

TOWARD A LIFETIME OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative PROGRESS REPORT 2008–2012

Summer 2012

THE MOST IMPORTANT YEARS OF A CHILD'S LIFE— for building cognition, character, and identity— ARE THE FIRST FIVE.

Since up to 85 percent of these key developmental abilities are formed by age five, early childhood education offers incredible potential that we are just beginning to tap.

The region's Jewish early childhood education centers play an influential, yet often unrecognized, role in introducing children and their families to Jewish life. With 230 educators teaching 1,100 children in 80 classrooms, they are among our best hopes for developing healthy, successful learners and for providing gateways to current and future Jewish engagement.





“It takes a community to get things done.”
Educator at a Denver/Boulder Jewish ECE Center

Denver/Boulder Jewish Early Childhood Education Centers:

- Aish Denver Preschool
- Boulder Jewish Community Center Preschool
- BMH-BJ Preschool
- Congregation Hebrew Educational Alliance Preschool
- Congregation Rodef Shalom Preschool
- Garden Preschool and Early Learning Center at Chabad Jewish Center of South Metro Denver
- Robert E. Loup Jewish Community Center Early Childhood Center
- Temple Emanuel Early Childhood Center
- Temple Sinai Preschool

For more information about these centers, visit mazeltot.org

Colorado Partners:

- Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado
- Colorado Agency for Jewish Education
- Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative Steering Committee
- Jewish Early Childhood Center Directors Council
- Rose Community Foundation

Funders:

- Paul Gillis
- Mizel Family Foundations
- Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation
- Rose Community Foundation
- Two anonymous donors

Report author **Michael Ben-Avie, Ph.D.** is a research affiliate of the Yale Child Study Center and can be reached at michael.ben-avie@yale.edu. Visit rcfdenver.org/jewishECEstudy to view the full report and executive summary online.

For more information about the Colorado Jewish ECE Initiative: **Judi Morosohk** at 303.951.0273 or jmorosohk@caje-co.org



BACKGROUND

In 2005, Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado, Colorado Agency for Jewish Education, the Jewish Early Childhood Center Directors Council and Rose Community Foundation came together to explore ways to enhance and grow Jewish early childhood education in Denver/Boulder. They were motivated by recent research showing the connection between Jewish family engagement and early childhood education (ECE).

Together they commissioned a study of Denver/Boulder Jewish early childhood education centers. The 2006 *Jewish Early Childhood Education in Denver and Boulder Study and Report* demonstrated that Jewish ECE Centers build Jewish identity for parents and their children, but they are largely not recognized for this important role by the organized Jewish community. The study revealed that Jewish ECE Centers offer a gateway for young families to become involved in Jewish life and they substantially increase Jewish family behaviors. The research shows that the behaviors of new families are shaped by their child's experience in Jewish ECE Centers.

The 2006 study also found that parents care most about the quality of early childhood education and they carefully consider options when selecting a school, with the most important factor being the competency levels of staff and teachers. This study led to a Jewish Early Childhood Summit, which created a strategic plan for ECE.

In 2007, the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative Steering Committee was formed. It is comprised of representatives from the Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado, Colorado Agency for Jewish Education (CAJE), the Jewish Early Childhood Center Directors Council and the Rose Community Foundation. Its task is to oversee the comprehensive strategic plan to improve and enhance Jewish early childhood education. The Committee is focused on these long-term strategic opportunities:

- ECE Centers provide a unique opportunity to foster Jewish identity and influence Jewish family life at a formative time.
- ECE Centers should operate with emotionally responsive and developmentally appropriate teaching and with Jewish practices and values seamlessly integrated into all that they do.
- Quality and high standards need to be encouraged and Jewish ECE Centers must be exposed to Qualistar and be prepared for the Denver Preschool Program (designed in 2005 and approved by voters in 2006).

