

RECRUITMENT: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM STUDIES OF JEWISH EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL

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Over the past decade the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, now the Mandel Foundation, conducted a national survey of Jewish educational personnel in several communities: Milwaukee, Baltimore, and Atlanta. The survey documented Jewish educators' background and training, rewards and benefits, career patterns, and workplace conditions. Understanding this survey can aid the Jewish community in establishing a policy toward recruiting people into the field of Jewish education.

Background and Training

Teachers and educational administrators in the survey entered the field with a variety of training and preparation. Most had some college level training in either education or Jewish studies, but not both. Some had no formal training in either education or Jewish studies

Training	Teachers	Educational Administrators
Training in both education and Jewish studies	19%	35%
Training in Jewish studies only	12%	14%
Training in general education only	35%	41%
No training in either	34%	11%

Current Recruitment and Career Patterns

While some of the people surveyed had planned to have careers in Jewish education, the majority "fell into" the field. Someone asked them to take a position or suggested that they apply for a position. Results suggest that many qualified teachers and administrators may not be seeking positions in the Jewish community.

Most teachers and administrators consider themselves to have a career in Jewish education whether they work full or part time in the field. People do move around from setting to setting. Teachers and administrators surveyed reported relatively long terms of service in Jewish education, as presented in the table below.

	Teachers	Administrators
1 year or less	6%	0%
2 to 5 Years	27%	9%
6 to 10 years	29%	13%
11 to 20 years	24%	48%
More than 20 years	14%	30%

Since most people seem to stay in the field for a considerable amount of time, it is worth investing in their professional development. It is important to note that many of the teachers and administrators surveyed have worked both part-time and full-time, according to their life situations, and continued to identify Jewish education as their career.

Many teachers and administrators report that their exposure to the field began in high school or college as teacher aides, camp counselors, Hebrew tutors, or religious school teachers. Typically, one does not think of a high school or college student as having a career. It is an important transition when those early opportunities get transformed into a firm sense of having found a career path. Jewish education as a profession has not developed recruitment approaches and strategies to address this opportunity. Far more high school and college students serve in these roles than enter Jewish education as a career.

Rewards and Benefits

Most Jewish educators are motivated to enter and remain in the field because of the intrinsic rewards it offers. Respondents spoke of the opportunity to serve the Jewish people, work with children or adults, and advance the study of Torah. Despite these good intentions and values, salaries and benefits do make a difference to those in the field.

Regardless of their salary levels, 20% of the teachers reported that Jewish education was their main source of income and 51% reported that it was an important source of additional income. Yet, over 50% of day school and early childhood teachers and 35% of all administrators expressed dissatisfaction with their salaries. In terms of benefits, health insurance was available to only 48% of the teachers who worked full-time. ("Full-time" in this study was defined as teaching 25 hours or more, which is comparable to full-time status in public schooling.) Part-time teachers reported that increased salary, benefits, and job security would provide the most incentive for them to work full-time in the field. What the research was unable to document was the extent to which salary and benefit levels kept people out of the field. While the intrinsic rewards are important, salaries and benefits do make a difference.

Bibliography

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Questions for Discussions

1. What do you think is the most important finding presented here? What, if anything, surprised you?
2. Since many educators surveyed noted that they had worked both part and full-time, how might your institutions and community make better use of part-timers?
3. What are the implications for developing plans and programs in your institution and community to recruit people to the field?
4. How does this research substantiate some of your ideas about what needs to be done to recruit people to the Jewish education field?
5. What do you think are the implications of the study to advocating, designing and implementing recruitment in your community?

Roberta Louis Goodman was a member of the CIJE research team that conducted the studies on Jewish educational personnel as well as a consultant on the topic for Cleveland and Seattle. She has done evaluation/research work for the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation on the issue of recruitment and serves on numerous North American committees addressing the shortage of Jewish educational personnel. Her official positions are as a Planning Associate for the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and as academic staff for the Cleveland College of Jewish Education Distance Learning Programs.