

Jewish
Early Childhood Education
in Denver and Boulder:
Mapping the Field
Final Report
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Jewish Early Childhood Education in Denver and Boulder: Mapping the Field Final Report

I. Introduction

This report summarizes the results of a comprehensive assessment of the structure, financial status, and performance of nine Jewish Early Childhood Education (ECE) schools in the Denver and Boulder area. The goals of the assessment were to:

- Gauge the response of participating parents and teachers to ECE and Jewish programming;
- Assess the impact of Jewish education on the lives of the children and their families; and
- Learn how the ECE schools can be strengthened.

The study was prompted by national research suggesting that Jewish preschools can play a vital role in shaping Jewish identity and family behavior. For example, a national survey of Jewish preschool parents found that 70 percent engaged in some form of Jewish practice and behavior as a result of their child's attendance (Beck, 2002). The National Jewish Population Study found that more intensive forms of Jewish education in childhood are associated with lower rates of intermarriage (United Jewish Communities, 2002).

However, the national research also suggests that Jewish preschools may be missing the opportunity to be more influential. Most Jewish parents of preschoolers lack memories of a rich Jewish home environment from their own childhood and have had no formal Jewish education past their early teen years (Cohen and Eisen, 2000). More to the point, few preschool programs provide parents with opportunities to increase their own Jewish knowledge or to connect with other preschool families (Beck, 2002).

This report is organized in the following manner:

- Project Methodology
- Key Findings Related to Jewish ECE and the Community
- Key Findings Related to Jewish ECE Program Providers
- Key Findings Related to Jewish ECE Parents
- Summary of Findings

II. Project Methodology

The research draws on data from the following sources.

- **Director Interviews:** A researcher conducted in-person interviews with the nine ECE school directors in 2005. Although the interviews were open-ended, an interview guide was used to make sure that specific topics were addressed by all of the directors (see Appendix A). Each interview lasted between 1½ and 2½ hours and addressed the following questions:
 - ▶ What are the approaches to Early Childhood Education utilized by the Jewish schools in the Denver/Boulder area?
 - ▶ What are the ways that Jewish ECE schools currently provide Jewish life programming?
 - ▶ What types of programming for parents are offered by the ECE schools?
 - ▶ What are economic realities and stressors that the schools face?
 - ▶ What are the primary staffing challenges faced by directors in running the ECE programs?
 - ▶ What are the accreditation issues of the schools?
 - ▶ What types of requests do parents make to the schools with regard to academic and Jewish programming?

- **School Information Form:** Each director completed a form (found in Appendix B) that elicited information on the following:
 - ▶ Enrollment and capacity of schools;
 - ▶ Number of families served;
 - ▶ Number of children on waiting list;
 - ▶ Staffing arrangements;
 - ▶ Salaries and benefits for staff;
 - ▶ Directors' credentials;
 - ▶ Tuition charges; and
 - ▶ Financial profiles of the schools.

- **Parent Survey:** Surveys were distributed to parents by directors at the nine participating schools. The parent survey (see Appendix C) covered such topics as:
 - ▶ The factors considered when selecting a preschool;
 - ▶ Quality of the ECE curriculum and Jewish life programming;
 - ▶ Quality of the teachers and staff;
 - ▶ Satisfaction with other aspects of the preschool;
 - ▶ The factors that will affect their selection of a K-12 school;
 - ▶ Licensing and accreditation;
 - ▶ Overall treatment of families and children; and
 - ▶ Levels of Jewish practice prior to and following their child's enrollment in the ECE school.

Parents were also asked about their education, income and work status, and Jewish identity. The parent survey was distributed to the parents of approximately 1,200 children (representing 961 families) enrolled in the nine participating ECE schools. Survey completion took place from November 2005 through March 2006. To encourage parents to respond, the schools were offered an incentive of \$2.50 for each returned survey. This incentive was communicated to parents in a cover letter urging participation by representatives of agencies sponsoring the Jewish Early Childhood Education Project.

A total of 529 surveys were completed and returned. Response rates for individual schools ranged from 33 percent to 90 percent. The cross-school response rate for families was 55 percent.

■ **Survey of Teachers and Teacher Assistants:** The teacher survey was distributed to 181 teachers and assistants in November and December 2005 (see Appendix D). A total of 111 were completed and returned. Response rates for individual schools ranged from 31 percent to 100 percent. The cross-school response rate for teachers and assistants was 61 percent. The survey for teachers and teacher assistants included the following:

- ▶ Rating the preschool on the child development curriculum, Jewish life programming, and helping parents to promote Jewish family life; and
- ▶ Rating staff morale, the atmosphere of the school, the quality of classrooms and equipment, support services, and opportunities for professional growth.

Respondents were also asked basic demographic information, and were asked about their training and teaching experiences, their salary and benefits, and their interest in various types of professional development activities.

III. Key Findings Related to Jewish ECE and the Community

This profile of Jewish ECE is based on data provided by directors of nine programs for the 2004-2005 school year. Because the study only involved nine schools that varied greatly in size, we use ranges and medians rather than averages when discussing various topics such as enrollment, number of teachers, or tuition.

The information provided by directors yields the following picture of Jewish ECE schools:

- The schools range in “age” from one to 70 years, with four schools in operation for 29 years or more.
- Six of the nine schools are licensed (or pursuing licensing) by the state.
- Two schools (22%) are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Only 4 percent of all Denver’s Early Childhood Education Centers (secular and religious) are accredited by NAEYC (Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children, 2005).
- When the study was conducted, three schools had used their religious exemption to choose not be licensed.
- Seven schools are located in central Denver; two small schools are located in Boulder.
- The age at which the schools first enroll children ranges from six weeks to 3½ years. Only one school accepts infants at the age of six weeks. The median starting age is 18 months. Six of the schools serve children aged five and younger; three also have classes for six-year-olds.
- Across all nine schools, there are 67 classrooms.

Table 1. Selected ECE School Characteristics

Number of years in operation	1 to 70 years 4 schools have been operating 29 years or more
Licensing and accreditation	
State license	5 schools, 1 pending
NAEYC	2 schools
Using religious exemption from state license	3 schools
Enrollment preference given to:	
Members of associated synagogue.....	4 schools
Jewish families	2 schools
Type of program ★	
Year-round	3 schools
9 to 10 months, with summer program	5 schools
9 to 10 months, no summer program	2 schools
Total number of classrooms	67
Age range of children in programs	6 weeks to 6 years
★One school has two programs: year-round, and 10-months with summer program.	

School Enrollment and Capacity

Table 2 provides information about the capacity and enrollment of the schools, the percentage of children who are Jewish, and school waiting lists. The table shows:

- The nine schools have a total capacity of 1,281 students. The range in school capacity is large, from 15 to over 300 students.
- The schools are operating nearly at capacity (94%), with 1,212 students enrolled.
- Approximately two-thirds of the enrolled students are Jewish. This is somewhat lower than the 77 percent reported by 152 directors who responded to a national survey of Jewish early childhood centers (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002). However, one of the two schools that do not collect or report information about the Jewish identity of their students is associated with a synagogue; thus, the total number of Jewish children who are enrolled is undoubtedly higher than the 589 reflected in this table.

Table 2. Enrollment for 2004-2005 School Year for Nine Schools

Total capacity for enrollees	1,281
Range of enrollment capacity	15 - 310
Median	155
<hr/>	
Total number of children enrolled.....	1,212
Range of enrollment	14 - 300
Median	155
<hr/>	
Total number of families enrolled.....	961
Range of families	14 - 224
Median	100
<hr/>	
Total number of Jewish children enrolled★	589
Percent of enrolled children who are identified as Jewish★★	66%
Range of percent who are identified as Jewish.....	53% - 100%
Median:	60%
<hr/>	
Total of names on waiting lists★★★	501
Range of size of waiting lists.....	2 - 365
Median	14

★ Two schools do not identify Jewish students.

★★ Percent of total students of seven schools identifying Jewish students.

★★★ Six schools have waiting lists.

Five of the nine schools provided information on capacity and enrollment for the past three years. Figure 1 shows:

- There has been modest but steady increase in capacity over the past three years.
- The growth in enrollment has kept pace with the increase in capacity.

Additionally, two Jewish day schools added preschools in the last two years, slightly increasing the overall capacity and enrollment for the community.

Figure 1. Capacity and Enrollment Over Three Years

Based on data from five schools

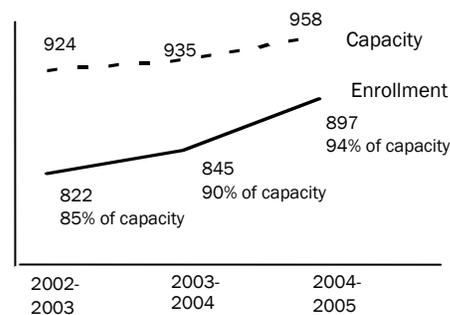


Table 3 shows total enrollment by age.

- Children under two years old comprised 15 percent of the total enrollments in 2004-2005.
- Approximately 27 percent of enrolled children were ages 2, 3, and 4/5, respectively.
- Only 4 percent were kindergarten students, with ages 5/6.

Table 3. Enrollment by Age, All Schools, 2004-2005					
	Under 2	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4/5	Age 5/6
Totals	180	341	332	329	47
	(6 schools)	(7 schools)	(8 schools)	(9 schools)	(4 schools)
As percent of all enrollments.....	15%	27%	27%	27%	4%

Staffing and Staff Capacities

Table 4 shows the numbers of teachers, assistants, and classrooms in the nine schools during the 2004-2005 school year.

- The nine schools employ 124 teachers and 57.5 assistants.
- There are a total of 67 classrooms.
- While several of the schools employ close to the same number of assistants as teachers, one school employs only teachers, and two others employ teachers and assistants at a 7:1 and 9:1 ratio, respectively.

Table 4. Teachers, Assistants, and Classrooms, 2004-2005	
Total teachers	124
Female.....	97%
Jewish	64%
Range of teachers at school.....	2 - 30
Median.....	16
Total assistants.....	57.5
Female.....	100%
Jewish	62%
Range of assistants at school	0 - 17
Median.....	4
Total classrooms	67
Range of classrooms for school	1 - 14
Median.....	8

Salaries and Benefits

The directors provided the following salary information for teachers and assistants:

- Hourly salaries for teachers range from \$10 to \$30. The top salary of \$30 per hour is unusual. For five of the schools, the top salary per hour for teachers is \$16.50 or less.
- The median hourly teacher salary is \$12, which translates into a full-time, annual salary of \$24,960 based on 2,080 hours of work per year and \$18,732 based on full-time work for the nine-month school year.
- Hourly salaries for assistants range from \$8 to \$15.60. Six of the schools have a top salary for assistants of \$12 or less.
- The median assistant salary is \$10, which translates into a full-time, annual salary of \$20,800 based on 2,080 hours of work per year and \$15,610 based on full-time work for the nine-month school year.
- Average teachers' and assistants' salaries at all schools have increased over the past three years, with increases ranging from 3 to 15 percent.

It is difficult to compare salary levels in Jewish ECEs with secular settings. The median hourly wage for preschool teachers in Denver in 2003 was \$9.23 per hour. For Denver Public Schools teachers (Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, 2003) the estimated average hourly salary was \$24.79.

