typically experienced as an upheaval in one's work life.

By the same token, professional development also does not provide an inoculation when "life happens" and blows a career off-course. Five members of the interview sample are no longer working in what one might characterize as the broader field of Jewish education. They were knocked off track by a mix of factors: ill-health, childbirth, marriage, relocation and—most unexpected—a global pandemic. (Interestingly, only one member of the interview sample seems to be currently out of work due to the pandemic.) Their professional development experiences have not inhibited the impact of these life events.

I retired last year from teaching because of the health issues. I'm a rabbi and was head of Jewish life at a day school for several years. I retired 1.5 years ago, I've been doing some writing, teaching adults at synagogues, and teaching two courses at the day school. I got a health issue when I was at the program. —Yiddish Book Center

The 4HQ experience does not seem very relevant right now. I'm focused on growing my private practice, on my career, on my relationship. Life has thrown me some curveballs, and that experience is not a priority right now. If I was still in New York and things were as they were, it would have been a different answer. —Makom 4HQ

I've been furloughed from [organization] since June. I get updates from them on a monthly basis. My role was educating, training, and hiring Birthright staff. There are no trips now. ... Right now I just need to get a job, I'm not thinking about growth at this point. ... I'm not looking for a job in this field. I'm done with this for now. It's because of growth potential and salary. It's hard to work for this salary and do things you want to do in life (buy house, have kids, go on vacation). I can't justify staying in the field. — iCenter

Just as the programs have not generally propelled their participants to higher status plateaus within their fields, so they have not ensured that everyone is able to remain on the plateau they had previously reached. Their special contribution is of a different kind.

Personal and Professional Growth Revisited

This absorption of professional development into a subtly evolving life experience is echoed in a further way. In our earlier cycles of interviews, we probed the differences participants experienced between personal growth and professional growth. They perceived these dynamics to be distinct but related, especially at the end of the first year: one process touched on who the person was and the other on what they were capable of doing in the workplace. Back in Year One, interviewees articulated how they had signed up with programs looking to build their professional skills and how they had then been surprised by the extent to which their learning was freighted with personal significance.

Two years later, while in conceptual terms the distinction between personal growth and professional growth still resonates with most of the interviewees, many found it difficult to view these processes separately, at least in terms of how they have touched their lives. Their professional growth has not only enhanced their skillset and their capacity to do their work, but it has also changed how they think of themselves and of how they think of the contribution they can make to the Jewish community. At the same time, their personal growth impacts how they view their work, their own know-how, and their sense of what professional skills they still need to learn. A SVARA participant presumed that this fusion was unique to that program:

> *SVARA's method is all about how learning a rigorous methodology is facilitating a spiritual growth, presence, and other personal growth. It's really hard to separate. As I grow in these hard skills, I definitely increase in confidence. Professional skills are the frame or the path to personal growth. But personal growth is actually the point. Professional skills feed the personal growth pieces in this case. That's unique to SVARA I think. A part of this pedagogy is reflection. —SVARA*

We're inclined to conclude that this experience has actually been quite widespread. The following reflections capture two different dynamics, or at least two processes that began at different starting points (one personal, one professional), even while they seem to have ended up in more or less the same place.

> *In order to grow professionally, you have to understand yourself personally. How you bring your personal into your professional life. Knowing yourself, your strengths and limitations, what you can share and choose not to share, where you're willing to take risks—it makes work more exciting and transformative. It's vulnerability. I was tested in the program in that regard. Because of that you learn the benefits of opening up more. For a while I'd say it was more of a personal growth, but now I look back and I see how I grew professionally. —M²*

> *I'd say I was focused on the professional skills and it's still a priority in terms of what I gained and the value of the experience. But ... exposure to new ideas and new approaches to Israel was key. ... Professionally, the experience solidified that this is an area of interest and growth for me. I have been involved in multiple conversations [around potential jobs] where my learnings have been a positive part and made me attractive to those organizations. I understand the issues from educational standpoint. I'm more marketable and I'm more of a leader in the community. Personally, it made me feel more connected to this work and to Israel. —iCenter*

Networks – Where the Personal and Professional Come Together

In practical terms, the fusion of the personal and the professional was most palpable when interviewees reflected on the networks and relationships they gained through the programs. Some highlighted the professional dimensions of these networks (having access to a sounding board, opinions, feedback, and additional opportunities). Others pointed to personal outcomes (friendships made, emotional support, and the exchange of advice). Generally, the longer the program's length, the stronger its personal outcomes, with participants having observed and accompanied one another through any number of life changes, in real time. The pandemic did prove something of an equalizer in this respect, though, with personal support proving valuable to alumni however long their original interaction. During a period of so much disruption and confusion, communities and relationships built up within the programs proved to be a grounding constant and a source of stability.