In 2008, the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative shared with the community its recommendations for promoting Jewish identity in children and deepening the connection of their families to the Jewish community; improving the quality of teaching; and expanding quality Jewish educational options for families. The first strategy implemented by the Initiative was to partner with the national Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative (JECEI) and bring their education change process, professional development and accreditation program to Denver/Boulder. Six funders paid for this four-year \$1.1 million project.

JECEI's approach to educational change was informed by the scientific study of child development, Jewish thought, the approach of Reggio Emilia schools, and research on the most effective way to engage children and their families in Jewish life. JECEI principles of relationships, vision, learning community, shared leadership, and environment guided the educational change process.

JECEI's central metaphor of "journey" was intended to help early childhood centers measure their efforts and outcomes against the ideal of intertwining educational change and Judaism on behalf of children's healthy learning and development. Whereas educational change initiatives tend to be about education, JECEI stood for Jewish life. Whereas Jewish institutions tend to be about Judaism, JECEI stood for Judaism informing educational change. JECEI's selection of "journey" as its central metaphor reflected its ideal of "being restless" in behalf of children and their families.

Strategies

Governance and management of the initiative. As an integral part of the initiative, governance and management teams and processes were established. The Steering Committee oversees all the activities of the Colorado Early Childhood Initiative. The steering committee spearheads strategic planning for the community. As part of JECEI implementation, directors promoted shared leadership through mentoring educators to take on responsibility not only for their own classrooms, but also the center as a whole. Leadership teams were established at ECE centers that were designed to promote healthy relationships between educators and families and thereby create the necessary conditions for the early childhood programs to (1) impact the lifepaths of the families; and, in turn, (2) to engage the families in the work of improving the early childhood programs. The leadership teams also engaged in strategic planning to coordinate all the efforts of the school community in behalf of students' learning and development (and not, for example, on "adult agendas").

The Steering Committee recognized that the JECEI services would be enhanced and embedded in the community if there were a new Early Childhood Education specialist at CAJE working alongside the JECEI staff and fostering the school's work in between JECEI coach visits. Judi Morosohk was hired to be the first ECE Education Specialist as part of the \$1.1 million project.

On-site coaching and mentoring. To promote "unprecedented high quality" in early childhood education, CAJE's Early Childhood Specialist and JECEI consultants provided on-site coaching and mentoring. They coached individual directors, individual educators, leadership teams, and leaders from the host institutions. At least annually, a community-wide gathering of educators occurred during which educators were able to learn from schools and experts locally and nationally. Moreover, CAJE's Early Childhood Specialist conducted seminars and workshops to educators on such topics as addressing children's challenging behaviors, appreciative leadership, and the natural environment.

Content of professional development According to JECEI's theory of change, Jewish early childhood centers will implement strategies that are informed by Jewish values and ideas

interwoven with sound educational practice to increase the capacity of lay and professional leaders to effect change.

Thus, the content of the professional development offered by the initiative focused on:

- Principles of excellence. JECEI principles of relationships, vision, learning community, shared leadership, and environment guided the educational change process.
- Reggio Emilia approach. This is an educational approach developed shortly after WWII in Italy by mothers who wanted to create a new society that would prevent war and violence. It is considered among the leading approaches to educating young children.
- The JECEI Lenses. As a method of professional development, JECEI articulated complex Judaic concepts in accessible language during convenings and seminars.
- Constructivist education and teaching: This approach promotes intellectual curiosity among educators and students through such methods as reflection, inquiry, and documentation.
- Emotionally-responsive practice; Emotionally Responsive Practice at Bank Street (Lesley Koplow) “builds on the well-documented connection between emotional well-being and learning potential to collaborate with early childhood and elementary school programs to develop emotionally responsive school routines, curriculum and adult-child interactions throughout the school day.” [<http://bankstreet.edu/professional-development-office/projects/emotionally-responsive-practice/>]
- Leadership training for early childhood education directors. A former JECEI consultant offered seminars on such topics as shared leadership and appreciative leadership, which were based on a book by Diana Whitney Amanda Trosten-Bloom, and Kae Rader (2003/2010) entitled *Appreciative Leadership: Focus on What Works to Drive Winning Performance and Build a Thriving Organization*.

