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HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION  
LOS ANGELES SCHOOL

SCHOOL OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE

FINDING OUR MARKETING NICHE:  
HOW TO INCREASE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL  
ENROLLMENT IN LOS ANGELES

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**FINDING OUR MARKETING NICHE:  
HOW TO INCREASE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL  
ENROLLMENT IN LOS ANGELES**

**By**

**Rebecca Garrison**

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A project presented to the School of Jewish Communal Service of the Hebrew Union  
College-Jewish Institute of Religion, California School in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Jewish Communal Service.

May, 2006

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### **WRITER'S NOTE**

I spent the 2005-2006 academic school year interning at the Bureau of Jewish of Education of Los Angeles. As a result of my work in the day school operations department, I developed an increased interest on issues related to day school recruitment, admissions and retention rates. What draws people to day school, what keeps them there, and what can be done to encourage more parents to consider it, are questions that I frequently considered. As part of my internship responsibilities, I developed a survey to study the factors that most influence parents when determining where to send their children to elementary school. I have chosen to go beyond what was asked of me in order to create a more comprehensive piece of work aimed to study day school enrollment in Los Angeles. My hope is that by better understanding the needs of parents, day schools will be able to successfully recruit and retain more students.

I would like to express my deepest thanks to Miriam Prum Hess, Dr. David Ackerman, and Dr. Elaine Lindheim for their continued support in helping to create and analyze the surveys, Dr. Sarah Benor for her energy, time, and thoughtfulness with which she helped me construct this paper, and my two classmates, Miriam Pullman and Gosia Szymanska for their encouragement and ability to make me laugh throughout my entire two years of graduate school.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Increasing the enrollment in Jewish day schools in Los Angeles has become of increasing priority in Jewish communal agencies; studies indicate that children who attend day school education throughout their formative years are more likely to become affiliated as adults than their non-day school counterparts. Although Los Angeles day schools have experienced a modest increase in enrollment during the 2005-2006 academic year, a great untapped market exists of Jewish parents who have either not considered day school education or who have considered it but decided against it. Why are some parents choosing to send their children to Jewish day school, while others are choosing to send their children to a non-Jewish private school or public school? Through the use of two surveys, one completed by 143 parents of graduating preschoolers and the other completed by 29 preschool directors, this paper explores factors that influence Jewish parents' choice of elementary school for their graduating preschoolers. Major findings include:

- the importance parents place on general studies is greater than the importance placed on Jewish values, culture and language
- families want their children to be exposed to a diverse group of peers
- rabbis, in particular, are not sought after for their advice regarding elementary school
- many families believe that their children can develop Jewish identities without a day school education
- elementary school and preschool staff tend to influence parents in choosing an elementary school

- cost, while a prohibitive factor to some, is not the only reason why parents are choosing to send their children to non-Jewish day schools

Based on these findings, recommendations are suggested to help develop a marketing campaign with the goal of increasing day school enrollment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Jewish day school education has traditionally been recognized as a major contributing factor toward strengthening Jewish identity. Proponents of day school education emphasize that years spent in an all Jewish environment studying Hebrew language, Jewish studies, and Torah, not only contribute significantly to the students' strong base of knowledge, but also increase the likelihood of the individual marrying another Jew, maintaining a higher level of observance, and donating to Jewish causes as an adult (Bubis, 5). Alternatively, those who do not receive formal Jewish education are less likely to maintain Jewish social circles, be observant, and give to Jewish agencies (Bubis, 5). According to a 2002 study of New York Jews (Jewish Connections, 145), the percent of respondents with at least five years of day school education who consider the value of tzedakah to be very important is 88%, compared to only 60% of those with more minimal Jewish experiences as a child. Likewise 83% of those with day school experience highly value being a part of a Jewish community, compared to 45% of those who did not receive day school education. Sylvia Barack Fishman argues that childhood formal Jewish education is more powerfully related to adult Jewish behaviors than any other single background factor (Fishman, 60). It is essential, therefore, that day schools receive continued support from the community to ensure that the levels of students who attend them continue to increase.

For the first time in five years, the numbers of day school and yeshiva students in Los Angeles have increased, surpassing the 10,000 person mark. This accomplishment is significant on the part of both schools and Jewish educational organizations such as the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE), the AVI CHAI Foundation, and

the Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) that have recognized the great need to attract more students. Through innovative marketing strategies, these organizations aim to take into account the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Jewish family.