Nationally, a survey of directors of Jewish early childhood programs in 2001 reported that the annual salary for Jewish preschool teachers ranged from \$10,000 to \$29,000, with an average of \$19,400 (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002). In contrast, the average annual salary for elementary school teachers in 25 states in 1999 was \$40,000.

Table 5 shows the number of schools providing benefits to teachers and assistants, as reported by directors.

- All reporting schools provide paid sick leave or paid vacation to full-time teachers.
- The next most common benefit is free or reduced tuition or membership in the school, synagogue, or Jewish Community Center (JCC).
- Six of the eight responding schools provide health insurance benefits and professional development.

Part-time and assistant teachers receive fewer benefits, although most responding schools provide free or reduced tuition or memberships and paid sick leave or vacation.

Table 5. Number of Schools Providing Benefits to Full- and Part-Time Teachers and Assistants, as Reported by Directors*

Number of schools providing benefits for ...	Full-time Teachers	Part-time Teachers	Full-time Assistants	Part-time Assistants
Paid sick leave or paid vacation	8	7	5	5
Professional development or continuing education subsidies	6	5	3	3
Health insurance, employer contribution	6	2	4	1
Disability benefits, employer contribution.....	2	0	2	0
Life insurance, employer contribution.....	2	1	2	1
Pension benefits, employer contribution	2	0	2	0
Free/reduced tuition in school, or membership in JCC or synagogue	7	7	6	6

*Eight schools reporting.

Tuition and Child Care Costs

It is difficult to compare tuition charges across the eight schools that provided financial information, because there are many different program options (half-days three times a week, for example), as well as adjustments for synagogue members and siblings. Table 6 shows the number of responding schools that offer various types of tuition arrangements.

- Seven schools reported that they offer scholarships or sliding scale arrangements.
- The estimated dollar value of all scholarships given during the most recent fiscal year was \$146,221. This ranged from zero to 5.6 percent of total program income in the seven schools that provided detailed information on scholarships.
- Across the seven schools, scholarships comprised 3 percent of total program income.

Table 6. Number of Schools with Tuition Arrangements★	
School offers ...	
Scholarships or sliding scale arrangements	7
Adjustments in tuition for families with siblings enrolled	7
Lower tuition for members (of synagogue).....	5
★Eight schools reporting.	

Table 7 shows the ranges in tuition charges for half-day programs and full-day programs with before and after care.

- The most expensive schools are almost 100 percent more costly than the least expensive schools. The median for half-day and full-day programs with before and after care ranges from \$503 and \$949.
- There is somewhat less variation in the cost for full-day programs, although tuition for the most expensive program is 55 percent higher than the cost for the least expensive. The median cost is \$752 per month.

To place these figures in perspective, monthly tuition charges for child care centers in Denver are estimated to be \$650 for preschoolers, \$722 for toddlers and \$812 for infants (Qualistar, 2003). Qualistar estimates that charges would be even higher for quality child care programs and would stand at \$753 for preschoolers, \$1,061 for toddlers and \$1,186 for infants.

Table 7. Range of Monthly Tuition Charges for Half-Day, Full-Day, and Full-Day Plus Before and After Care, for Standard Tuition and Reduced Members' Tuition★			
		Standard tuition charge	Synagogue member charge★★
Half-day enrollment, 5 days per week:	Range.....	\$300 - \$595	\$353 - \$430
	Median.....	\$503	\$398 (17% - 25% discounts)
Full-day enrollment, 5 days per week:	Range.....	\$600 - \$928	\$523 - \$650
	Median.....	\$752	\$633 (15% - 23% discounts)
Full-day enrollment, before and after care 5 days a week:	Range.....	\$630 - \$1,220	\$686 - \$1,040★★★
	Range.....	\$949	\$790 (10% - 25% discounts)
	Median.....		
★Eight schools reporting.			
★★Five schools are associated with synagogues with memberships.			
★★★Four schools associated with synagogues provide before and after care.			

“Before and after care” varies a great deal across the eight schools that provide this service. At the extremes, one school operates from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., compared to another that provides care for one hour before school but no care after school.

Five of the eight reporting schools only charge tuition and do not charge additional fees. Three schools charge a registration fee for each child. The two ECE schools affiliated with a Jewish Community Center each charge a registration fee of \$150 per child, plus an annual JCC membership fee. One school affiliated with a synagogue has a \$100 registration fee per child for non-members; the fee drops to \$85 for members.

Income and Expenses

Seven schools provided information on income and expenses. This information is summarized in Table 8. Given the differences in school size, it is no surprise that the income and expense picture varies greatly from school to school.

- The smallest school reported income of \$165,492 from tuition and fundraising activities.
- The largest reported gross annual income from tuition, program fees, and fundraising of \$1,356,239.
- With the exception of one ECE program, program income is almost entirely generated from tuition and program fees, with net fundraising income and donations comprising 1.25 percent to 4.6 percent of total program income. The exception is one small ECE program that generates 24 percent of its gross annual income from grants, donations, events, and sales.
- Staff costs, benefits, and direct program expenses also varied across the seven schools that provided information and ranged from \$147,000 to \$1,082,700.
- Almost all staff costs consist of salaries and contractual fees paid to teachers, assistants, consultants, directors, and assistant directors.
- Expenditures for supplies, professional development, and other direct program expenses ranged from 1.1 percent of ECE school direct expenses for the year to 11.3 percent.
- Direct program expenses comprised 6.8 percent of the expenditures made by the smallest ECE program. The most profitable program made the lowest direct program expenditures (1.1 percent of expenses).
- All seven responding schools reported a positive cash flow from their ECE programs. The excess of income over expenses ranged from a low of \$18,497 to a high of \$304,407. In percentage terms, the net income reported by schools amounted to a return that ranged from 11 percent to 33 percent and averaged 23.8 percent before indirect costs are considered.
- If overhead is included, program expenses for the same seven programs totaled \$3,770,129. The difference was \$1,023,059, which comprised 21.3 percent of program income.

Table 8. Range of Income, Expenses and Surplus Reported by Schools★

Annual income	
Tuition and program fees range	\$125,492 - \$1,285,320
Net fundraising income range	\$5,906 - \$70,919
Fundraising income as a % of total income range	1.25% - 24%
Total income for reporting schools.....	\$4,793,188
Annual expenses	
Total direct expenses range	\$147,000 - \$1,082,707
Total expense for supplies, professional development	\$7,000 - \$122,046
Direct program expenses as a % of total expenses	1.1% - 11.3%
Indirect costs	\$11,000 - \$85,000
Indirect costs as a % of annual income	5.8% - 11.25%
Total direct expenses for reporting schools	\$3,654,362
Total direct and indirect expenses for reporting schools	\$3,770,129
Fund balance	
Excess of income minus direct expenses range	\$18,492 - \$304,407
Surplus funds as a % of annual income	11% - 33%
Surplus funds (with indirect costs) as a % of annual income	4.5% - 33%
Average surplus for all reporting schools (without indirect costs)	23.8%
Average surplus for all reporting schools (with indirect costs)	21.3%

★Seven schools reporting.

Accreditation

Directors are ambivalent about pursuing accreditation because of the workload and cost involved. Only two preschools are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and when the study was conducted, three schools had opted out of state licensing by using their religious exemptions. While directors see the need for standards for ECE schools in general, they view the Jewish ECE schools as different from schools that hire people without degrees. Several directors explained their position:

It costs thousands of dollars to go through the accreditation process for NAEYC. I can use that money to buy things for the children and school. I don't see what accreditation brings the school. We are full, and we have a waiting list.

In the past 15 years, only one parent ever asked if the preschool was accredited by NAEYC. I go to NAEYC conferences and come back thinking we might tackle the process. But we have a waiting list, a full school, and we already do everything they [NAEYC] want us to do.

In general, directors are taking a wait-and-see attitude toward the idea of pursuing accreditation by Qualistar, because they are not familiar with the system and cannot envision the benefits. But a director who has led her school through the NAEYC accreditation sees the results of that process as:

... a guideline for us — now we know we can measure up to a national standard. We have confidence that NAEYC is up to date, so this helps us.

Another director of a school with NAEYC accreditation noted that she often refers to the NAEYC policies and standards when discussing classroom situations and school policies with teachers.

Although it is a long and hard process, I recommend that every school pursue this accreditation. It is useful when looking for outside funding and when talking with parents. It does benefit the school.

As we note in a subsequent section of this report, parents take a somewhat different view, with 48 percent characterizing accreditation or quality ratings as “very important” in their selection of a school. Asked specifically about the importance of various forms of licensing and accreditation, 84 percent said that state licensing was very important, 62 percent rated NAEYC accreditation as very important, and 42 percent characterized a Qualistar rating as very important.

Staffing Issues

Directors face intertwined staffing and funding challenges, despite the longevity of many teachers. Small schools with limited budgets are looking for ways to grow, but they can offer teachers very little in the way of professional development perks and worry that they cannot hold onto good teachers. For schools of all sizes, directors say that it is difficult to find people who are qualified in ECE, are Jewish, or have studied Jewish programming, who want to work with children in preschool, and who will work for low wages. Several directors note that they have lost teachers due to salaries that are not competitive. One director said:

It hurts that I can't pay my single-mom staff more — my biggest challenge is finding funds to pay our teachers a salary close to what teachers earn in other schools.

An unexpected aspect of staffing challenges is that longevity does not always equate with excellence. A parent complained on the survey form that “the teachers seem to be teaching the same things that were taught 20 years ago.” Several directors discussed the difficulty of motivating the older teachers to try new approaches and new materials. Said one director:

Longevity is both our strength and weakness. We have very little turnover. Teachers can get stale after several years of doing the same thing. Sometimes it helps to bring in new blood to stir things up.

Profile of Directors

Table 9 presents information about the professional and Judaic background of ECE directors (all female), as reported on the School Information Form.

- The tenure as director ranges from one to 15 years.
- Most have worked in the field of ECE for a long time, with the average number of years of experience standing at 16 years.
- Two of the nine have a graduate degree; the rest have a B.A. or B.S.
- Seven of nine reporting directors are Jewish, and eight have obtained some form of formal Judaic education.

These patterns are consistent with those reached in a national survey of directors of Jewish early childhood centers. According to the 152 respondents in that study, 93 percent of directors are Jewish, 79 percent have a bachelor's or master's degree, and 67 percent have the equivalent of a high school diploma in Jewish education (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002).

Table 9. Selected Characteristics of Nine ECE Directors★

Number of years as current ECE director	
Range	1 - 15 years
Average	4.3 years as director
Number of years working in ECE field	
Range	7 - 40 years.
Average	16 years of experience
Highest degree attained	
B.A./B.S.	7
M.A./M.S.	2
Specialized credentials for ECE	
State director's certificate	8
State teacher's certificate	1
Jewish	7
Judaic education	
Attended Hebrew school, earned Melton Certificate, studied in college, taught religious school, or attended school in Israel	8

★Eight schools reporting; one school has two directors.

The directors reported taking part in a variety of professional development activities in the past five years, including attending Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC) conferences, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conferences, Colorado Agency for Jewish Education (CAJE) Early Childhood Education conferences, CPR and medical administration training, management training, and taking classes or correspondence courses for ECE.

