

Hanukat CAJE: Salaries, Benefits, and Education of Educators

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Jewish educators are better educated, but receive lower salaries and fewer benefits than other Jews, according to the information submitted by CAJE members in response to several Hanukat CAJE surveys. Hanukat CAJE collected information on topics such as demographics, salaries, and benefits available to spotlight the personnel shortages within Jewish education and to promote excellence in Jewish education across the spectrum of Jewish life. The advocacy arm of CAJE is providing preliminary data from these surveys and wishes to thank all those who participated in our surveys at the Conference and online.

Compiling accurate figures will help in devising solutions not only to the problems relating to salary and benefits for Jewish educators, but also for addressing concerns about issues of recognition and respect. Please note that some of the data referenced in the information below about Jewish early childhood educators was derived from the recent research paper "Untapped Potential: The Status of Jewish Early Childhood Education in America," published by the Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership, which was incorporated into CAJE's new Early Childhood Department in July 2002.

It is clear that quality Jewish education is the critical element in preserving and strengthening the Jewish community. However, unless the Jewish community successfully addresses key issues, including the status and compensation of educators working in that arena, the severe shortage of Jewish educators will limit the ability of Jewish education to achieve the goals being set for it. Satisfaction with the job and compatibility with Jewish life are keeping people in the field, according to our findings, but salaries are among the top reasons professionals leave, with almost half of Jewish educators indicating they had considered leaving the field or actually did so for a time.

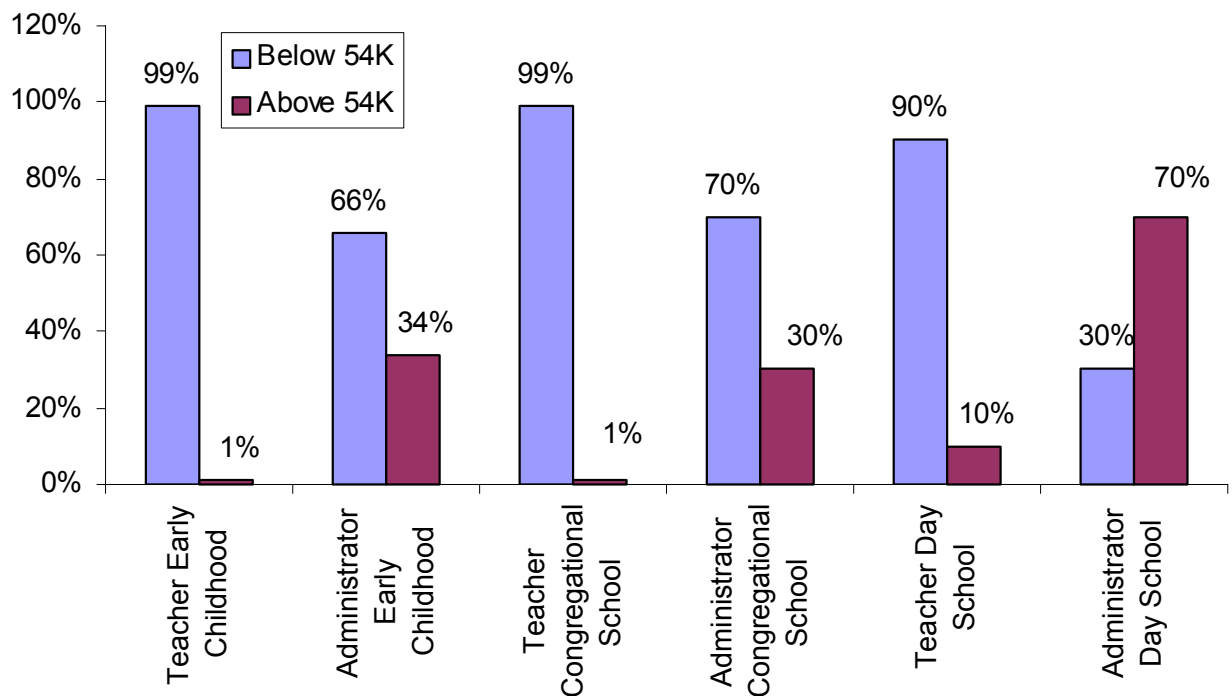
Jewish educators, as a group, are better educated, but receive less monetary compensation and fewer benefits than most other Jewish professionals. When one factors in data that indicate that the profession is overwhelmingly female and usually does not have access to employer-provided or employer-funded health care or retirement plans, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the only way one can remain in the profession is to also be employed elsewhere and/or rely on the benefits and pension provided by a spouse.