Such marketing efforts aimed at increasing enrollment are necessary due to indications from the Los Angeles Jewish Population Survey of 1997 which indicated a 30% drop in the total number of Jewish elementary school age children across the city in public, private and non-Jewish private schools, compared to high school age children: 20,453 children ages 8-12 compared to 28,706 children ages 13-17 (LAJPS). Two possible explanations for this phenomenon include: 1) younger families are being priced out of the Los Angeles housing market and are moving to more affordable areas around the United States and 2) the large population of the baby boomers (born between 1945 and 1960) have essentially stopped having children. Whatever the reasons, the pool of potential day school applicants has decreased. Therefore, if day schools seek to increase – or even maintain – enrollment levels, they must attract a much greater percentage of Jewish families than they have up until now.

The increase from 9,693 students in the 2004-2005 school -year to just over 10,000 in the 2005-2006 year - while noteworthy - is not dramatic enough to warrant termination of all marketing efforts. To the contrary, the modest increase in enrollment indicates a growing interest on the part of families towards day school education. Los Angeles is now in the process of creating “community based day school marketing committees,” following other prominent Jewish communities that have done so over the last five years, including Boston, Phoenix and San Diego (Continental Council for Jewish Day School Education, 2).

Methods of drawing new segments of the Jewish population to the day school movement are changing. Today's parents are consumers. Literature has indicated that those who seek out private education for their children are no longer just choosing the closest, most affordable, or most popular school. In actuality, the search for the perfect school can take months, as parents seek to find the "right fit" for their child both academically and socially. Their "outlook is linked to a specific understanding of children, of the role parents should play in raising and socializing children and in ideas about what schooling must provide for their children" (Wertheimer, 16). In addition, parents who seek day school education look for a school that models their own religious theology and traditions and reflects the type of community they feel most comfortable in (Wertheimer, 27).

This new consumer market model has serious implications for day schools. Day schools can no longer rely on their Jewish affiliation (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox) to characterize themselves within the community. Alternatively, they must actively try to define themselves by the unique contributions they offer to their students and families. Successful marketing strategies should also allow parents to imagine their children fulfilling the aspirations they hold for them (Wertheimer, 28). Schools need to be able to achieve excellence, in whatever way they deem appropriate in order to gain recognition.

Education is not a separate sphere of Jewish life; it is integral to how American Jews live today – in marked contrast to how Jewish education was experienced a generation, let alone two generations ago [...]. Beyond the cognitive knowledge and the skills that they teach, Jewish educational settings are central to the way American Jews construct their lives and communities today" (Wertheimer, 5).

The significance of Jewish education for the American Jewish family of today is noteworthy, not only because it indicates to the Jewish community the continued desire

for educational opportunities, but also because it indicates that American Jews are seeking more from day schools than just a standard curriculum. Day schools, seeking to grow their enrollment, must take into account modern needs and make tangible changes that can be perceived by the larger Jewish community.

While it is true that day schools ultimately have to be responsible for increasing their own enrollment, it is also important that they receive community-wide support. There is a clear role for the Jewish Federation, private Jewish family and community foundations, and Jewish Early Education Centers to play in cultivating increased interest in day schools.

If, for instance, Jewish Federations and Foundations provided substantial allocations and grants annually to help subsidize tuition, more day schools would be able to offer education at an affordable price tag. According to Bureau of Jewish Education records, day school tuition in Los Angeles currently ranges from \$7,000 to \$10,000 annually for elementary school and \$15,000 to \$25,000 annually for high school (Prum Hess, p.c.). Cumulatively, parents could easily spend \$160,000 per child on a K-12 day school education. While all schools do offer scholarship opportunities, families sometimes do not want to apply for financial aid due to the stigma. Furthermore, without significant financial aid, many families simply cannot afford the tuition rates. From the communal perspective, losing children to public school due to financial reasons is a serious loss. Therefore, it is important to educate and cultivate Federation leaders and other communal professionals about the key issues surrounding day school education, because ultimately they are the people who create policy and determine funding

allocations (Wertheimer, 33). If these communal institutions determined to increase their allocations, tuition rates could potentially be lowered significantly.

Jewish Early Education centers can steer their families to the next stage of Jewish education by promoting day school opportunities. In 2004, approximately 125,000 children attended Jewish preschools in the United States, 85% of who were Jewish (Schaap, 1). This large number of Jewish children in Jewish Early Education Centers provides marketers a targeted population to promote day school education. Significantly, research indicates that Jewish parents prefer to send their children to Jewish rather than non-Jewish preschools for a number of reasons, which include:

- Jewish preschools generally have a better reputation than their non-Jewish counterparts
- parents want their child to be surrounded by Jewish children
- it is the only way to get their children into their day school of choice
- parents want their children to be exposed to Judaism
- parents want to increase their own level of observance in the home (Fishman, 84).

Although Jewish preschools are preferable to their non-Jewish counterpart, these same parents more often choose non-Jewish private and public school over Jewish day school. Therefore, the preschool director can play a role in helping to forge connections between their parents and the local day schools, so that at the very least, day school is considered as an option (Wertheimer, 32).