Although directors in Denver and Boulder were not asked about their ages and plans to continue at their jobs, it is relevant that the national survey of directors found that the majority are between 50 and 59 years of age and that 79 percent will reach retirement age in 10 to 15 years (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002).

IV. Key Findings Related to Jewish ECE Program Providers

Close to two-thirds (61%) of the teachers and assistants employed by the schools under discussion completed a Teacher Survey (found in Appendix D) yielding 111 questionnaires. Two-thirds of the respondents were teachers (67%) and the rest were assistant (30%) or floater (3%) teachers. Teachers and assistants from every school responded. All respondents were female, 70 percent were less than 50 years old, 76 percent reported that they were married or in a marriage-like relationship, and 73 percent reported having children or step-children, although only 32 percent said that these children had attended the preschool either currently or in the past.

Secular Education and ECE Training

Table 10 presents information on responding teachers and assistants. It shows that they are highly educated, trained in ECE, and dedicated to the field.

- About two-thirds have at least a college degree, and roughly one-third has either a two-year degree or some college experience. This is higher than the educational levels reported for the 526 Jewish early childhood directors, teachers, and aides surveyed in Miami-Dade and Broward counties, 56 percent of whom held a degree or license in ECE and 49 percent of whom reported their highest degree to be a B.A. (Schaap, 2005). In the secular early childhood education world, only 45 percent of teachers have a Bachelor's degree or higher (Whitebook, et al., 2001).
- Nearly all of the teachers and most assistant teachers have formal training in early childhood education. More than a third (34%) of teachers and 11 percent of assistants have a college or graduate degree in ECE or child development. Nearly one half (48%) of teachers and 25% of assistants have taken some ECE courses.
- Teachers have worked in the ECE field for an average of 9.9 years and a median of 7.5 years. They have worked at their current school for a range of 1 to 30 years and an average of 7.2 years. Schaap (2005) also finds that Jewish ECE personnel are extremely loyal, with 71 percent working continuously in the field once they enter it.

Table 10. Secular Education Level, ECE training and Tenure of Teachers and Assistants

	Teachers (n=75)	Assistant Teachers (n=36)	Total (n=111)
College training reported by teachers and assistants			
College or graduate degree	67%	56%	64%
Two year degree or some college	26%	41%	31%
Highest level of ECE or CDE ...			
No ECE or child development beyond high school*	8%	25%	14%
ECE courses*	48%	25%	41%
AA in ECE or CDE	5%	3%	5%
CDA (Child Development Associate)	4%	3%	4%
B.A./B.S. degree in ECE/child development	23%	11%	19%
M.A./M.S. degree in ECE/child development★	11%	0%	7%
Doctorate in ECE or child development	0%	0%	0%
Other★	11%	28%	16%

Table continued

Table 10. Secular Education Level, ECE training and Tenure of Teachers and Assistants

	Teachers (n=75)	Assistant Teachers (n=36)	Total (n=111)
Years worked at current ECE school			
Mean	6.9	7.9	7.2
Median	5.0	6.0	5
Range	<1-25	<1-30	<1-30
Years worked in field of ECE			
Mean	10.6	8.3	9.9
Median	10.0	6.5	7.5
Range	<1-35	<1-30	<1-35

★ Chi square is significant at .05.

Jewish Identity and Training

Table 11 shows the Jewish identity of responding teachers and assistants and their training in Jewish education.

- Two-thirds of teachers and assistants self-identify as Jewish. This is identical to the Jewish self-identification rate (69%) reported in a national survey of Jewish early childhood centers (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002), but lower than the 83 percent rate reported in a survey of early childhood personnel in Florida (Shaap, 2005).
- Most teachers and assistants say they have had some formal training in Jewish education, although 25 percent of the teachers and 44 percent of the assistants (32% of the total) report having none. Relatively few respondents report having pursued Jewish education as an adult. This is consistent with national patterns. According to a national survey of directors of Jewish early childhood education centers, 45 percent of the teachers reported that their highest level of Judaic education was an afternoon Hebrew school (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002).

Table 11. Religious Identity and Jewish Education of Teachers and Assistants (n=111)

Self-identifies as:	
Jewish	67%
Not Jewish	33%
★ Adult Jewish learning courses	25%
★ College-level Jewish studies	10%
★ Jewish day school, afternoon Hebrew high school, Yeshiva elementary and/or high school, supplementary school	37%
★ Jewish education as a child	33%
No Jewish education	32%

★ Respondents could check more than one item.

The non-Jewish status of many teachers and assistants and the lack of recent training among most staff present a problem for parents who look to Jewish ECEs to go beyond providing a low-keyed exposure to Jewish culture. According to one parent, “The staff needs more Jewish education. The connection to Israel is poor. Jewish emphasis has been reduced in the last year.” And in the words of another parent:

This year we have a pair of teachers who are very strong academically but neither is Jewish. They cannot integrate Hebrew or regular Jewish content. I like them very much and feel they are teaching my child social and academic skills just great, but they are unaware of or unwilling to enforce Jewish rules and are inaccurate in their teaching Jewish crafts for holidays.

Interest in Professional Growth Opportunities

Directors report that they try to provide stimulating in-service workshops for staff, or close the school for a day and bring in a specialist to teach about a relevant topic. While these types of professional development are welcomed by teachers, they are not the same as receiving credit for coursework or attending national conferences. Nor are the schools offering teachers newer and more innovative approaches to professional development such as coaching, mentoring, and observing “master” teachers.

Few teachers (12%) and assistants (8%) report that they belong to a professional organization for education, although 32 percent have attended an ECE conference or class “frequently” in the past few years and 40 percent have attended “occasionally.” There is typically an annual membership fee for professional organizations (\$50 per year for NAEYC). More to the point, Table 12 shows that most teachers and assistants are interested in professional growth opportunities, especially if their school pays tuition or offers compensation.

- Most respondents (59 to 98%) would take part in professional development activities during school hours. There is more variation in willingness to participate in programs offered outside of school hours (25 to 82%).
- Compensation is an important element for teachers, although 61 percent say they would attend a local conference or seminar on ECE without compensation.
- Teachers express more interest in activities concerning ECE than those related to Jewish education, although many would participate in Jewish education if opportunities are offered during school hours, include compensation, and/or are free.
- Teachers are somewhat more interested in conventional training programs, such as lectures, classes, conferences, and seminars, rather than more effective ones such as coaching, mentoring, or observing master teachers (National Staff Development Council Standards, 2005).

Table 12. Teacher Interest in Various Staff Development Offerings (n=75)

Percent of teachers who would be interested in the following if ...	If program was offered ...		The cost and compensation were ...		
	Outside school hours	During school	Teacher compensated	No compensation	ECE school paid tuition
Classes (non-degree) on ECE	78%	95%	98%	50%	98%
Classes on Jewish life	50%	80%	87%	35%	85%
Occasional speakers on ECE	77%	93%	94%	57%	92%
Occasional speakers/lectures on Jewish education.....	58%	91%	91%	42%	93%

Table continued

Table 12. Teacher Interest in Various Staff Development Offerings (n=75)

Percent of teachers who would be interested in the following if ...	If program was offered ...		The cost and compensation were ...		
	Outside school hours	During school	Teacher compensated	No compensation	ECE school paid tuition
Local conference on ECE	82%	98%	100%	61%	96%
Local conference or seminar on Jewish education.....	56%	85%	91%	33%	80%
Chance to observe “master” ECE teachers	63%	80%	88%	50%	86%
“Master” ECE teacher observing in teacher’s class and debriefing	48%	71%	78%	50%	76%
Chance to observe “master” Jewish education teachers	44%	69%	76%	36%	76%
“Master” Jewish education teacher observing teacher’s class and debriefing..	38%	59%	68%	36%	66%
Ongoing peer coaching and mentoring.....	62%	88%	93%	68%	93%

Teacher Satisfaction with School Atmosphere and Setting

Table 13 shows that teachers are generally pleased with the atmosphere and setting in which they teach.

- Most teachers (82%) describe the schools in which they teach as “warm and friendly.”
- Most teachers (78%) believe the school is valued and supported by the parents.
- Most teachers (72%) see the ECE school as providing ample opportunities for social events and activities.
- Most teachers (71%) feel the school has sufficient teaching and administrative support.

Fewer teachers, on the other hand, rate their schools highly with respect to staff morale and professional growth.

- Half of teachers (54%) say that staff morale is high.
- Less than half of teachers (47%) say that staff participates in decision making.
- Less than half of teachers (45%) say that there are enough opportunities for professional growth.

Table 13. Teachers' and Assistant Teachers' Assessment of Their ECE School (n=111)

Teachers rated each of the following for their ECE school:	Very True	Somewhat True	Somewhat Untrue	Very Untrue
Staff receive praise and recognition for their work	65%	28%	5%	2%
Staff morale is high	54%	37%	4%	4%
Staff participate in decisions about things that affect them	47%	36%	12%	4%
Staff feel free to express opinions	59%	32%	4%	5%
Staff feel valued	62%	28%	8%	2%
Enough opportunities for professional growth	45%	39%	10%	7%
The atmosphere is friendly and warm	82%	13%	3%	3%
The school is well planned and efficiently run	64%	32%	3%	1%
Enough resources/services for special-needs children	50%	35%	12%	4%
Enough support services (such as secretaries and aides)	71%	21%	7%	1%
The school space is attractive and well-organized	64%	28%	3%	5%
The classrooms have enough equipment and supplies	60%	30%	9%	2%
The school is valued and supported by parents	78%	22%	0%	0%
Parents are involved in the program	64%	32%	3%	1%
Parents are respectful of the staff	66%	34%	1%	0%
Parents provide support to the staff when it's needed	67%	30%	3%	0%
School advises on ways to provide Jewish family life	60%	35%	4%	1%
ECE school/parent organization provides opportunities for social activities	72%	24%	4%	0%

The Financial Status of Teachers and Assistants

Table 14 shows the number of hours that teachers and assistants work in a typical week and the time they devote to planning outside of the classroom.

- Half of the teachers and assistants work less than 30 hours per week at the ECE school.
- Roughly a third work a second job, with half working more than 40 hours per week, and some working up to 80 hours per week. According to Schaap (2005), early childhood personnel in Miami-Dade work an average of 33 hours per week, with 94 percent working over 20 hours per week.
- Most teachers (62%) and many assistant teachers (29%) say they frequently spend time preparing for class outside the classroom, with the average amount of time being 4.5 hours per week.

Table 14. Paid Hours Worked by Teachers and Assistants and Unpaid Planning Time at ECE School and Elsewhere

	Teachers (n=75)	Assistants (n=36)	Total (n=111)
Number of hours worked at ECE school per week			
Mean	29.0	29.5	29.2
Median.....	32.0	30.0	30.5
Range.....	2 - 45	6 - 41	2 - 45
Percent working at other jobs in addition to ECE school job.....	33%	24%	30%
If multiple jobs, number of hours per week at all jobs combined			
Mean.....	34.6	47.5	38.8
Median.....	39.0	42.5	40.0
Range.....	2 - 60	25 - 80	2 - 80
Teacher or assistant plans for classroom outside of regular school hours ★			
Never.....	4%	9%	6%
Rarely.....	8%	38%	18%
Occasionally	26%	24%	25%
Frequently.....	62%	29%	52%
If frequently, number of hours per week ★			
Mean.....	4.0	6.8	4.5
Median.....	4.0	2.0	1.0
Range.....	1 - 10	2 - 21	1 - 21

★ Chi square is significant at .05.