> *Probably the network of colleagues and professionals I met [was the most significant gain]. Colleagues in difficult moments (especially in the last 6 months) allow for so much in terms of support—we've continued to meet regularly as a cohort. I organized the first 6 months of those meetings and I know that the group really appreciated them. I now passed it on to someone else. There's a value in maintaining the relationships, digging into the practice and dialogue about what it means to be a relational educator. —M²*

> *It's the connection with the group—we bonded instantly. They tried to front load the program so we had a lot of in-person time and that was smart. Over time with the circumstances some of us got married, had kids, had to leave the program. … But those relationships stayed and we are all still connected. It's a sense of support, I'm part of this wider network, it's gratifying. We're not just colleagues, but friends. —Sheva*

Again, the following reflection from a SVARA alum might seem like an outlier. We suspect that this feeling of affinity around a shared personal or professional identity is actually quite widely shared, especially when as a Jewish educator, one can often be isolated or excluded. Forging relationships with a broader community is a special gift that comes from joining a cohort of peers.

> *The affinity component [is important] too, with it being queer normative. I didn't know how joyful it could be. I never get to be in spaces like that outside of SVARA especially with others. It's healing. Community is very meaningful. It's THE community I'm connected to primarily. It pushes me to think about the connection between Talmud and the world. It's grounding. —SVARA*

And the following comment from a Sheva participant demonstrates that the cohort experience is not just about feeling good about oneself (a personal growth outcome); it has professional consequences too. "It's *practically* limitless," as one interviewee put it in a fortunate choice of words, for, as we will see, in many ways, these programs have been most powerful when they are most *practical*.

> *Children learn how to play and build relationship—and that's critical throughout the life. I can try and figure it out myself, but I now have connections with people who have already done it or are also looking for a solution. And I have this support now beyond the program. It's practically limitless. I'm more confident in my own work because of the cohort. —Sheva*

Take-Aways with a Longer Shelf Life than Expected

With the great majority of interviewees having completed their programs more than a year ago (Ayeka, SVARA, Gen Now, Next Gen, M^2, YBC, iCenter, Makom), and in the case of M^2 more than two years ago, we were curious to see what had remained with alumni from these program experiences. We had expected to see the broader consolidation in their professional identities of the kinds described above, and the transmutation of professional learning into shifts in personal identity—shifts that likely get cemented over time in the aftermath of the program. It has however been surprising—and we believe it important—to see that the program "gains" interviewees most commonly report as having stayed with them are specific professional practices and skills. One might have expected these program take-aways to have a shorter shelf life than personal shifts in how people think about themselves. Without constant reinforcement, one could have expected these gains to have faded.

Jewish Learnings

In fact, when asked what specifically they took away from their programs in Jewish terms, it was surprising to hear interviewees point not so much to Jewish ideas or values but to Jewish learning experiences they translate directly into their own practice. The Jewish content of longest-lasting impact seems to have been that which has been deeply practical.

> *It broadened my scope of what "Jewish" could be. I had a lot of training in more traditional values and concepts. We did have text study, but because people came from such different backgrounds, there was no right or wrong. ... In my previous work, the text was the centerpiece and ideas came out of the text. Now I'm in a situation where I think about the situation, the people, the context and I think about how to bring the text in. —M^2*

> *There was Jewishness in this experience. The design of the fellowship was meant to bring things that aren't Jewish into the Jewish space to give us new language. It's the intersection between the "Jewish" and the tool. They did it. There were also explicit things—we learned from Jewish educators, we did Israel seminar, we did text studies... I really appreciated intersectionality the most. It was a pluralistic space, there was a spectrum. I do some things differently when it comes to the Jewish experience I bring to the teens. I'm trying to provide experiences to teens that meet them where they are, pluralistically, modeling what I learned at Gen Now. —Gen Now*

> *Prayer experiences we had expanded my thoughts on leading tefilla in my workplace. We had to lead tefilla for the group and different people offered creative models that would inspire me to bring it back to my workplace. Or the text we studied, I could bring that back too. —HUC*

Conceptual Frameworks

When it comes to the concepts that alumni report they gained from the programs, we observe a similar pattern. They describe having learned powerful new ideas. But what makes these ideas so powerful, and—it seems—what has contributed to their extended "shelf life"—their continued usefulness—is their practicality. Interviewees describe how these ideas have inspired or enabled them to do things differently, how they've translated ideas encountered within their programs into new frameworks or practices.