Recognizing that day school is an option, while significant, will not necessarily be enough to convince parents to enroll their child in one. Even parents who consider day school without the direction of their preschool directors often have significant concerns.

Three well known issues stand at the forefront of parental concern. These include: a) the high cost of day school, b) the sense that day school education will not prepare children to live in a socially diverse society and c) the sense that day schools do not offer the same quality of general studies academics as do their non-Jewish private or public counterparts (Wertheimer, 33).

While the Jewish community of Los Angeles recognizes the need to market day schools in a new way to appeal to a new segment of the population and address the concerns of the public, it is unclear what marketing techniques would be most effective. Therefore, the Bureau of Jewish Education has determined to undertake three major projects in order to be able to create a successful marketing campaign:

1. Major market research through surveys. Two surveys have been completed, one by preschool directors of Jewish Early Education Centers (ECCs) and the other by parents of graduating preschoolers who attend Jewish ECCs. The goal of the surveys was to discover the factors that influence Jewish parents when determining which elementary school to send their children to. Additional surveys will be distributed to day school parents of graduating elementary and middle school students in the upcoming months. The purpose of these surveys is to help understand why day schools lose students at these transition points (between elementary and middle school and then again between middle school and high school). Data gleaned from these surveys will allow the BJE to more completely understand this population. A more complete analysis of the first two surveys can be found later in this paper.
2. To enlist "Champions for Jewish Education" to be the spokespeople for day school education. Successful businessmen, accomplished artists, and famous entertainers,

for example, are being sought to be the representatives for day schools to help increase their popularity and "up the cool factor." These spokesmen either will have attended day school themselves or send their children to day school. Their testimonials will be featured: a) in the Federation building on high traffic days such as Super Sunday and in other community buildings b) in a brochure or pamphlet that can be left on seats in synagogues during High Holy Days and c) in advertisements in non-traditional media such as Playbill and Variety. The BJE has just begun its search to find Champions for Jewish Education; to date no names have been secured.

3. To help defray tuition costs, the BJE's Steering Committee unanimously endorsed the creation of a \$100 million day school endowment fund, beginning with \$20 million in communally raised resources, which would be used to match \$80 million to be raised by schools in new endowment funds. If successful, \$150,000 would be allocated annually to each affiliated day school and yeshiva to be spent according to individual needs.

According to the Models of Day School/Yeshiva Support Programs document created by the Bureau of Jewish Education, the specific program goals include:

- attract new families
- provide incentives for continuing enrollment
- encourage enrollment in pivotal grades (early elementary, beginning of middle school and high school)
- enable lower- and middle-income families to enroll.

While Los Angeles is in the beginning stages of conducting market research, other communities have already completed theirs. The Boston study (Day School Advocacy

Forum) suggests that emphasizing academic excellence in math, science and English is the strongest marketing message for Jewish day schools. Parents want to be assured that graduates of day schools are accepted to prestigious universities and can compete with peers who did not attend day school. Jack Wertheimer's article "Linking the Silos" lists some additional marketing messages used by other communities. They include:

the role of day schools in the development of mature and moral individuals

- the ability of a day school education to foster critical thinking and leadership skills
- the importance of being active in two communities and literate in two sets of literature and history
- small classes and individual attention
- excellence in arts, athletics or social action

Significantly, both Jack Wertheimer's article and the Boston study concluded that word-of-mouth testimonials seem to be the most effective method of marketing day schools.

According to PEJE's "Continental Council for Jewish Day School Education Report on Community-based Day School Marketing" from September 2004, the following factors contribute most highly to the decision of parents to send their preschoolers to Jewish day schools for the elementary years (5).

- high levels of observance and affiliation of parents
- the perception by parents of day schools as beneficial for the child
- a peer group who send their children to day schools
- motivation of parents to maintain Jewish ties
- newly found belief in the importance of Jewish education by parents

- avoidance of perceived negative aspects of public school by parents
- belonging to a synagogue as a family prior to preschool enrollment
- receiving information about Jewish education from preschools
- travel to Israel by mother and/or father.

Alternatively, the Continental report indicated that Jewish parents most commonly cited the following reasons for deciding not to send their children to Jewish day school (6):

- negative feelings toward day schools – regarded as too intense or too sheltered
- cost
- distance from home
- belief that public schools education is consonant with American values
- inability of day schools properly to serve students with special needs
- belief that family religious observance is a necessary prerequisite for day school enrollment
- concern about creating a “knowledge gap” between parent and child
- lack of peers who had chosen to send their own children to day school
- desire for a more diverse educational setting
- parents own negative experiences in Jewish day schools

While this background information provides significant insight into the research conducted by other communities, a more specific examination of the Los Angeles community is essential in order to help create a marketing campaign. The next section will analyze the surveys given to parents of graduating preschoolers and to preschool directors in order to learn about these specific populations more completely, determine

the extent to which the findings are similar to or different from other communities, and to help inform the marketing campaign. For the purposes of clarity, I will discuss the results of both surveys together in order to help form a more complete picture.