Table 15 shows annual household incomes reported by teachers and assistants.

- About half (48%) of teachers and nearly 70 percent of assistants (67%) report total household incomes of less than \$50,000. The annual Self-Sufficiency Standard[♦] in Denver in 2004 for two adults and two children (preschooler plus child in school) was \$48,065 (Pearce, 2004). Almost three-quarters of the teachers and assistants are in two-parent homes with children.
- Twenty-two percent of assistants reported an annual household income of less than \$15,000. In 2004, the federal poverty line (FPL) in Denver for two adults and two children (one preschool age and the other school age) was \$15,670.
- Household income patterns for personnel at Jewish ECEs in Denver are similar to those reported by their counterparts in Miami-Dade, where 39 percent reported family incomes of less than \$45,000 (Schaap, 2005).
- According to early childhood personnel in Miami, teaching salaries were an important source of household income for 91 percent of respondents and for 28 percent it was the sole source (Schaap, 2005). While a comparable question was not asked of Denver early childhood personnel, it is relevant that 26 percent reported that they were not currently married or in a marriage-like relationship and presumably were supporting themselves.

[♦] The Self-Sufficiency Standard defines the amount of income required to meet basic needs (including paying taxes) in the regular “marketplace” without public or private/informal subsidies. By providing a measure that is customized to each family’s circumstances, e.g., taking account of where they live and how old their children are, the Self-Sufficiency Standard makes it possible to determine if families’ incomes are enough to meet their basic needs” (Pearce, 2004: 3).

Table 15. Total Annual Household Income of Teachers and Assistants

	Teachers (n=75)	Assistants (n=36)	Total (n=111)
Total household income ★			
Less than \$15,000	2%	22%	8%
\$15,000 - \$29,999	32%	26%	30%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	14%	19%	15%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	25%	15%	22%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	7%	11%	8%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	14%	7%	12%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	3%	0%	2%
\$200,000 or more	3%	0%	2%

★ Chi square is significant at .05.

Table 16 shows which benefits are available to teachers and assistants, and the percent age of people who use those benefits.

- Fifty-seven percent of respondents are eligible for medical insurance, but less than half (44%) use it. In a similar vein, only one-third of Miami-Dade early childhood personnel opt to participate in a medical insurance plan offered by their employers and 11 percent have no medical insurance at all (Schaap, 2005).
- Vacation time, paid sick leave, and reduced or free tuition at the school are the benefits that most teachers and assistant teachers receive. Almost all of the respondents who have access to these benefits report using paid sick leave (94%) and vacation time (90%).
- Only a quarter of respondents say they use free or reduced tuition.
- Roughly one-third or less of respondents are offered disability benefits, life insurance, or access to a retirement plan.
- Close to half of teachers (47%) and one third (30%) of assistants are offered subsidies for professional development or continuing education, and two-thirds of those take advantage of the benefit.

Table 16. Benefits Offered and Used, by Staff Position (n=111)

		Benefit Offered			Benefit Offered and Used		
		Teachers	Assistants	Total	Teachers	Assistants	Total
Medical insurance	No.....	42%	45%	43%	50%	71%	56%
	Yes.....	58%	55%	57%	50%	29%	44%
Vacation time	No.....	15%	20%	17%	8%	15%	10%
	Yes.....	85%	80%	83%	92%	85%	90%
Paid sick leave	No.....	14%	29%	18%	6%	6%	6%
	Yes.....	86%	71%	82%	94%	94%	94%

Table continued

Table 16. Benefits Offered and Used, by Staff Position (n=111)

		Benefit Offered			Benefit Offered and Used		
		Teachers	Assistants	Total	Teachers	Assistants	Total
Disability benefits	No.....	67%	77%	70%	57%	67%	60%
	Yes.....	33%	23%	30%	43%	33%	40%
Life insurance	No.....	73%	69%	72%	52%	62%	55%
	Yes.....	27%	31%	28%	48%	39%	45%
Access to a retirement plan	No.....	70%	86%	74%	49%	50%	49%
	Yes.....	30%	14%	26%	51%	50%	51%
Employer contribution to retirement plan	No.....	74%	86%	78%	43%	42%	43%
	Yes.....	26%	14%	22%	57%	58%	58%
Subsidies for professional development or continuing education	No.....	53%	70%	58%	32%	36%	33%
	Yes.....	47%	30%	42%	68%	64%	67%
Reduced/free tuition for a child	No.....	20%	27%	22%	76%	67%	73%
	Yes.....	80%	73%	78%	25%	33%	27%
Free/reduced tuition at summer camp	No.....	29%	38%	32%	74%	60%	71%
	Yes.....	71%	62%	69%	26%	40%	29%
Reduced/free membership in synagogue	No.....						
	Yes.....	82%	72%	79%	79%	58%	73%
Reduced/free membership in a JCC	No.....	18%	28%	21%	21%	42%	28%
	Yes.....	74%	81%	76%	53%	27%	46%
	Yes.....	26%	19%	24%	47%	72%	54%

Satisfaction with Salary and Benefits and Future Plans

Table 17 shows that many teachers and assistants are dissatisfied with their salaries and some are considering leaving the field of ECE.

- Only 11 percent of teachers and 24 percent of assistants report being very satisfied with their salaries.
- About half of teachers (47%) and one third (30%) of assistants say they are not satisfied with their salaries and benefits.
- A quarter (26%) believe they are underpaid, compared to other people with similar jobs.
- Approximately one-third of teachers and assistants say they have considered leaving the ECE school, leaving Jewish ECE, or leaving the entire field of ECE because of the salary level.

- Nevertheless, half of the teachers and assistants state they will likely be working in a Jewish ECE program in two years.

These patterns are similar to those observed in other studies of early childhood education. Schaap’s (2005) survey of 526 Jewish early childhood personnel in Miami-Dade found that 62 percent of the teachers were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their salaries (63% of Jewish and 48% of non-Jewish teachers), and that 67 percent have considered leaving the field because of their salaries. Nationally, directors of 152 Jewish early childhood centers report that 12 percent of teachers and 14 percent of assistants either left this past year or are planning leave this year (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002). In secular early childhood education, the average turnover rate stands at 31 percent, with new teaching staff coming in with significantly lower education levels than those they replaced (Whitebook, *et al.*, 2001).

While the unusual loyalty of Jewish early childhood professionals insulates schools from the turnover endemic to secular preschools, Jewish preschools are not immune to these dislocations. As one teacher noted:

I think because of the salaries our school offers, we tend to draw in many inexperienced people – we lose employees fairly quickly as well ... higher pay draws out experienced candidates for the job.

Table 17. Satisfaction with Salary and Benefits, by Staff Position

	Teacher (n=75)	Assistant Teacher (n=36)	Total (n=111)
Compared to other people with similar jobs, person thinks that she is ...			
Well paid	11%	20%	14%
Adequately paid	64%	51%	60%
Underpaid	25%	29%	26%
Overall satisfaction with salary			
Very satisfied	11%	24%	15%
Somewhat satisfied	37%	33%	36%
Somewhat unsatisfied	45%	27%	39%
Very unsatisfied	7%	15%	10%
Overall satisfaction with benefits			
Very satisfied	23%	16%	21%
Somewhat satisfied	23%	19%	22%
Somewhat unsatisfied	30%	19%	26%
Very unsatisfied	23%	45%	31%
Salary level has made person consider ...			
Leaving this school	36%	34%	36%
Leaving Jewish ECE	33%	32%	33%
Leaving the entire field of ECE	41%	27%	37%
Likelihood person will be working in Jewish ECE program in two years			
Very likely	48%	54%	50%
Somewhat likely	38%	31%	36%
Somewhat unlikely	10%	14%	11%
Very unlikely	4%	0%	3%

V. Key Findings Related to Jewish ECE Parents

Demographic Characteristics of Responding Parents

A total of 529 parents completed the Parent Survey (Appendix C). The portion of families at each school who completed surveys ranged from 33 percent to 90 percent, with the median school response rate standing at 56 percent and the cross-school response rate being 55 percent.

Table 18 provides demographic information about the parents completing the form. It shows that most responding parents are Jewish, married, highly educated, and affluent.

- Three-quarters of the parents are between the ages of 31 and 40.
- Most parents (77%) are Jewish.
- Virtually all parents (97%) are married or in a marriage-like relationship.
- Over 90 percent have at least a college education.
- More than two-thirds (69%) report an annual household income of \$100,000 or more, and 30 percent report a household income that exceeds \$200,000.

Indeed, surveyed preschool parents are much more apt to be married, better educated, and wealthier than the Jewish and non-Jewish population as a whole. According to the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) 2000-01, only half (54%) of Jewish adults 18 years of age are currently married, 9 percent are divorced, and 4 percent are separated – patterns that closely mirror those found in the total U.S. population. The NJPS also found that 24 percent of Jewish adults 18 years and older have received a graduate degree and 55 percent have earned at least a bachelor’s degree. The current comparable numbers for non-Jews are 5 percent and 28 percent, respectively. And while the median household income for the Jewish population (\$50,000) exceeds the U.S. median (\$42,000) and the percent earning less than \$25,000 (19%) is lower than the U.S. rate of 29 percent, preschool respondents in the Denver and Boulder survey are clearly far wealthier than their national counterparts (United Jewish Communities, 2002).

Table 18. Demographic Profile of Parents Completing the Survey and Their Families (n=529)

Sex	
Female.....	94%
Male.....	6%
Age	
Under 30.....	6%
31 - 40.....	75%
41 - 50.....	18%
51 - 60.....	1%

Table continued

Table 18. Demographic Profile of Parents Completing the Survey and Their Families (n=529)

Currently married or in a marriage-like relationship	97%
Number of children	
Mean.....	2.1
Median.....	2.0
Range.....	1 - 6
Education	
B.A. or B.S.....	42%
Graduate degree	53%
Education of spouse/partner	
B.A. or B.S.....	37%
Graduate degree	53%
Household income	
Less than \$15,000	1%
\$15,000 - \$29,999.....	2%
\$30,000 - \$49,999.....	5%
\$50,000 - \$74,999.....	10%
\$75,000 - \$99,999.....	14%
\$100,000 - \$149,999.....	27%
\$150,000 - \$199,999.....	12%
\$200,000 or more	30%

Employment Patterns and Childcare Needs

Table 19 shows that most responding parents have one parent home full time, and relatively few have the most intense childcare needs with two parents working full time and no nanny.

- Most responding parents are either home full-time (42%) or employed only part-time (35%), with only 24 percent in full-time employment.
- Over a quarter of the households (28%) have a full- or part-time nanny.
- Only 13% of the homes have two parents working full time with no nanny.

These patterns closely resemble those found in a 2002 survey of Jewish preschool parents in Baltimore, Chicago, and Denver, where 42 percent of interviewed mothers said they were not working for pay, 27 percent reported working full time, and 31 percent worked part time (Beck, 2002). Nationally, 62 percent of women with preschool age children work outside the home and 38 percent do not. Although the proportion of mothers with preschool age children working full time and part time is not known, 25 percent of U.S. women work part time (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006). According to the NJPS, 56 percent of Jewish women are employed on a full or part-time basis (United Jewish Communities, 2002).