I gained a better understanding of how to address Israel as an educational subject as opposed to being more focused on our response to current events. I now have an educational framework. Previously a lot of our work was about building a response to BDS on campus and developing programs to prevent those types of issues. Now, we've developed an educational framework that helps students proactively engage with Israel in a positive way and develop affinity for it and connections with it on its own merits. — iCenter

Our school has a rich history with this kind of work, but we were able to add the Jewish lens to it. We are using the new vocabulary and concepts. The idea that connection is a basis of social emotional learning. The impact of journaling and how this approach is developing and taking root in our middle school. ... On a personal level, a framework that strengthens my mind—holistic approach to Jewish text and pedagogy. My own educational philosophy. —Ayeka

[What I gained was] specific language—utilizing what I learned, I created a strategic plan for my department completely changing the approach we're using with teens. It's all about the outcomes and adaptive leadership now, social and emotional learning. I also brought the language back to the staff— communication is better now. I led the committee around improving communications with staff—not everyone felt they were getting information they needed in the time and manner they needed. So, we sat down and discussed strengths and weaknesses, along with perceptions of communication from supervisors and supervisees. We talked about the gaps and it allowed us to open an honest conversation about it. We took some concrete ideas and implemented them. —Gen Now

The common denominator here is how learnings and new insights from the programs have become embedded in the institutions from which program participants come. These ideas have not just remained as interesting or provocative concepts. They have been actionable. This feature is underlined by the last interviewee summarizing what seems to have been a dramatic series of changes in his organization as a case of "we took some concrete ideas and implemented them." It was surely more complex than that, but this comment points to what has enabled these practices to take root, their tangibility and concreteness.

Skills

Following a similar pattern, when asked to talk generally about what they gained from their programs, interviewees point to a range of specific skills—things they now know how to do—that they learned in their programs and that they are still employing today. In some respects, these are the kinds of practices and techniques they previously described themselves looking to gain when they first signed up. It turns out that gaining these skills is more significant than just a case of expanding their repertoires and know-how, what was originally a priority for some. Gaining these skills has changed how they think of themselves as educators, and specifically as Jewish educators.

Journaling is impacting the students, where they write about the text and share if they want to. It's a new structure that they benefit from. It's less about the assignment, but more about their internal growth and learning in the spirit of Ayeka protocols and approach. —Ayeka

We did a lot of writing, research—we were encouraged to journal and publish—this gave me empowerment in having a voice in writing. In this new role I'm the writer at my department. It comes from a place of M² working with us in terms of helping sharpen our thinking and define our goals. I also

took away some really nice materials, concepts, textual learning, top educators and teachers like Erica Brown. I continue to have personal and professional relationship with the coach. —M²

In my class, I teach biblical texts. I had always incorporated art and literature into that class to compare and contrast traditional and modern interpretations. What I'm doing now is incorporating much more Jewish and Yiddish literature into my curriculum. It gives students additional relatable context outside of their own experience. Being Jewish is being human and it spans all these historical periods they are learning about. It broadens the idea of being Jewish from a small community to global and diverse perspective. —Yiddish Book Center

Self-Belief

Several participants spoke about suffering from imposter syndrome. When they began their programs, they weren't sure they fit in or they felt underqualified. They had not been confident about what they were capable of doing or what they knew. Their program experiences and especially their membership in a cohort of fellow professionals who, they discovered, shared similar goals, concerns, and insecurities helped them gain confidence. This experience enabled them to think about and hold themselves differently.