## **SURVEY ANALYSIS**

Parents and directors were given different surveys but asked questions on similar topics, including: family composition and background, religious denomination, activities that families plan to do to help choose an elementary school, the importance of various individuals in helping to make that decision, and general beliefs regarding education. See the appendix for a complete copy of the survey questions.

One-hundred forty-three parents of graduating preschoolers and 29 out of the total 64 directors were surveyed from BJE-affiliated Jewish Early Childhood Schools in the Los Angeles area. Parents responding represented Reform (47), Conservative (76), Orthodox (1) and Community (17) affiliated schools. Directors represented Reform (9), Conservative (10), Orthodox (6), Community (3) and Reconstructionist (1) affiliated schools. Sixteen of the schools are located in the city of Los Angeles, 12 schools are located in the Valley communities of Los Angeles, and one is located in the South Bay. Eleven of the preschools have affiliated day schools. All of the parent respondents in the survey are either Jewish themselves or have a Jewish spouse. In total, the 29 directors graduated 1149 students in the 2004-2005 school year. Out of the total numbers of graduating students that year, directors only indicated where 631 of them attended elementary school after graduating from the preschool.

The following chart breaks down preschool affiliation and choice of elementary school down by public, day, and non-Jewish private school.

**Table 1: Type of Elementary School that Preschool Graduates Now Attend**

Type of Preschool	Public	Day	Non-Jewish private	Total	Total N
Community	49%	43%	8%	100%	118
Reform	42%	38%	20%	100%	191
Conservative	53%	35%	12%	100%	251
Orthodox	23%	76%	1%	100%	71
Total:	45%	43%	12%	100%	631

This data indicates that most families, excluding the Orthodox, are choosing to send their children to public school, followed by Jewish day school, followed by non-Jewish private school. It also indicates that a fairly significant percentage of families from Reform (20%), Conservative (12%), and Community (8%) preschools are choosing to send their children to non-Jewish private schools. Because the cost of tuition of secular private schools is generally higher than that of Jewish schools in Los Angeles, it can be argued that cost is not the barrier to attending Jewish day school. Rather, there must be alternative factors that influence the decision to send children to private secular schools.

Although the Boston studied indicated that it is the Reform population who is mainly underserved by the Jewish day school system, this study indicates that the additional outreach should be conducted to all of the non-Orthodox populations. It is important that marketers take the opportunities to reach out to this group through new means, possibly through advertising in Jewish Community Centers or other media or organizations aimed toward more liberal-thinking people.

## **FAMILY COMPOSITION**

All of the parent respondents in this study have at least one graduating preschool child in Jewish Early Childhood centers. Fifty-four percent indicated they have two children, 26% have three children and 5% have four or more in their families.

Of the 47% of parents with elementary-aged children, 94% indicated that it is extremely likely for their younger child to attend the same elementary school as their older child does. This finding is particularly interesting because it underscores the importance of marketing day schools to first-time parents. Once parents decide to send their oldest child to a particular elementary school, the likelihood of choosing another one for their second or third child is significantly diminished. This data does not support previous research done on the subject which indicated that parents are most concerned with finding the school that is the "right fit" for their child, which may or may not be the same school as their other child attended. It is very important that marketers begin to focus efforts on attracting first-time parents by targeting groups such as Lamaze classes, parenting classes and play groups for babies and toddlers, and in places such as the parenting section in libraries and bookstores.

Of 126 respondents who indicated their first preference in regards to the elementary school for their preschool graduate, 49.2% plan to send their children to day school, 40.4% to public school and 7.9% to non-Jewish private. These percentages are fairly similar to those provided by preschool directors who indicated that 43% attend day school, 45% attend public school and 12% attend non-Jewish. The high interest in day school education is likely the result of a very high response rate from one school,

Pressman Academy. Pressman Academy is a conservative school that tends to draw many of its elementary students from its preschool.

### **ACTIVITIES PARENTS DO TO HELP CHOOSE AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

In regards to the types of activities that parents most often do to help them choose an elementary school, three stood out as most common. Eighty-six percent of respondents indicated that it is very important that they visit the prospective elementary school by themselves, 80% indicated that it is very important that they meet with members of the elementary school staff, and 77% indicated that it is very important that they speak with parents of children at the prospective school. Jonathan Schreiber, founder of Out of the Box advertising company and official PEJE marketing coach underscored the importance of mastering the art of the school presentation. He said, "If the school can't do it well, don't do it at all." In other words, if the most common activity for perspective parents is to visit the school and speak to the faculty, then each school should ensure that the planning and execution of those activities is as perfect as possible. Likewise, schools should initiate a "parent ambassador training program" to teach current parents how to be the best advocates for their elementary school by learning the most effective techniques (PEJE). Furthermore, if the school cannot do any of these activities well, they should not do them at all, because the consumer will be turned off by a lackluster presentation.