Table 19. Employment Status of Parents Completing the Survey, Use of Nanny, and Level of Need for School-Based Childcare (n=529)

Employment status	
Employed full-time	24%
Employed part-time	35%
Home full-time	42%
Employment status of spouse/partner	
Employed full-time	92%
Employed part-time	4%
Home full-time	2%
Have a nanny/au pair	
Yes, full-time	9%
Yes, part-time	19%
No.....	72%
Level of need for ECE school to provide childcare	
Both parents working full-time/no nanny	13%
Working part-time/no nanny	25%
Single or working full-time/with nanny	19%
Full-time homemaker.....	43%

Jewish Identity and Practice

Table 20 shows how responding parents identify their families in Jewish terms.

- Seventy-seven percent of parents identify themselves as Jewish, which is identical to the estimated Jewish enrollment (77%) reported by 152 directors in a national survey of Jewish early childhood education centers (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002).
- Twenty-eight percent of interviewed parents in Denver and Boulder characterize themselves in more traditional ways (Conservative and Orthodox), 29 percent characterize themselves in more liberal ways (Reform, Reconstructionist), and 21 characterize themselves as secular (secular Jewish, just Jewish, or part Jewish).
- Twenty-three percent of parents say they are not Jewish.

Table 20. Parent Report of Jewish Identity (n=529)

Parents consider their family to be ...	
Reform	26%
Reconstructionist	3%
Conservative	23%
Orthodox	5%
Secular Jewish	3%
Just Jewish	5%
Part Jewish	13%
Not Jewish	23%

Given this diversity, it is not surprising that schools have diverse objectives for their Jewish programming ranging from providing a low-keyed exposure to Jewish culture to establishing the basis of Jewish values and creating Jewish identity for child and family. The following quotes from directors reflect this broad range of goals.

Jewish programming is not the primary function of the school. It is a bonus. Things like building a Jewish identity are done through the synagogue and the family, not our school. We do no religious training, except for Shabbat and the holidays.

The point is to provide a basic introduction to holidays and values, such as tzedakah. We also provide a limited introduction to Hebrew, but do very little with religion as such. We don't spend a lot of time talking about God, but we do have blessings before the snack or meal.

We want to instill a Jewish identity for the child and his/her family, a religious foundation for the child and a connection to the Jewish community. We also teach a love for Israel, for Jewish traditions and the history of Judaism. And we teach basic Jewish values and morals.

Despite the heterogeneity of objectives across schools, surveys completed by Jewish parents indicate that attending a Jewish ECE school deepens Jewish practice. Table 21 shows the self-reported behaviors of Jewish families prior to enrollment.

- Many parents (71%) say they celebrated Jewish holidays regularly prior to sending their child to a Jewish ECE school, and 55 percent say they often socialized with other Jewish families. On the other hand, only 16 and 30 percent reported regular synagogue attendance and Shabbat celebration, respectively.

Table 21. Report of Participation in Jewish Activities Before Enrolling in ECE School, by Parents with a Jewish Identity (n=387)

Before enrolling in ECE, family did the following ...	Often/regularly	Sometimes	Rarely or never
Celebrated Shabbat	30%	28%	42%
Attended synagogue or temple	16%	47%	37%
Gave tzedakah (charity)	45%	44%	12%
Celebrated Jewish holidays	71%	24%	4%
Studied Judaism as a family	15%	32%	53%
Read or sang Jewish books or songs	29%	42%	28%
Socialized with other Jewish families	55%	36%	8%

Table 22 shows reported behaviors of Jewish families following enrollment.

- At least one-fourth of the respondents report an increase in the frequency with which they participate in each of the listed Jewish activities following preschool enrollment.

Most parents (70%) in Beck's (2002) three-city study of Jewish preschools also reported doing something different in terms of Jewish observance as a result of preschool attendance, with the most common changes being lighting candles on Friday and holiday celebration. Some cited a stronger sense of Jewish identity and synagogue membership. However, unlike Beck's study, which found that synagogue membership doubled among interviewed families over time, only 29 percent of surveyed parents who self-identified as Jewish in this study reported attending synagogue more frequently

following preschool enrollment. Preschool attendance does affect synagogue membership. Half of the families whose child attends a preschool connected with a synagogue reported being a member and among these families, 39 percent became members after their child began school (61% were already members).

Table 22. Report of Participation in Jewish Activities After Enrolling in Preschool, by Parents with a Jewish Identity (n=387)

After enrolling in ECE, the family does the following ...	More often	About the same	Less often
Celebrate Shabbat	43%	56%	2%
Attend synagogue or temple	29%	68%	3%
Give <i>tzedakah</i> (charity)	27%	72%	2%
Celebrate Jewish holidays	36%	64%	0%
Study Judaism as a family	25%	73%	3%
Read or sing Jewish books or songs	52%	47%	1%
Socialize with other Jewish families	38%	62%	1%

Table 23 shows that the groups with the greatest changes in observance, celebration, and Jewish socialization following enrollment are those who classify themselves as more liberal and secular.

- Following enrollment, more than half of liberal Jewish respondents report more frequent Shabbat celebration (55%) Nearly half report more frequent holiday celebration (40%) and socialization with other Jewish families (48%). And 39 percent report more frequent synagogue attendance.
- Secular Jewish respondents also report more regular celebration of Shabbat (38%), increased holiday celebration (40%) and more frequent synagogue attendance (23%) following preschool enrollment.
- The increases are statistically significant for liberal Jewish families.
- Traditional Jewish families report greater activity pre-enrollment and as a result, have less room to increase.

Table 23. Parent Report of “Very Often” and “More Often” Participation in Jewish Activities Before and After Enrolling in Preschool

	Participate “often/regularly” before preschool			Participate “more often” after preschool		
	More Traditional Jewish (n=141)	More Liberal Jewish (n=149)	Secular Jewish (n=109)	More Traditional Jewish (n=141)	More Liberal Jewish (n=149)	Secular Jewish (n=109)
★ Celebrate Shabbat.....	59%	19%	8%	34%	55%	38%
★ Attend synagogue or temple	36%	6%	3%	22%	39%	23%
★ Give <i>tzedakah</i> (charity).....	66%	37%	27%	27%	28%	25%
★ Celebrate Jewish holidays.....	89%	69%	50%	29%	40%	40%
★ Study Judaism as a family.....	32%	8%	0%	21%	29%	24%
★ Read Jewish books/sing Jewish songs	53%	18%	13%	43%	62%	49%
★ Socialize with other Jewish families	72%	52%	37%	29%	48%	34%
★ Chi square is significant at .1.						

Another way of looking at change in Jewish practice is to compare the percentage of traditional, liberal, and secular Jewish parents who report increases in at least one activity following enrollment in Jewish preschool. Table 24 shows that all three groups report increases in Jewish practice, but only the liberal group shows a statistically significant increase.

Table 24. Parent Reports of Increased Jewish Practice in at Least One Area of Life after Enrollment in Preschool★

	More Traditional Jewish (n=141)	More Liberal Jewish (n=149)	Secular Jewish (n=109)
Percent Reporting Greater Jewish Practice in One or More Areas	63%	84%	72%

★Chi square is significant at .1.

Preschool directors are not surprised that their programming leads to changes in Jewish practice at home. Here are the comments of directors regarding the impact of Jewish programming:

We try to teach the children the feeling of being Jewish. As part of that we teach them to be generous – we have food drives, clothing, books and toy drives. Their parents are very generous. Children learn through doing these things, and through the holidays.

“Parents say “Keep doing what you are doing – we love it.” In fact, children encourage their parents to celebrate Shabbat. Parents can’t avoid it. We hear of non-Jewish kids wanting to sing the blessing on Friday nights.

These patterns lend credence to the contention of some Jewish educators that preschools can have a profound impact on the Jewish behavior and practice of the entire family (Beck, 2002). Jewish preschools can also affect the perceptions of non-Jewish families.

- Sixty percent of parents who describe themselves as “not Jewish” say that their child’s experience at a Jewish ECE has made them feel more positive about Judaism and the Jewish people. The remaining 40 percent say it had not really changed their opinions.

As one non-Jewish parent observed, “As a non-Jewish family, we like learning more about Judaism and its stories. Also the emphasis on values – great!”

Selection of ECE Schools

Parents who use Jewish preschools are active educational consumers who care about quality. Nearly three-quarters (71%) reported that they considered other ECE schools before selecting the one in which their child is enrolled, and half looked at both Jewish and non-Jewish preschools.

Table 25 shows that the factors of greatest importance to parents in selecting a school are:

- The qualify of staff and teachers (97%);
- The quality of the child development programming (86%);

- Physical space and resources (69%);
- Class size (65%); and
- The school's reputation (65%).

The importance of teachers and the child development programming are reflected in the following parent comments.

Although we are a very new family to ____, I am very pleased with the preschool. My daughter has continued her rapid development ...The curriculum keeps up with her fast paced interests and she is very happy with her teachers and friends.

The school has been the best thing that has happened in early childhood development for our kids and our family. Continue the very high standard of teachers, as teachers mold and create a positive association for kids with school forever.

Table 25. Parent Rating of Factors Considered When Choosing a School (n=529)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
The distance from home or work	35%	48%	15%	1%
The quality of the staff and teachers	97%	3%	0%	0%
The quality of the physical space and resources	69%	31%	1%	0%
The quality of the child development programming	86%	13%	.2%	0%
The quality of the Jewish life programming★	31%	38%	16%	16%
Providing exposure to Jewish life	39%	35%	13%	14%
The special needs services available at the school	8%	18%	36%	39%
The student diversity	10%	42%	35%	13%
Class size	65%	32%	2%	1%
Knowing other families who attend	16%	35%	36%	14%
The preschool's general reputation	65%	32%	3%	.2%
Accreditations or quality ratings	48%	41%	9%	2%
The cost	14%	31%	31%	25%
Tuition discounts and admission policies for siblings	14%	31%	31%	25%
The hours of operation	35%	42%	19%	4%
The availability of infant care	11%	9%	25%	54%
Availability of an after-hours program	23%	25%	24%	28%
The preschool's relationship to your synagogue	11%	18%	25%	47%

★Chi square is significant at .1.

Unlike other studies that emphasize the importance of location in the selection of a preschool (Rosen, 2005), only 35 percent of surveyed parents cited distance from home or work as a key factor in their preschool decision. Jewish life programming and exposure to Jewish life was also of lesser import, with only 31 and 39 percent of parents, respectively, rating these factors as very important to their school selection. Of course, Jewish parents who identify as more traditional, place more emphasis on Jewish life programming and exposure to Jewish life when they select a preschool. Among these parents, 59 and 68 percent, respectively, cite this as very important. To contrast, these features of the school are very important to only 18 and 24 percent of those who identify as secular Jewish. And across all

Jewish identity categories the quality of staff and teachers and the quality of the child development programming were very important considerations.

These patterns are consistent with what 90 interviewed Jewish parents in a national study said about their decision to use a Jewish preschool (Beck, 2002). The key reasons they cited were teacher quality, low student-teacher ratios, school atmosphere, and reputation rather than Jewish content. As one parent put it, “The Jewish education was a plus but it was not something we were looking for.”