Most of all, psychologically, it helped me build myself as an educational leader, that I have the knowledge, the skills, the capabilities. I tend to be critical towards myself, so I learned to appreciate myself more. The program helped build my identity and personality. It's easier for me to talk about myself as a leader now. —HUC

[I gained] confidence—I have to continue to learn and move my practice forward, but right now I'm at the top of my game and received the best resources and I'm prepared to do what's next. —Sheva

It's been awhile since I put myself in a position where I need to change the way I work. SVARA did it, it made me feel more competent. I always want to learn new things, SVARA didn't change that. What's interesting about SVARA, it's getting to the core of my thinking about how I teach. I'm being challenged about what's core to me (my teaching). —SVARA

Bringing It All Together – Claiming an Identity as a Jewish Educator

We're aware that a minority of those who participated in PDI programs have either been unsure or reluctant to characterize themselves as Jewish educators, even after their programs concluded. 19% of respondents to the post-program, shared outcomes survey selected either "not sure" or "no" when asked "do you consider yourself to be a Jewish educator?"[1] One of these respondents explained: "I tend to steer away from this language because I find that Jewish educators are not well valued—it puts me in a certain box that limits by professional growth ability." We know from our study of the career trajectories of Jewish educators that such reticence is a widespread phenomenon.

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[1] We did not include this question in the "participant audit" survey which people took before they started the program. We thought it would color respondents' perceptions of what the programs were seeking to accomplish.

It is surely significant, then, that when looking back on their participation in these programs, on how they've grown and on what they gained, some of the interviewees describe in very powerful, even moving, terms how these experiences have allowed and encouraged them to see themselves as Jewish educators.

> *Two years ago I didn't see myself as a Jewish educator. Going through the fellowship, they taught us how we are ones. Reflecting on it now, I'd say I do see myself as a Jewish Educator, I recognize that my interactions with people can be their only touch point with the community. I also do a bit of marketing, so I have to speak to a lot of people and channel that Jewish component. —Next Gen*

> *I used to think about it as a job, but after Ayeka it feels more like a calling. It made me think that maybe teachers in Jewish Ed are doing it for the higher purpose, empowering the community and strengthening it. —Ayeka*

> *Before the program, I had a bit of a feeling that I just fell into my role because I was at a right place at the right time. I didn't have the education, so I couldn't fully feel I was an educator. During the program, I became more comfortable with the term, but seeing the mentors and leaders around, it was hard for me to see myself in that role. Now I am so proud to have those titles and feeling that I'm living it fully. I have all the confidence. —HUC*

> *Yes, I am a Jewish educator. I am Jewish and the work that we do is grounded in Jewish values and teachings. I feel that everything we do is from a Jewish perspective, supported by Jewish values and texts. It strengthens my identity. Having an option to be a part of Gen Now and being with other Jewish educators has anchored me in this work. —Gen Now*

In this third round of clinical interviews, we have started to see how achieving such clarity about their identities as Jewish educators seems, in part, a consequence of gaining and growing professional skills. We argued in previous reports that participants revealed the extent to which well-designed professional development programs can touch central dimensions of people's personal identities. At the time, we downplayed the significance of the specific skills and techniques they gained. These were part of the toolkit that had attracted people to the programs but, we assumed, were not part of the programs' most important contributions. We see now that we may have underestimated the ripple effects associated with acquiring such professional skills. The acquisition of those skills is not just a technical matter. In these distinctive contexts— embedded in a cohort experience, supported by a mentor—acquiring such skills has more significance than first meets the eye. These programs have not simply been bootcamps or depots that provide off-the-shelf tools. Within these frameworks, skill acquisition has been part of a bigger picture. It is fused with personal change and personal development. The skills people gain decisively contribute to them feeling confident in their skins as Jewish educators.

When asked to reflect on the program elements they perceive as having been most impactful, interviewees kept returning to two things: the cohort experience and the personal mentoring they received. We speculate that these ingredients help elevate the acquisition of professional skills into something of greater personal significance. When these elements are present, these experiences rise above the transactional.

We offer this last suggestion speculatively. It's an insight we arrived at only in the course of analyzing these 26 interview transcripts. It's an idea we're curious to explore further in our fourth and final round of interviews next year.

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Consistencies and Subtle Difference:
The Shared Outcomes Survey's Early Promise

The Shared Outcomes Survey has been one of the most innovative elements in the evaluation of the Jim Joseph Foundation's Professional Development Initiative. The 10 participating programs are tremendously diverse. One (Makom/Moishe House) is working with "para-educators," people doing the work of Jewish education as volunteers. Two programs (HUC's EMA, JCCA Sheva) explicitly groom rising stars to assume leadership roles in their sectors. Others promise different outcomes that are no less varied: building the skills and capacities to work with specific populations, whether teens (Gen Now) or millennials (Next Gen); engaging around particular content, whether Talmud (SVARA), Israel (iCenter), or Jewish literature (YBC); and, last, helping participants become adept with particular pedagogies or ways of educating (Ayeka, M^2). In retrospect, it was actually quite audacious to propose to uncover a set of common outcomes that programs cultivate in their participants and then to develop an approach to assessing those outcomes.