**Table 2: Activities Parents Do As They Select an Elementary School (Numbers given are percents. N=132.)**

Activities	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Not applicable
Meet with elem. staff	2	11	80	7
Speak with parents at school	2	15	77	5
Visit school by myself	2	6	86	6
Visit school with child	11	36	45	7
Speak with my friends	7	33	53	7
Attend open house	2	24	68	5
Speak with family	16	33	42	8
Speak with school alumni	14	40	34	11
Speak with preschool teacher	8	36	49	8
Meet with preschool director	12	31	50	7
Read newspaper or mag. article	14	44	32	11
Visit school website	14	42	36	8
Speak with Rabbi	41	29	14	16
Speak with another leader in community	45	28	10	17
Speak with child's pediatrician	50	23	11	16

### **INVOLVEMENT OF KEY PARTIES IN SCHOOL DECISION**

Most respondents regarded themselves, their spouses, and the staff at the school they were considering to be the most important parties in selecting the elementary school. Eighty percent of parents believed it was either somewhat or very important that they consult the staff at their child's preschool. Ninety-three percent of the directors indicated that parents seek their advice regarding the elementary school selection process, which indicates the high level of trust that parents place in their preschool staff. Because directors are seemingly consulted frequently, their role in school selection could be enhanced. In other words, perhaps more parents might be encouraged to consider Jewish day school as an option if more preschool staff not only made sure to have a conversation regarding elementary school, but incorporated a discussion about Jewish education within it.

Alternatively, the least influential people included community leaders, the family pediatrician, rabbi, grandparents and other members of the family. This information is important because it indicates to marketers their target population. Significantly, low on the list of important activities included speaking to the family rabbi. The Boston study similarly indicated that only 1 in 10 parents sought out advice from their rabbi or synagogue leader. Rabbis could potentially assert more influence if they chose to do so. If, for instance, rabbis took the time to speak about day school education at key moments of the year, such as the High Holidays, or simply encouraged families to speak about their child's Jewish education with them, rabbis might be able to open up the discussion about day school.

**Table 3: Individuals Parents Consider Important in the Decision Making Process**  
(Numbers given are percents. N=126.)

<b>Individuals</b>	<b>Not at all important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
Myself	1	2	95	2
My spouse	1	5	92	2
Staff at prospective school	1	25	71	3
My friends	28	56	14	2
Staff at preschool	18	42	38	3
My child's grandparents	45	35	12	8
Other members of family	50	38	3	9
Rabbi	55	31	5	10
Community leader	69	18	3	10
Child's pediatrician	60	25	6	10

## **IMPORTANT ATTRIBUTES WHEN CHOOSING A SCHOOL**

As parents choose an elementary school, they consider the following attributes most important: quality of English program (89%), quality of math and science program (85%), low student-teacher ratio (82%), and peer group for child (86%). Much lower on the importance scale were Jewish values at 47% and Jewish culture and practice at 42%. One hundred percent of directors also believe that parents are very concerned with the excellence of English, math, and science academic programs. Because the quality of general studies classes is of such high concern for parents, it is essential that day schools maintain an excellent reputation in those areas. However, when parents were asked whether they believe day schools have strong academic programs, only 50% indicated that they somewhat or strongly agreed. Thirty-seven percent indicated that they were neutral about the subject and 14% somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement that day schools had strong academic programs. Whether the respondents' concerns regarding quality of general academics are valid or not, it is essential that day schools work to improve their reputation.

While almost 90% of the respondents believe it is somewhat or very important for the prospective school to charge an affordable tuition, only 41% believe the availability of financial aid is important in their own decision making. This finding is particularly interesting because all literature suggests that the cost of Jewish day schools is the number one prohibitive factor in attending them. This data indicates that parents may apply to a school only if the tuition is considered affordable and will not consider applying for financial aid if the price is too high. It is unclear if parents do not consider the availability of financial aid important because they do not need it, because they do not

believe they would qualify, or because they would be embarrassed to apply. While results from the parents' survey indicate that financial aid is less important, 85% percent of preschool directors believed that availability of financial aid is important and 82% indicated that it is important that tuition be affordable.

The disparity in the percentages between parents and directors on this issue is significant. Are directors assuming that this concern exists when it doesn't? Are parents not being completely forthright in their need for financial aid? Or is this sample skewed toward parents who could afford tuition and therefore do not need to apply? Sixty-five percent of the total number of respondents chose to disclose their household income. Thirty-one percent of these indicated an income over \$300,000. Likely, this group does not represent the greater preschool parent population at large. However, since the cost of preschool is significant and can range between \$7,000 and \$10,000 each year, it is likely that preschools do attract the more affluent families in the community (Elfenbaum, p.c). This suggests that for many parents, cost is not the most important factor in their choice of an elementary school.