Assessment of ECE Schools

Table 26 shows that most parents are extremely satisfied with the schools they have chosen. Overwhelming majorities describe the preschool in which their child is enrolled as:

- Warm and friendly, and welcoming to both Jewish and non-Jewish parents;
- Doing a good job of teaching about Jewish life; and
- Well-run, attractive, and adequately supplied.

Table 26. Parents Responses to Statements about ECE School (n=441) ★

		Very True	Somewhat True	Somewhat Untrue	Very Untrue
The atmosphere is friendly and warm	.....	91%	8%	1%	0%
Teachers and director do a good job communicating with parents	.....	71%	26%	3%	0%
Parents feel welcome to help in class, attend parties and field trips	.....	85%	14%	2%	0.2%
Other families at ECE are a key part of the family's social life	.....	29%	34%	25%	12%
Preschool provides enough opportunities for social activities/events	.....	51%	42%	7%	0.2%
Non-Jewish families feel welcome at the preschool	.....	69%	28%	2%	1%
Preschool does a good job of preparing children for kindergarten	.....	68%	27%	5%	1%
Preschool does a good job of teaching children about Jewish life	.....	73%	25%	1%	0.2%
Preschool spends too little time on Jewish topics★★	.....	3%	7%	35%	55%
Preschool spends too much time on Jewish topics	.....	3%	9%	33%	55%
Preschool is well planned and efficiently run	.....	69%	26%	4%	1%
Preschool space is attractive and well-organized	.....	63%	29%	6%	2%
Classrooms have enough equipment and supplies	.....	62%	30%	7%	1%
Preschool needs to expand its hours	.....	7%	12%	29%	52%
Preschool holidays and closures are problems for the family	.....	12%	33%	24%	30%
Preschool calendar meets the family's needs	.....	37%	45%	15%	3%

★ Responses from parents at one school are missing.

★★ Chi square is significant at .1.

The aggregation of responses in Table 26 across the participating schools belies some differences in parent approval ratings at particular schools. For example, 22 percent of parents at one ECE school say it is very true that non-Jewish families feel welcome there, compared to 92 percent of parents at another school. The majority of parents at every school checked “very true” regarding a warm and friendly atmosphere, and parents are welcome to help in the classroom. But as Table 27 reveals, other statements show a wider spread of response.

Table 27: Range of Percentages of Parents by School, Responding “Very True” to Selected Statements (n=440) ★

Percentages of parents at ECE schools responding “very true” to the following statements:	Percentages range:
Atmosphere is warm and friendly	80% - 100%
Teachers, directors do good job of communicating with parents	57% - 89%
Parents feel welcome to help in classroom, attend field trips	80% - 93%
School provides enough opportunities for social activities and events	35% - 69%
Non-Jewish families feel welcome at school	22% - 92%
School does a good job of preparing children for kindergarten	24% - 100%
School does a good job of teaching children about Jewish life	57% - 100%
Space is attractive and well-organized	23% - 83%
Classrooms have enough equipment and supplies	33% - 76%
Spends too much time on Jewish topics	0% - 17%

★ Table is built on responses from eight schools, with one school missing.

One area of disagreement across schools is the extent to which parents feel that the school does a good job preparing children for kindergarten. Parents clearly disagree about the balance between a play-based versus an academic curriculum. Directors report that they are often pressured by parents to add more academics to the curriculum. As the following parents explained:

More attention should be paid to academic preparedness in the upper years (ages 3, 4 and 5). This is a play-based school – which is wonderful but I believe it could introduce more academics into the day. I question whether children are truly ready to enter kindergarten.

We need more academics ... stretching each child to his/her maximal potential academically in addition to providing a loving and nurturing environment for the children (what our preschool is doing already). It is an important problem for Denver Jewish community – there is no school for motivated achieving or gifted children. These children are pushed out into non-Jewish schools.

Directors understand the pressures that parents feel when parents think about enrolling their children into private elementary schools. As one director noted:

Yes, it is true – parents want more academics and school readiness. And so do the schools we feed into. Graland, Colorado Academy, Logan, British Primary School, Herzl – these private schools now all want children entering kindergarten to be “reading ready” and have “numbers awareness.” The parents feel pressured, because it is hard to get their kids into these schools.

Some say that they make an effort to keep informed of what kindergartens are looking for with incoming children. The director of an ECE school with a small kindergarten class described what her school is doing:

We try to stay on top of what elementary schools and kindergartens are demanding, and what the trends are. Our learning consultant works with public schools. A public school teacher comes here every year to teach us the trends, and to look at what we are doing. We use the same reading and math program for kindergarten as does DPS.

At the same time, most interviewed directors are comfortable with their school’s “whole child approach” and are committed to providing “developmentally appropriate” activities in a healthy, happy, safe, and nurturing environment.

Table 28 shows that while most parents are extremely pleased with the school’s child development and Jewish life programming; they are somewhat less favorable in their ratings of how well their preschool helps with parenting and promoting Jewish life at home.

- Most parents say that the quality of the school’s child development curriculum (61%) and Jewish life programming (58%) are excellent.
- Fewer parents think the school does an excellent job helping parents to promote Jewish life (40%). Nearly half say the school does a good job, and 11 percent rate these aspects of the school as fair or poor.
- Only 30 percent say the school does an excellent job when it comes to providing parenting tips and information on child development. Another 44 percent say the school does a good job. And 26 percent give the school a rating of fair or poor.

Table 28. Parents’ Ratings of Selected Aspects of Preschool (n=441) ★				
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Quality of child development curriculum	61%	35%	4%	0%
Quality of Jewish life programming	58%	39%	3%	0%
Helping parents with parenting tips/information on child development	30%	44%	23%	3%
Helping parents to promote Jewish family life	40%	48%	10%	1%

★ Responses from parents at one school are missing.

The following presents comments noted on the surveys pertaining to the child development and Jewish life programming, as well as the issue of helping parents with parenting tips and information on child development.

Early Childhood Education Curriculum: Virtually all ECE school directors maintain that their child development curriculum follows the “whole child approach, which focuses on fostering the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional aspects of each child using a play-based experimental approach. Academics are threaded into the activities of the older groups; the children receive lots of individualized attention. As the previous survey results and the following comment shows, most parents are enthusiastic about this approach:

We value the play based curriculum and the character education at [our child’s school]. Using the Jewish culture and religion our school is able to foster ethical, responsible, and caring children. We entered into the daycare/preschool experience

with trepidation. However, our anxiety soon dissolved when we felt the warmth and love provided to the children and saw our little guy develop with leaps and bounds. Our son's smiley/positive personality radiates the love and happiness he experiences at school.

As previously noted, there is some disagreement about the role of academics in the curriculum. Another issue raised by some parents has to do with computers and technology. For example, a parent wrote on a survey form, "Is there any opportunity for children to use computers?" One director said she refuses to allow computers, videos, or mimeographed materials in the classrooms. Another director explained in an interview:

We do not have computers here for the children's use. When people ask me about that, I say that these children all have computers at home. I don't want them to be doing the same thing they are doing at home – this is the time to build social skills and values.

These sentiments are underscored in a recent survey of Colorado kindergarten teachers that shows that the single most important skill for entering students is social: interact positively with other children (Educare and Colorado Children's Campaign, 2002). The other skills highly rated by kindergarten teachers also have very modest academic demands: a student must recognize his or her name in print; grasp a pencil and position the paper; recognize the difference between letters and numbers; count to 20; and recognize, name, and draw basic shapes. Given the highly educated and wealthy profile of parents with children in Jewish early childhood education programs, however, this type of survey data is not likely to resolve the debate on how programs should balance children's cognitive, affective, and behavioral needs, and it will be a continued source of tension.

Jewish Education Program: Jewish education programming is incorporated into the ECE programming in all nine schools. The schools teach Jewish songs and stories, celebrate Shabbat and the holidays, and emphasize Jewish values. Several schools teach Hebrew extensively, as described by this director:

Our Jewish programming is totally blended with ECE programming all day long. I greet them in Hebrew; attendance is taken in Hebrew, and we have Hebrew songs and dances. They learn things like colors, days of week and animals in Hebrew – and learn to read Hebrew.

As previously noted, parents are enthusiastic about the quality of Jewish programming and feel that the school does a good job of teaching children about Jewish life. On the other hand, Jewish parents with different types of orientations attach different importance to Jewish programming and the school's role in promoting Jewish family life. Written comments by parents on the survey forms reflect a range of reactions to the Jewish programming at their school:

I am very pleased with [this school]. It is very accessible from a Jewish standpoint. I think it will provide an excellent basis for our son's Jewish identity as well as general preparation.

I would like to see more emphasis on tzedakah and performing mitzvot. Maybe start a weekly tradition of children bringing in a small amount of change each Friday to place in a tzedakah "jar" – and a way to recognize the good deeds a child has done that week.

Overall, directors expressed satisfaction with the Jewish programming they have in place and say the feedback from parents is mostly positive. Problems with Jewish programming that directors listed include the lack of resources, such as Judaic books, for small schools; a lack of teachers who are qualified in both ECE and Jewish education; and a lack of fresh ideas for how to mark the holidays. As

one director said, “It would be nice to have a Jewish educator from out of town talk to us about new ways of doing things.” Several directors noted that it is a challenge to present Jewish concepts and stories to preschool children in a way that is meaningful yet non-threatening. “It would be good to have access to resources that adjust the stories, and to someone who could train the teachers on how to use them.”

Denver’s Jewish Early Childhood Education centers are not the only ones to struggle with developing and maintaining a Jewish curriculum. Surveys with directors and parents in other cities also find that schools are generally at a loss for non-holiday related programming, with particular deficits in Hebrew instruction and connections with Israel (Beck, 2002).

Communicating with Parents about Parenting: Preschool directors say they are unsure how to provide parenting information since attendance is typically very low at scheduled programs on child development and parenting. Said one respondent, “The problem is parents say they want something, but they don’t show up when we schedule it.”

All of the directors made the point that parents are busy, either with working and taking care of their families, or not working but having extremely full schedules. They also have access to community resources when they have parenting questions. Said one director, “If a parent is having problems with her child, she goes to a psychologist or counselor on her own.”

To provide parents with specific information about parenting, directors use a variety of approaches.

- Several schools have arranged for specialists to come and observe classes or children when there are behavioral questions.
- Directors try to keep a large file of printed materials and links to resources to hand out to parents when they ask for information, and encourage their teachers to do the same.
- They also put articles on nutrition, health, and child development in the school’s newsletter.
- The parent-volunteer association of one large school has taken on the responsibility of arranging quarterly events or speakers on parenting, and raises funds for outside resources or to locate resources in the community.
- One school teams with the synagogue and brings in evening speakers every few months to address topics such as raising a Jewish child. The director of this school says she is happy if 10 people attend.
- Another director explained, “Parents e-mail us with individual questions, or drop in, so we feel like we communicate well with them.”

These approaches, however, might not provide the personal, one-on-one type of interaction some parents seem to want. A few comments from the Parent Survey forms indicate that in some cases parents are looking for more individual communication regarding parenting and their child, and are dissatisfied with generic information:

I have found the communication between the teachers and parents to be exclusively one way – teachers sharing information with parents. There has been no dialogue with me as a parent about what I hope for my child, where I have concerns about his development, where I hope to have him grow during his school year. It has seemed

there have been many missed opportunities for me as a parent to help his teachers know him and our family better. It has been disappointing.