Last year, we described the process behind developing this instrument, a Shared Outcomes Survey. We are now able to reflect on preliminary findings derived from the responses collected from 104 participants from seven programs (a 61% response rate). These findings—presented in an accompanying deck—indicate that the effort to develop a shared instrument was reasonable and may yet have lasting significance as a means of assessment across widely differing professional development programs in Jewish education.

Interim analysis of the responses reveals a considerable level of consistency among the respondents. Indeed, through factor analysis—a search for the underlying patterns in how participants responded to the same questions—we have been able to identify nine sets of outcomes with which participation in these programs have generally been associated to a lesser or greater degree. In order of impact from highest to lowest, these are:

1. New ways of thinking and doing
2. Growing a professional network
3. Deepening Jewish connection
4. Growth within one's own organization
5. Growth within one's professional sector
6. Growth within the field of Jewish education
7. Developing leadership
8. Remaining connected to one's cohort
9. Remaining connected to program staff

As is clear, above all, these experiences have contributed to participants developing new ways of thinking about and doing their professional work. The programs have equipped the participating educators with skills and practices that enable them to be more adept in whatever is their chosen field. Running a close second to this outcome, the programs have also been fairly consistent in cultivating networks of peers engaged in the same work, able to learn from and share with one another.

Our clinical interviews (described elsewhere) probe the personal significance associated with gaining these outcomes; what they can mean for how individuals think of themselves as Jewish educators. While coming away feeling better equipped and more willing to play a leadership role in one's institution or field also scores quite highly here, these two outcomes (gaining know-how and gaining a network), because of their immediate practical consequence, are likely to constitute the currency with which prospective and past participants assess the worth of a program. We would have been surprised if these had not been the most highly ranked; they are the most immediately accessible benefits of participating in a cohort-based professional development program. It's encouraging the instrument captured these consequences.

When it comes to the Jewish outcomes of these programs, the data at first look disappointing: on average, Jewish gains are relatively modest. However, when we distinguish between participants with more and with less prior exposure to Jewish education, we see a strong and consistent pattern. Those participants who prior to these programs were exposed to less extensive Jewish educational experiences (including day school, congregational school, and summer camp) report significantly greater gains associated with being in a program of this kind. It is as if what participants learn in the program serves a remedial function, enabling them to imagine their contribution to Jewish life differently. They are more ready to see themselves as Jewish educators and as members of a Jewish educational community. The programs don't really play this role for those who already think of themselves in these terms before they sign up. Again, this finding is consistent with data from our case studies and from the clinical interviews.

Other patterns are worth noting too. First, in respect to the relationship between participants' motivations before the start of programs and what they ultimately report gaining most from them. Our analysis of Participant Audit data (a survey fielded to all participants at point of entry to the program) revealed two central, not mutually exclusive, motivations for signing up: an interest in developing one's professional self-efficacy (learning new practices, gaining new knowledge, and acquiring new leadership skills) and a desire for more holistic professional growth (a desire to stretch, explore new ideas, and assume new roles). Merging the Audit data with the Shared Outcomes data, we find that higher levels of each of these motivations is associated with graduating programs with a greater capacity for leadership in a variety of contexts, in one's workplace and beyond. At the same time, each of these motivations is associated with one further subtle difference. On the one hand, the more people are motivated by an interest in improved professional efficacy, the more their leadership capacities seem to be informed by enhanced technical strengths—essentially the acquisition of additional know-how. On the other hand, the more people are interested in holistic

professional growth, the more their leadership capacities seem to be related to developing greater relational strengths. What people look for subtly shapes what they bring away with them from these experiences.

Finally, the length of people's service in the field also seems to be associated with differences in the gains they report. Those who have been in the field for six years or more are significantly more likely to report leadership-related gains, higher Jewish outcomes, and a sense of being better able to contribute in their professional sector. We suspect that these outcomes are less a consequence of how the programs were designed to serve different populations and are more reflective of people getting what they're looking for. Those who are more settled in their careers are ready to contemplate leadership opportunities and will capitalize on the leadership opportunities provided by programs that move them forward in this respect.