**Table 4: School Characteristics Parents Consider Important in their Selection of an Elementary School (Numbers given are percents. N=125.)**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Not at all Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Quality of English	1	9	89	2
Quality of math and science	2	12	85	2
Peer group	1	14	86	0
Student/teacher ratio	1	16	82	1
Secure school facility	2	18	78	2
Small class size	1	24	74	1
Affordable tuition	10	37	51	2
Financial aid	42	23	18	17
Jewish values	18	30	46	6
Jewish culture	21	30	42	7
Hebrew language	29	25	36	10
Diversity of student body	15	47	34	3
Community for parents/families	2	30	68	0
Strong performance on stand. tests	6	45	48	2
Quality of athletic programs	17	48	33	2
Convenient transportation	8	34	56	2
Programs for gifted children	14	38	43	6
Programs for special needs children	39	28	12	21
Diversity of student body	15	47	34	3
Campus facilities	4	42	50	4
Middle school acceptance rate	16	26	50	7
Appropriate level of Jewish observance	24	40	26	10
School where my older child attends	6	8	50	35

Jewish identity building is an important component in the decision to send children to Jewish schools, regardless if it is a preschool, day school, or supplementary school. As previously indicated, parents often send their children to Jewish preschools because of the Jewish component. Eighty-two percent of the respondents indicated that it was important for their child to develop a strong Jewish identity, yet 52% of them somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement that a Jewish day school education was essential for building one. This indicates that day schools need to be able to offer more than Jewish identity building; parents are seeking a more well-rounded school experience for their children.

Families are also concerned that day schools do not allow their children to interact with people of different backgrounds. In fact, 72% of respondents indicated that this need for interaction is important to them. Day schools, for the most part, generally do not offer opportunities for their students to integrate with non-Jewish populations; families may choose to send their children to schools with a more diverse population. Day schools are faced with two options in order to ameliorate this situation: they can either demonstrate that their graduates are successful at negotiating the real world despite their lack of exposure to diverse groups, or they can make an attempt to integrate with various other groups during the educational years. One way to demonstrate that day school graduates can successfully negotiate the real world is through the Champions of Jewish Education campaign which would allow day school graduates to demonstrate their success upon entering college.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Parents have many expectations regarding their children's schooling. More emphasis is placed on the quality of English, math and science programs than on the quality of Jewish education. Although parents do believe that it is important for their children to develop Jewish identities, they also believe that attending day school is not the only way to help ensure that such identities develop. Parents also have a great desire to expose their children to a diverse group of peers, which day schools, for the most part, do not offer. Furthermore, while many parents consult both the prospective elementary school staff and preschool staff in helping to inform their elementary school decision, the rabbi is underutilized as a resource. Finally, although cost is a prohibitive factor for some, other parents are choosing to send their children to a higher-priced non-Jewish private school. This finding indicates that for some, choice of school has little to do with cost.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study provides key information to help inform the marketing campaign.

Some recommendations include the following:

1. Increase marketing efforts towards first-time parents
2. Increase marketing efforts towards non-Orthodox populations
3. Master the art of the school presentation
4. Encourage preschool directors to forge connections to day schools (i.e. create relationships with key players in day schools)
5. Allow day schools to market to parents in preschools
6. Encourage preschool directors to speak with parents about elementary school choices
7. Encourage rabbis to become more involved in Jewish education
8. Remove the stigma of applying for financial aid
9. Lower tuition rates
10. Improve the reputation of general academics in day schools
11. Increase exposure of day school students to more diverse populations.

## **CONCLUSION**

This systematic study of a target population will help to provide a fuller, more informed picture of the educational needs of the Jewish community in Los Angeles. My work creating and analyzing this initial study is just the first part of a long process ahead that includes raising the funds for and designing the public relations materials, choosing the most effective ways to disseminate them to the public, and assessing the short and long terms results. It is too early to determine if the effects of the marketing campaign will result in a dramatic increase in enrollment, or whether success will have to be redefined in other ways. Perhaps, it is enough if the reputation of day schools is improved, if more parents consider day school as an option, or if day schools receive more funding from Jewish agencies. At the very least, my hope is that this campaign will bring important issues about day school education to the Jewish communal service agenda.

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## **APPENDIX**

This appendix presents the surveys distributed to (A) parents of graduating preschoolers and (B) preschool directors.



### **Parent Questionnaire - 2006 graduates from Jewish ECC programs**

The following survey has been created to help the Bureau of Jewish Education understand the factors parents of Jewish pre-school graduates consider when determining the elementary school their child/children will be attending. Your candid responses are very important. Please complete this survey no later than February 10th, 2006. Thank you.

**PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS:** Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

By completing this survey, you give permission for your responses to be aggregated with those of other respondents and to be included in any published results without identifying information.

For questions about the study, please contact Rebecca Garrison at the Bureau of Jewish Education at 323-761-8347 or at [rgarrison@bjela.org](mailto:rgarrison@bjela.org)

**\* 1. How many children do you have?**

1

2

3

4 or more

☐

☐

☐

☐

**\* 2. Please indicate how many of your children fit into each age bracket. You must indicate with a 0 if you do not have children in a particular age bracket.**

Under 3

3-5

6-12

13-18

Over 18

**\* 3. How many of your children are currently enrolled in pre-school?**

**\* 4. Which pre-school does/do your child/children attend?**

**5. Please rate how satisfied you are with your experience at your current pre-school.**

Not Satisfied

Somewhat  
Satisfied

Satisfied

Very Satisfied

☐

☐

☐

☐

**\* 6. Do you have a child/children in k-5?**

Yes

No

☐

☐

**\* 7. What school/s do they attend?**

**8. How likely is it for your current pre-schooler to attend the same school as your k-5 child?**

- ☐ Extremely likely
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Extremely unlikely
- ☐ Not sure

**\* 9. Please list in rank order the top 3 elementary schools, including Jewish and non-Jewish schools, that you are considering for your child/children. (Please enter the word "none" in the appropriate blank if you considered fewer than 3 schools.)**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**\* 10. Which of the following activities do you plan to do, or have you done to help you choose an elementary school for your pre-school child? Please rate the importance of each activity.**

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Not applicable
Meet with members of elementary school staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with parents of children at the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit the school by myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit the school with my child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with my friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend an open house or other event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with my family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with alumni of the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with my child's pre-school teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with my child's pre-school director	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read newspaper or magazine articles about the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit school website(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with my Rabbi from my synagogue or another leader in the synagogue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with another leader in the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak with my child's pediatrician	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**11. Are there any other activities that you participated in or plan to participate in to help you with your elementary school choice?**

.....

**12. Please rate the importance of each individual in regards to helping you choose an elementary school.**

	Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Not Applicable
myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my spouse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
the staff at the school I was considering	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
the staff at my child's pre-school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my child's grandparents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
other members of my family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
a Rabbi or other synagogue leader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
community leader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my child's pediatrician	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**\* 13. Different things are important to different parents when deciding where to send their children to school. Please indicate how important each of the following items is to you in choosing a school.**

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Not Applicable
Quality of math and science programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of English program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of arts program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community for parents/family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer group for my child/children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secure school facility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish culture and practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small class size	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strong performance on standardized tests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of athletic programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of Hebrew language education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Affordable tuition/No tuition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Affiliation with a synagogue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial aid available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Convenient transportation/location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs for gifted children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs for special needs children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diversity of student body	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Campus facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Middle school acceptance rate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student/Teacher ratio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appropriate level of Jewish observance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School where my older child attends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**\* 14. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Choosing a school is a long and difficult process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children can receive a good education in public schools as well as in private schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to go to the right elementary and high school to get into the right college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish schools have strong general academic programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am willing to make personal financial sacrifices to give my child the best possible general education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am willing to make personal financial sacrifices to give my child the best possible Jewish education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am uncomfortable applying for financial aid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is very important for me that my child develop a strong Jewish identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Jewish Day school education is not essential for building a strong Jewish identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am uncomfortable in environments that are "too Jewish" or "too religious"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children learn intolerance if they don't associate with other ethnicities/religions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child needs to interact with different backgrounds to learn to deal with people in the real world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**\* 15. Do you consider yourself Jewish?**

Yes

☐

No

☐

**16. Does your spouse/partner consider themselves to be Jewish?**

Yes

☐

No

☐

Not applicable

☐

**\* 17. Are you currently affiliated with a synagogue?**

Yes

☐

No

☐

**\* 18. Please check the current affiliation(s) of your synagogue.**

☐

Orthodox

☐

Conservative

☐

Reform

☐

Reconstructionist

☐

Chabad

☐

None

☐

Other (please specify)

**19. Please indicate the name of your synagogue.**

**\* 20. Do you consider yourself: (please check all that applies):**

- ☐ Orthodox
- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Reform
- ☐ Reconstructionist
- ☐ Chabad
- ☐ Sephardic
- ☐ Persian
- ☐ Secular
- ☐ Just Jewish
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**\* 21. Are you American born?**