I only see him for a few minutes before and after school in the classroom and I always wonder what his day is like. At 2½ they don't tell you much, so it keeps me wondering ... I liked the parent/teacher conference, but it was a little too brief and I didn't feel like I received much concrete information on his behavior. Even though he's young, a 15 minute conference is too short.

I've only been to one teacher-parent conference. I would have liked more feedback or information regarding my child. For example, I was shown a drawing of a face my child had drawn. I would appreciate knowing if this is appropriate for his age. I didn't get a lot of information at the conference.

Obviously, lengthier and more frequent parent-teacher conferences have cost implications for schools. Most teachers already report spending substantial amounts of uncompensated time planning for classes. Without additional compensation, they can hardly be expected to spend more time meeting with parents and conducting home visits.

Selecting a K-12 School

Table 29 shows that parents plan to select a K-12 school based on its academic program and teacher quality.

- Over 90 percent of the parents say the quality of teachers and staff, and the quality of the academic curriculum, will be “very important” in their choice of a K-12 school.
- Other factors that will be “very important” for parents include class size (78%), the school's general reputation (69%), accreditation and ratings (65%), physical space (58%), and enrichment and extracurricular programs (53%).
- Jewish curriculum is relatively or totally unimportant for 68 percent of responding parents.

Table 29. Parents' Report of Importance of Selected Factors in Selecting a K-12 School (n=529)

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
The academic curriculum.....	92%	8%	0%	0%
The distance from your house or work.....	38%	52%	9%	1%
The quality of the staff and teachers.....	98%	2%	0%	0%
Class size.....	78%	21%	1%	0%
Knowing other families who attend.....	21%	42%	30%	7%
The school's general reputation.....	69%	29%	1%	.2%
The cost	29%	51%	15%	6%
Availability of an after-hours program.....	19%	26%	34%	21%
Jewish curriculum.....	14%	19%	33%	35%
The special needs services available at the school	10%	24%	31%	35%

Table continued

Table 29. Parents' Report of Importance of Selected Factors in Selecting a K-12 School (n=529)

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
The quality of the physical space and resources.....	58%	40%	1%	0%
The student diversity.....	23%	58%	16%	4%
Enrichment and extracurricular programs available.....	53%	41%	5%	1%
The school is a feeder school for a select high school.....	24%	39%	28%	10%
Accreditation and quality ratings.....	65%	31%	3%	1%
Discounts and admissions policies for siblings.....	16%	34%	25%	24%

When the responses of parents to selection of K-12 schools are analyzed by Jewish identity, the subgroups are similar except in a few areas. Table 30 shows that:

- Jewish curriculum is a very important factor for 42 percent of those who identify as more traditional, compared to 6 percent of more liberal Jewish and secular Jewish parents.
- Among Jewish preschool parents, 68 percent say Jewish curriculum will be “not very important” or “not at all important” in their selection of a K-12 school.

Table 30. Parents' Report of Selected Factors as “Very Important” in Selecting a K-12 School, by Jewish Identity

	More Traditional Jewish (n=141)	More Liberal Jewish (n=149)	Secular Jewish (n=109)	Not Jewish (n=118)
The academic curriculum	90%	91%	94%	93%
The distance from your house or work★	28%	43%	47%	36%
The quality of the staff and teachers★	95%	97%	100%	98%
Class size	71%	78%	81%	85%
Knowing other families who attend	23%	23%	19%	17%
The school's general reputation	70%	70%	74%	65%
The cost	28%	29%	32%	29%
Availability of an after-hours program	19%	18%	19%	18%
Jewish curriculum★	42%	6%	6%	0%
Special needs services available at school★	14%	11%	7%	8%
Quality of the physical space and resources	55%	56%	66%	59%
The student diversity★	10%	23%	32%	30%
Enrichment/extracurricular programs★	44%	53%	63%	56%
School is a feeder for a select high school	25%	28%	22%	18%
Accreditation and quality ratings	57%	67%	69%	69%
Discounts/admissions policies for siblings	18%	18%	12%	16%

★Chi square is significant at .1.

Future Jewish Education

Parents who identified their families as Jewish provided more information about their plans for their child’s future Jewish education, and these responses are shown in Table 31.

- The majority of parents (61%) plan to send their child to a public elementary school, 10 percent intend to use a private school, and 19 percent plan to enroll their children in a Jewish day school.

These patterns are similar to those found in a 2002 study of nine Jewish preschools in Baltimore, Denver, and Chicago. According to preschool administrators, 73 percent of the 422 graduates of these schools went to public schools, 16 percent went to Jewish day schools, and 12 percent went to private schools (Beck, 2002). They also resemble findings of a 1997 survey of Jewish households in the Denver/Boulder area which found that only 18 percent with a child under the age of six was definitely interested in sending a child to a Jewish day school or Yeshiva (Miller and Ukeles, 1998).

- Among those parents who describe themselves as traditional Jewish families, 41 percent plan to send their preschool child to a Jewish day school. Among liberal and secular Jewish parents, the comparable figures are 6 and 8 percent.

Like Beck, we also find that Denver/Boulder families who plan to use a Jewish Day School are more traditionally observant and affiliated and appear to have made up their mind before the preschool decision (Beck, 2002).

- Among those who do not plan to use Jewish day schools, most parents say it is “very” (65%) or “somewhat” (18%) likely that they will continue their child’s Jewish education when they enter grade school.

Liberal Jewish respondents are almost as emphatic about this as their traditional counterparts. Secular Jews are less certain about their child’s continuing Jewish education, although one-third is very certain that it will occur

Table 31. Plans for K-12 and Future Jewish Education by Jewish Identity

	More Traditional★ Jewish (n=141)	More Liberal★★ Jewish (n=149)	Secular Jewish★★★ (n=109)	Total Jewish (n=387)
Type of elementary school your preschooler will attend ...				
Jewish day school	41%	6%	8%	19%
Public	41%	77%	65%	61%
Private (non-Jewish)	5%	10%	18%	10%
Home school	1%	0%	0%	1%
Not sure	11%	7%	9%	9%
If decide not to use Jewish day school, how likely it is that you will pursue other Jewish education opportunities				
Very likely	89%	79%	34%	69%
Somewhat likely	6%	16%	35%	18%
Somewhat unlikely	3%	4%	17%	7%
Very unlikely	3%	2%	14%	6%
Have children or stepchildren attending a Jewish K-12				
No	76%	96%	97%	90%
Yes	24%	4%	3%	10%

- ★ Parents who classified themselves as Orthodox and Conservative.
- ★★ Parents who classified themselves as Reform, Reconstructionist.
- ★★★ Parents who classified themselves as Secular Jewish, Just Jewish, Part Jewish.

Licensing and Accreditation

When the study was conducted, three of the nine schools had opted out of state licensing by using their religious exemptions, and only two preschools were accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Preschool directors were ambivalent about accreditation because of the workload and cost involved. Virtually all the schools are full; most have long waiting lists. Like their counterparts in other cities, most rely on their reputation in the community to attract families (Beck, 2002).

Tables 32 and 33 show that parents and teachers care about licensing and accreditation.

- Approximately half (48%) of the parent respondents said that accreditation or quality ratings were very important factors when selecting an ECE school.
- Nearly all (84%) parents familiar with state licensing say that it is very important for a school to be licensed by the state.
- Of the parents familiar with NAEYC accreditation, 62 percent rated that as very important.
- Fewer parents are familiar with Qualistar, and less than half of those see that as something their school should have.
- Among teachers, the percentage reporting NAEYC is very important is 56 percent and for Qualistar the figure is 36 percent.

Table 32. Level of Importance of Preschool Accreditation and Licensing For Those Parents Familiar with the Program★

How important is it for the school to be ...	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important At All
Licensed by the state (n=435) ...	84%	12%	2%	1%
Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (n=397) ...	62%	32%	5%	2%
Rated by Qualistar Early Learning (n=299) ...	42%	35%	17%	6%

★ Responses from parents at one school missing.

Table 33. Level of Importance of Accreditation and Licensing, by ECE School Staff (n= 111)

How important is for your school to be ...	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important at all	Not familiar with this
Licensed by the state.....	80%	17%	2%	1%	0%
Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.....	56%	36%	7%	2%	0%
Rated by Qualistar Early Learning.....	36%	21%	14%	4%	26%

The future behavior of preschools in this area may depend on external funding and regulatory factors including the possible creation of a new sales tax in Denver to provide universal early childhood care and education for four-year-olds. If that comes to pass and funding is tied to various licensing and accreditation requirements, preschools will have little choice in the matter and many more will pursue formal accreditation procedures.

VI. Summary of Findings

Key Findings: Community

Jewish ECE in the Denver and Boulder communities is large in scale and scope.

Jewish early childhood education in Denver and Boulder is big business. The nine schools currently in operation enroll 1,212 children and employ 181 teachers and teaching assistants in 67 classrooms. Based on the seven schools that provided financial information, they generate income of \$4,793,188 per year and they are profitable, generating net income that ranges from \$18,497 to \$304,407, for an average return of 23.8 percent before indirect costs are considered. On an annual basis, the 961 families that use Jewish ECE spend approximately \$6,036 for half-day care, \$9,024 for full-day care, and \$11,388 for extended day care for each enrolled child.

Jewish ECE capacity falls short of demand and is concentrated geographically.

While the Jewish population of Denver/Boulder is dispersed, with particular growth in Boulder, and in North and West Metro Denver, seven of the nine Jewish ECE schools are located in central Denver and only two small schools are located in Boulder. Although there has been a modest increase in school capacity in recent years with the addition of preschools in two Jewish day schools, the schools operate at near capacity (94%) and six report waiting lists with a total of 501 names. The schools serve primarily preschoolers between the ages of two and four. Only 15 percent of enrolled children are age two or younger, and 4 percent are kindergartners. There may be additional parents in the Jewish community who would be interested in Jewish ECE for their children. The 1997 survey of Jewish households found that only 21 percent of children under age five were enrolled in Jewish preschools and approximately 42 percent of the households were not using Jewish ECE but reported such education to be of interest.¹ Extrapolating these figures suggests there may be an estimated 2,000 Jewish children of preschool age in the Denver/Boulder area who are not in a Jewish ECE program but whose parents would be interested in such a program.

Exposure to Jewish ECE schools results in improved perceptions of the Jewish community among people of other faiths.

Nearly a quarter of the parents surveyed in this study described themselves as “not Jewish.” Sixty percent of these parents report that their child’s experience at a Jewish ECE has made them feel more positive about Judaism and the Jewish people. And while Jewish programming was not an important factor in their decision to select a Jewish ECE, 47 percent of non-Jewish parents rate the quality of Jewish life programming at their children’s school as excellent. Overall, 69 percent of parent respondents strongly agreed that non-Jewish families feel welcome at the preschool although the responses for individual schools ranged from 22 to 92 percent. In their comments, non-Jewish parents indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to learn about Judaism and its values (“As a non-Jewish family, we like learning more about Judaism and its stories. Also the emphasis on values – great!”) Still other non-Jewish families report that they are singing Jewish songs and celebrating Jewish holidays.

¹ Miller, Ron and Jacob B. Ukeles (1998). *The 1997 Greater Denver/Boulder Jewish Community Study*. Denver, Co: Ukeles Associates.