So far, our data are relatively limited. We have been fielding the survey six months after each program ends, and only about a quarter of PDI participants have received it so far. It is early days in terms of uncovering what people have gained from programs. Nevertheless, the consistencies revealed, and at the same time the differences uncovered between what different populations report having gained, leave us feeling optimistic about how this tool might prove exceptionally useful to the field in the coming years.

Shared Outcomes Survey

Preliminary Results

December 2020

Outline

1. What did we explore?

2. When was the survey fielded?

3. Who responded?

4. What did we find?

What did we explore?

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework
Ten Shared Outcomes

1. Gain sophisticated and increased knowledge

2. Gain skills or tools to better own practice

3. Feel (re)inspired about own profession

4. Gain knowledge of own leadership capacities

5. Develop a personal vision for Jewish educational leadership

6. Become an agent of change in own profession

7. Develop a community of practice

8. Experience personal Jewish growth

9. Change institutional cultures

10. Adopt a stance for inquiry

When was the survey fielded?

Survey Distribution Details

Fielding the Survey

○ Ongoing fielding of S.O.S. started in January 2020
○ So far, the survey was fielded to 171 participants of 10 programs:

Program	Number of Participants	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
The Jewish Education Project: Gen Now Fellowship	20	13	65%
Makom: 4HQ at Moishe House Cohort 1	27	10	37%
M²: Immersive Experiences - Facilitating for Meaning	23	11	48%
M²: Architecture Cohort	15	9	60%
M²: Relational Engagement Circle Cohort 1	18	15	83%
M²: Narrative Cohort	13	8	62%
Ayeka: Soulful PD Program Cohort 1	14	9	64%
SVARA: Talmud Teacher Fellowship	8	6	75%
YBC: Teacher Seminar Cohort 1	14	10	71%
iCenter: Academic Certificate Program in Israel Education	19	13	68%
Total	**171**	**104**	**61%**

*Data collection is ongoing and will conclude spring 2022

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Who responded?

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Characteristics of Respondents (N = 104)

81% identify as Jewish educators

91% work full time

Professional Sector (frequencies)

Sector	
Jewish non-profit	24
Jewish day school	22
Federation/Foundation	9
Jewish supplementary school	8
College campus organization	8
Youth movement/youth group	8
Do not work in a Jewish sector	8
Other (MH)	6
Synagogue (other than school or ECE)	4
Jewish summer camp	3
Israel experience program	3
JCC (other than ECE)	1
Unemployed	1

Role

Other	Supervision/Management – I supervise those who work directly with our target population	"Front-line work" – I work directly with our target population	Both "front-line work" and supervision
6%	12%	36%	46%

How long have they worked in the field

Less than a year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-9 years	More than 10 years
3%	8%	30%	22%	37%

Age

26-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51+ years
15%	41%	23%	21%

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What did we find?
Shared Outcomes Findings

Knowledge, Skills, and Personal Gains

● Professional network   ● Ways of thinking and doing   ● Jewish connection   ● Leadership

Mean

Ways of thinking	4.38
Professional network	4.14
Leadership	3.95
Jewish connection	3.52

Scale: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

Numbers represent the average on a 5-point agreement scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)

% of strongly agree

Top 3

Gained new ways of thinking about own work	65%
Learned valuable new information that can use in own work	65%
Further developed pre-existing professional skills	56%

Feel more connected to Jews around the world	25%
Can better implement Jewish values through my work	24%
Feel a greater connection to Israel	22%

Bottom 3

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In what ways have you grown Jewishly? (Open-ended responses)

Jewish Practice (n=19)

I have new tools to learn Jewish texts and have reinvested in the frame of learning as spiritual practice, in my own life.

Knowledge/Understanding (n=13)

I have a broader understanding of Jewish literature and communities around the world, as well as the dynamic works and histories still being discovered.

Jewish Connection... (n=10)

Feel more connected to Israel and Jews in Israel of various backgrounds.