Yes

No

☐☐

If yes, skip to Question 24

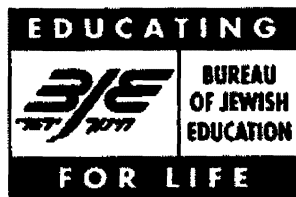
**\* 22. What is your country of origin?**

**\* 23. What year did you move to the US?**

**24. Optional:**

**What is your approximate total household income?**

- ☐ Under \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000-\$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000-\$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000-\$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000-\$124,999
- ☐ \$125,000-\$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000-\$174,999
- ☐ \$175,000-\$249,999
- ☐ \$250,000-\$299,999
- ☐ over \$300,000



## **Pre-school Director Questionnaire**

Thank you very much for agreeing to assist the Bureau of Jewish Education with a survey of pre-school graduates. The following survey will help the BJE understand the choices that families make regarding their child/children's elementary education. We thank you for your participation and will make sure to share the results of this survey with you.

**PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS:** Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

By completing this survey, you give permission for your responses to be aggregated with those of other respondents and to be included in any published results without identifying information.

For questions about the study, please contact Rebecca Garrison at the Bureau of Jewish Education at 323-761-8347 or at [rgarrison@bjela.org](mailto:rgarrison@bjela.org)

\* 1. What is the name of your pre-school?

\_\_\_\_\_

\* 2. How many children are currently enrolled in your pre-school program? (Please do not include "Mommy and me" or Kindergarten enrollment, if applicable).

\_\_\_\_\_

\* 3. How many children graduated in the 2004-2005 school year?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How many of those children came from families with two Jewish parents?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How many of those children came from families with no Jewish parents?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. How many of those children came from families with one Jewish parent and one non-Jewish parent?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How many of those children came from families with a single parent who is Jewish?

\_\_\_\_\_

\* 8. How many children will graduate in 2006?

\_\_\_\_\_

\* 9. Do you have a kindergarten program?

Yes



No



If no, skip to Question 11

17. Please list the names of the Jewish Day schools they are attending.

\* 18. Do you have any policy regarding whether private elementary schools can recruit in your pre-school?

Yes

☒

No

☐

If no, skip to question 20

\* 19. What is the policy?

\* 20. Do representatives from other Jewish and non-Jewish elementary schools actively recruit families in your program?

Yes

☒

No

☐

If no, skip to question 22

\* 21. Which schools actively recruit?

10. What percentage of the children in your pre-school program continue in your kindergarten?

\_\_\_\_\_

\* 11. Do you know where the children who graduated in 2005 are attending elementary school?

Yes

☒

No

☐

If no, skip to question 18

12. How many of your 2005 graduates are attending public school?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Please list the public schools they are attending.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. How many 2005 graduates are attending non-Jewish private schools?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. Please list the names of the non-Jewish private schools they are attending.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. How many 2005 graduates are attending Jewish Day schools?

\_\_\_\_\_

17. Please list the names of the Jewish Day schools they are attending.

\* 18. Do you have any policy regarding whether private elementary schools can recruit in your pre-school?

Yes

☒

No

☐

If no, skip to question 20

\* 19. What is the policy?

\* 20. Do representatives from other Jewish and non-Jewish elementary schools actively recruit families in your program?

Yes

☒

No

☐

If no, skip to question 22

\* 21. Which schools actively recruit?

22. If no, have requests been made by schools? If so, which ones?

--

\* 23. Is your pre-school program affiliated with a Jewish Day School?

Yes

No

☐☐

\* 24. Is the pre-school program located in the same facility as the Day School?

Yes

No

☐☐

\* 25. Do your pre-school families need to apply to the Day School?

Yes

No

☐☐

\* 26. What types of activities does your Day School do to actively recruit students from your program? Please check all that apply.

☐

special program for pre-school families conducted by the Day School

☐

visits from Day School students to the pre-school

☐

open house invitations

☐

phone calls from Day School parents to pre-school parents

☐

joint family meetings with pre-school Director and Day School Director or staff

☐

None

☐

Other (please specify)

--

27. Please describe any recruitment activities you would like the Day School to engage in with your pre-school families.

\* 28. Do families consult with you regarding their elementary school choices?

Yes



No



**\* 29. Please indicate your sense of how important each of the following reasons is to parents when making their final choice of school for their child.**

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Quality of math and science programs	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of English program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of arts program	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Community for parents/family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Peer group for their child/children	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Secure school facility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Jewish values	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Jewish culture and practice	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Small class size	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Strong performance on standardized tests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Quality of athletic programs	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Quality of Hebrew language education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affordable tuition	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Affiliation with a synagogue	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial aid available	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Convenient transportation/location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Programs for gifted children	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Programs for special needs children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diversity of student body	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Middle school acceptance rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

30. We would like to be able to share the results of this survey with you. Please provide your email address in order for us to do so.

---

Thank you so much for your participation in this survey. We sincerely appreciate your time and effort.