Key Findings: Parents

Parents report the ECE experience has increased and deepened their Jewish practices, with significant increases for liberal Jewish families.

Following the enrollment of their child in a Jewish preschool, a majority of responding Jewish families report substantially greater participation in Jewish practice, such as celebrating Shabbat (43%), attending synagogue (29%), or studying Judaism (25%). Parents report increases in every area of Jewish practice asked about in the study. Post-enrollment changes in Jewish practice and family behavior are most pronounced for those who classify themselves as liberal or secular Jewish. Traditional Jewish families report greater activity pre-enrollment and as a result have less room to increase. Among liberal and secular Jewish families, Shabbat celebration became more common for 55 and 38 percent, respectively; synagogue attendance increased by 39 and 23 percent, respectively; and 40 percent of both groups reported more frequent celebration of Jewish holidays. An assessment of the percent of traditional, liberal, and secular Jewish families who report an increase in at least one activity following enrollment shows that while all three groups make gains, only the liberal group shows a statistically significant increase. These findings are consistent with other studies that conclude that Jewish preschools present significant opportunities for strengthening families' Jewish affiliations and enhancing their Jewish identities (Beck, 2002; United Jewish Communities, 2002). As Ilene Vogelstein of the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education puts it, "The early childhood experience, as the start of Jewish practices at home and the understandings of Jewish values, is the gateway for the family to move into future Jewish experiences."

Most parents are Jewish, married, highly educated, and relatively affluent.

Three quarters of the parents who responded to this survey are between the ages of 31 and 40. Most (77%) are Jewish. They are much more likely to be married or in a marriage-like relationship (97%) than their counterparts in the national Jewish and non-Jewish world, where only about half (54%) are married. Jewish ECE parents are also considerably better educated than the Jewish and non-Jewish population in the U.S. Ninety percent have at least a college degree, compared with 55 percent in the national Jewish population and 28 percent in the non-Jewish world. Parents in Jewish ECE are also wealthier. Nearly a third have household incomes of \$200,000 or more; two-thirds earn \$100,000 or more. In contrast, median household income for the Jewish population is \$50,000, and \$42,000 in the U.S. as a whole. Forty-two percent of responding parents are home full time, and 35 percent work part time. Only 24 percent work full time. Nearly a third (28%) has full- or part-time nanny help. More to the point, only 13 percent of families have a situation that requires full-time child care: two parents working full time with no nanny.

Parents care about ECE quality and carefully consider their options before selecting a school.

Parents consider other preschools before making a decision. Approximately 70 percent report looking at other ECE schools and 50 percent looked at both Jewish and non-Jewish preschools. The things that matter most to them are the quality of the staff and teachers and the quality of the child development programming. Other big factors are class size, the school's general reputation, and physical space and resources. Distance, hours of operation, after-hours programs, and Jewish life programming are less important (rated very important by about a third), and relationship to the synagogue is only very important for about 11 percent (although many synagogues do not have preschools). Denver preschool parents appear to value proximity less than do their counterparts in other studies of Jewish preschools (Rosen, 2005), although they are similar to their counterparts in other settings in their emphasis on quality. As the authors of a national survey of Jewish early childhood education centers observe, Jewish early childhood programs must provide an exceptional, nurturing, developmentally appropriate secular and Judaic program; otherwise, only those most committed to Judaism will remain (Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002).

Licensing and accreditation matter to parents and teachers.

Two-thirds (65%) of parents said that school reputation was very important to their decision to pick a certain ECE school, as compared with 48 percent who gave accreditations or quality ratings a similar ranking. Most preschool directors question whether pursuing accreditation would be worth the money and effort in light of their full enrollments and long waiting lists. When this study was conducted, three preschools had religious exemptions and were not licensed by the state and only two were accredited by NAEYC. Nevertheless, licensing and accreditation is very important to many parents. Nearly all surveyed parents are familiar with state licensing, and 84 percent said it was very important for a school to have this credential. Most parents (90%) were also familiar with NAEYC and among those who knew about it, 62 percent termed it “very important.” Fewer parents knew about Qualistar, the Colorado rating system for ECE schools (60%), but among those who did, nearly half (42%) characterized it as “very important.” Teachers concur in these ratings. State licensing is rated as very important by 80 percent of teachers and assistants. Accreditation by NAEYC is viewed as very important by 56 percent, and a Qualistar rating is seen as very important by 36 percent.

Parents will select a K-12 school based on its academic program and teacher quality.

When considering what type of K-12 school is best for their preschooler, virtually everyone (90%) ranks as very important the academic curriculum and the quality of the staff and teachers. Class size comes next (78%), followed by the school’s general reputation (69%) and accreditation and quality rating (65%), physical space (58%), and enrichment and extracurricular programs (53%). Far fewer parents rate distance, cost, student diversity, entry to a select high school, and an after-hours program as important. Only 14 percent rate the Jewish curriculum as very important; 68 percent say it will be “not very important.” The fraction of parents who intend to use a Jewish day school (19% in this study, 18% in the 1997 Greater Denver/Boulder demographic study, and 16% in Beck’s study) characterize themselves as more traditionally observant. Indeed, 41 percent parents who describe themselves as traditional Jewish families plan to send their preschool child to a Jewish day school. Among liberal and secular Jewish parents, the comparable figures are 6 and 8 percent. Most parents who do not plan to use a Jewish Day School say it is “very” (65%) or “somewhat” (18%) likely that they will continue their child’s Jewish education when they enter grade school.

Parents are satisfied with their preschools.

User satisfaction is very high and schools get high marks for having a warm and friendly atmosphere, welcoming parents, and teaching children about Jewish life. Nearly three-quarters of surveyed parents strongly agree that the teachers and director do a good job of communicating with parents. Two-thirds feel as though it the schools are well run, the space is attractive, the equipment is good, and that children are prepared for kindergarten. Half of the parents feel as though the school provides enough social activities and events, and only a quarter say that other families in the school are a key part of their social life. About 60 percent give the preschool a rating of “excellent” on the child development curriculum and the Jewish life programming. Holidays and school closures are problems for some, but are not huge irritants. Of course, these are all subjective assessments and may well differ from objective ratings of quality that were beyond the scope of this study.

Parents are somewhat less favorable in their ratings of how well the school helps with parenting and promoting Jewish life at home.

Only one third (30%) of parents say their child’s school does an excellent job of helping parents with parenting tips and information about child development; 40 percent rate the school as excellent at helping parents promote Jewish life at home. While parents were not asked whether they want more help in these areas, it is interesting that recently interviewed preschool directors in a national study felt that parents need a Jewish educational program so that they can better support their children and keep up with Shabbat and holiday practice (Beck, 2002). At the same time, school directors in Denver and Boulder struggle to find an effective format for communicating with parents about child development and parenting. As one director of put it, “The problem is parents say they want something, but they don’t show up when we schedule it.”

Key Findings: Providers

Jewish ECE directors and teachers are trained and educated in ECE, dedicated to the field, and eager for professional growth opportunities.

All nine directors have at least a college degree and eight have a State Director's certificate. On average, they have worked in the field of ECE for 16 years and have directed their current school for 4.3 years. Nearly all teachers and most assistant teachers have formal training in ECE or CDE, and about two-thirds have a college degree or more. They are more highly educated than their counterparts in secular early childhood education worlds, where only 45 percent of teachers have a bachelor's degree or higher (Whitebook, et al., 2005). Teachers and assistant teachers are loyal and dedicated. They have worked in their ECE schools for an average of 7.2 years and a median of five years. They have worked in the field of ECE for an average of 9.9 years and a median of 7.5 years. While only 12 percent of teachers belong to a professional organization for educators, most expressed interest in attending classes on ECE development, occasional lectures on ECE, or local ECE conferences. Most teachers would participate in professional development activities during or outside of school hours, especially if compensation is offered and/or the school pays tuition. Teachers are somewhat less interested in Jewish education opportunities, although sizeable numbers would participate if it was offered during school hours and compensation was offered and/or the school paid tuition. Teachers were somewhat less interested in newer and more effective (National Staff Development Council Standards) forms of staff development including mentoring, observing "master" teachers, and peer coaching.

Most directors, teachers, and assistants are Jewish. While almost all directors have had formal training in Jewish education, a third of teachers and 44 percent of assistants have not, and those with training say it took place during high school or before.

Seven directors and 67 percent of teachers and assistant teachers are Jewish. Approximately a third of the teachers and 44 percent of the assistants have had no formal training in Jewish education, and half of those reporting training say they have not received any training beyond high school. Eight directors report formal Judaic education including attending Hebrew school, obtaining a Melton certificate, taking college courses, and/or attending school in Israel. The total absence or limited training of many teachers and assistants in Jewish education is a source of frustration to some parents who hunger for more Jewish content.

Jewish ECE teachers are generally pleased with the atmosphere and setting in which they teach.

Most teachers (82%) describe their schools as warm and friendly, and the majority (78%) also feels as though it is valued and supported by parents. Two-thirds feel as though they get praise and recognition, feel valued, that the school is well run, there are sufficient support services, the space is attractive and well organized, parents are involved and supportive, and classrooms have enough equipment and supplies.

Jewish ECE teachers express frustration with their financial status, professional growth opportunities, and the status of teachers within their schools.

Only half of responding teachers and assistants feel as though staff morale is high, staff participates in decision making about things that affect them, that they are free to express opinions, or that there are enough opportunities for professional growth. Many are also displeased with their salaries and benefits. The salaries for teachers range from \$10 to \$30, with a median range between \$12 and \$19 per hour. For assistant teachers, the salary range is from \$8 to \$15.60, with a median of \$10 per hour. While Jewish ECE salary levels are consistent with salaries for ECE in secular settings and with Jewish ECE salaries nationally, they are low. A fifth of assistant teachers report a total household income of \$15,000 per year. The federal poverty line for two adults and two children (one preschool and one school-age) in Denver in 2004 was \$15,670. The annual Self-Sufficiency Standard for Denver County in 2004 for two adults and two children (a preschooler plus one school-age) was \$48,065. Forty-eight percent of teachers and 67 percent of assistant teachers report annual household incomes that fall below this level. Almost three-quarters of the teachers and assistants are in two-parent

homes with children. Jewish early childhood personnel in Miami-Dade have similar income situations, with 39 percent reporting a family income of less than \$45,000.

Not surprisingly, only 11 percent of teachers and 24 percent of assistants say they are very satisfied with their salaries; 21 percent are very satisfied with their benefits. To contrast, roughly half (49%) are very or somewhat dissatisfied with their salaries, while 57 percent are very or somewhat dissatisfied with their benefits. A third of the teachers and a quarter of the assistants work a second job, spending an additional 2 to 80 hours and a median of 40 hours at that employment.

Many teachers are considering leaving the field of ECE.

Roughly one-third of teachers and assistants say their salary level has caused them to consider leaving the school, Jewish ECE, or the entire field of ECE. At the same time, half say it is very likely they will be working in a Jewish ECE setting in two years. Among early childhood personnel in Miami-Dade, 67 percent report that they have considered leaving the field because of their pay. And nationally, directors report that 12 percent of teachers and 14 percent of assistants either left this past year or are planning to leave this year. In secular early childhood education, the turnover rate is 31 percent, with new teaching staff having significantly less education than those they replace (Whitebook, *et al.*, 2001).

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