Jewish Educator Network (n=9)

I made great professional connections that I am still using two years later

Gains Within Settings – Workplace, Sector, and Jewish Education Field

● Professional Sector   ● Employer   ● Jewish education

Mean

Employer — 3.74
Professional sector — 3.70
Jewish education field — 3.59

Numbers represent the average on a 5-point agreement scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Top 3 — % of strongly agree

Have developed a personal vision for own work	37%
Able to articulate own learnings effectively to others in organization	34%
Committed to advancing change in professional sector	34%
Have reached out to other organizations in the same sector to work collaboratively	20%
Have carried out change in professional sector	19%
Have carried out change in the field of Jewish education	19%

Bottom 3

Network Gains

Mean

Cohort members ● 3.16

Program staff ● 2.84

1   2   3   4   5

● Cohort members   ● Program staff

Top 3   % of strongly agree

Reach out to cohort members to maintain friendship — 57%

Respond to cohort members to maintain friendship — 51%

Have stayed in touch with members of cohort — 41%

Reach out to program's staff/mentors to maintain friendship — 9%

Frequently seek moral support from program's staff/mentors — 6%

Frequently provide moral support to program's staff/mentors — 3%

Bottom 3

Summary **Outcome Dimensions**

- Professional Sector Setting
- Personal: Jewish Connection
- Personal: Professional Network
- Personal: Ways of Thinking and Doing
- Personal: Leadership
- Jewish Education Field Setting
- Program Staff Network
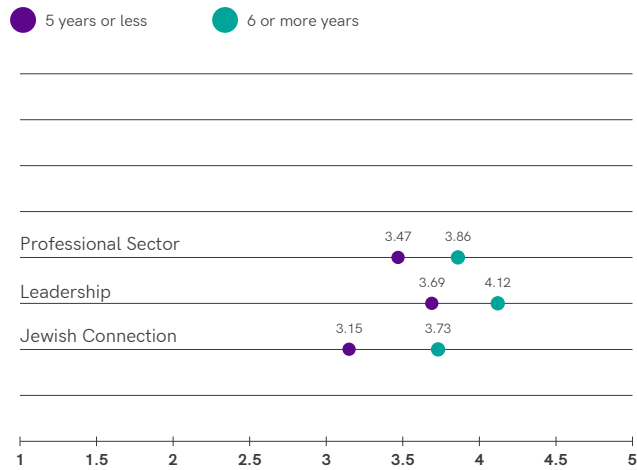- Organization Setting
- Cohort Members Network

More Experienced Professionals Gain More

Those who are more experienced have higher ratings on three dimensions:

○ Leadership (personal gains)

○ Professional Sector (gains within settings)

○ Jewish Connection (personal gains)

● 5 years or less   ● 6 or more years

	5 years or less	6 or more years
Professional Sector	3.47	3.86
Leadership	3.69	4.12
Jewish Connection	3.15	3.73

1   1.5   2   2.5   3   3.5   4   4.5   5

There were no difference in any of the outcomes dimension in relation to respondent role (supervisors vs. front liners) or type of program (content-focused or process-focused programs).

Sharing Learnings with Colleagues

As a result of participating, which of the following learning areas (if any) have you shared with your professional colleagues? (Select all that apply)

New perspectives on the work we do	77%
Practical tools that are relevant to our work	59%
Valuable new information that is relevant to our work	55%
Connected them to other professionals	43%
Professional skills	40%
None of the above	9%
Other	2%

Professional Motivations Fuel Program Outcomes

When analyzing people's motivation for participating in program (as revealed through the participant audit) we found there are two central, not mutually exclusive, motivations:
professional self-efficacy *and* ***holistic professional growth.***

The more people are motivated by **professional self efficacy** the more they report growing in terms of :	The more people are motivated by **holistic professional growth** the more they report growing in terms of:
o Ways of thinking and growing o Leadership skills o Contextual gains related to professional sector, current organization, and the education field in general	o Developing community of practice with program staff o Leadership skills o Contextual gains related to professional sector, current organization, and the education field in general

Both motivations are associated with coming out of programs with a greater capacity for leadership, in a variety of contexts. That capacity is informed by enhanced technical strengths in one instance, and more relational strengths in the other.

Intensity of Prior Jewish Experiences is Inversely Related to Jewish Outcomes

The less intense a participant's Jewish background before starting the program, the greater the Jewish gains associated with being in the program:

o Greater Jewish connection

o Higher contextual gains related to professional sector, and the Jewish education field in general (they feel more comfortable in the Jewish field)

o Greater leadership skills (they feel more ready to think of themselves as Jewish leaders)

o More likely to develop a community of practice with other cohort members (they have gained a professional Jewish community)

Programs serve a remedial role for those with less intense Jewish backgrounds.

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