"This research clearly shows that those who work for the Jewish community are being compensated and benefited inadequately," said Cherie Koller-Fox, co-chair of CAJE's Hanukat CAJE Committee. "To recruit the best young leaders and to retain the talented Jewish educators currently in the field must become a priority for the Jewish community. Each synagogue and institution in Jewish life should reassess and reexamine their personnel practices to make sure that they meet the communal standards for ethical

behavior and to guarantee that their institution can continue to attract Jewish professionals in a highly competitive market."

Income

Based on the fact that these educators are so highly educated, one would expect that they also are compensated at a far higher level than the median income of the general US population, which is put at \$42,000. A word of caution: In CAJE's survey, the number of educators in the day school settings was quite small and should be used only as a rough comparison. The US Department of Education Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) 2000 study separates schools into Torah U'Mesorah, Solomon Schechter Day Schools and other. Their data show that the average base salary for teachers in the Schechter system is \$36,000, compared with \$40,000 in the US public school system. Some 60% of the teachers in congregational schools indicate that they earn less than \$5000 annually and 57% of the administrators earn less than \$50,000, according to CAJE research.

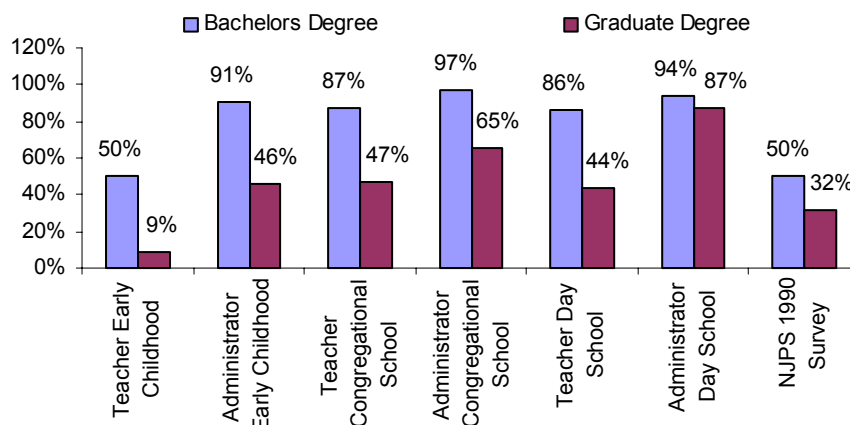


Benefits

The lack of healthcare coverage for a large number of Americans has been a hot-button issue for some time and Jewish educators are not immune to this vexing problem. More than 40% of all those working in the field do not have medical benefits provided by or through their employers. When it comes to those employed in Jewish early childhood education (62%) and congregational schools (86%), the figures are even more distressing. Even among full-time administrators of congregational schools, 36% do not have access to a medical benefits plan. CAJE data reveal that 24% of Jewish educators get benefits by virtue of their holding another job, while 67% rely on medical benefits provided through a spouse or a parent. And, 5% of those working in Jewish education do not access any medical benefits plan.

The figures are just bad as when it comes to pensions and retirement plans. Just over 54% of all Jewish educators have no access to retirement plans. While educators working in early childhood (80%) and in congregational schools (84%) were the least-well provided for, just over half of full-time administrators of congregational schools (53%) also will have to rely on either savings, social security, or the pension and retirement funds of spouses when they retire.

Education



While the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey data show that adult Jews are better educated than the general US population, the CAJE members are far better educated than Jews overall.

The CAJE data indicate that Jewish educators need meaningful and challenging work, a chance to learn and grow, the opportunity to advance in their jobs, fair compensation in salary and benefits, a good work environment with reasonable expectations, and appropriate recognition and respect. Unless the Jewish community successfully addresses the status and compensation of Jewish educators, the prognosis for Jewish education will be poor, because of severe shortages of Jewish educators.

Again, we offer our thanks to all those who participated in the surveys that provided us with this data. Remember, knowledge is power. This information will make our collective voices stronger. In the future, we hope that you will continue to support the self-study efforts of Hanukat CAJE.

This year, Hanukat CAJE is focusing on providing information on benefits to both employers and Jewish educators in the hope that this will both help retain people in the field and make the field more attractive. Wherever possible, Hanukat CAJE will act as a facilitator on the issue of benefits.

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