To support the work of JECEI implementation in the centers, stipends were provided during the first two years.

Qualistar Colorado In parallel, ECE centers also implemented Qualistar. “The Qualistar Rating™ is a tool that objectively measures the quality of an early childhood education program. Points earned in each quality component are combined to determine a total rating score, which ranges from a Provisional to 4-Star rating: The quality of the learning environment; The program’s family partnerships; The training and education of the program staff; The adult-to-child ratio and group size in classrooms; and Whether a program is nationally accredited” [<https://www.qualistar.org/about-us.html>].

Moreover, a scholarship fund was established, which is managed by the Federation, to provide financial assistance to families in order to encourage greater access to Jewish early childhood education. In recognition of the pressing financial situation families were facing, a scholarship fund was established in 2010, which is managed by Allied Jewish Federation, to provide financial assistance to families in order to encourage greater access to Jewish early childhood education. A permanent lay committee was created at the Federation to oversee this new fund. The Federation granted a total of \$285,000 as of April 30, 2012, according to Shere Kahn. An initial grant was received from Rose Community Foundation for \$85,000. For 2011 and 2012, the Federation received a \$50,000 matching grant each year for ECE scholarships. Federation

raised an additional \$50,000 each year for a total of \$100,000 for scholarships each year. Funds were also used to award a one-time grant of \$360 for every Qualistar-rated classroom in the ECE centers, which was \$10,000 last year and an estimated \$5,000 this year.

Outcome evaluation

JECEI closed its doors and ceased its operations in the third year of work in Denver/Boulder. The Steering Committee and all the participating schools decided to continue the work started with JECEI to complete the four-year process without JECEI. Because the JECEI evaluation was aborted when JECEI closed, the initiative engaged an outcome evaluator to capture the learning and outcomes of all four years. For the purposes of this report, all four years of the work—with and without JECEI—will be called “the JECEI initiative.”

The overarching aim of this current research study was to answer these research questions:

1. To what extent was each outcome met?
2. To what extent were positive changes in early childhood centers, if any, aligned with the intended outcomes of the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative and the JECEI partnership?
3. Which strategies adopted by the centers contributed to positive change, if any?
4. How deeply were JECEI’s principles (relationships, vision, learning community, shared leadership, and environment) implemented in the centers?
5. Which professional development delivery method was the most appealing and effective?
6. What, specifically, will the Jewish community and the early childhood centers sustain from the JECEI partnership and the entire four-year initiative, which aimed to bring about systemic change at the community level?

The focus of the outcome evaluation was to determine whether the initiative met or exceeded stated outcomes. This current research study consisted of a review of documents; statistical analyses of previous research; interviews; the design and administration of a family survey and an educator survey as well as the subsequent statistical analyses of the findings. Interviews were held with Early Childhood Education (ECE) center directors, educators, leaders of the host institutes (e.g., rabbis of synagogues and executive directors), parents, Steering Committee members, and professional staff supporting the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative.

TIMELINE OF THE COLORADO JEWISH EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE 2004-2011

The Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Initiative is a partnership of the Allied Jewish Federation, Colorado Agency for Jewish Education, Rose Community Foundation, and Early Childhood Centers. The total investment in multiple projects to enhance ECE during this time period was \$1,771,294. The following is a brief timeline of the initiative.

2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partners begin meeting to assess the state of Jewish early childhood education.
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish Early Childhood Center Directors Council joins the partnership.
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jewish Early Childhood Education in Denver and Boulder: Mapping the Field Study</i> published.
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish Early Childhood Summit engages 125 stakeholders to create an action plan • Jewish Early Childhood Education Steering Committee created • Jewish Identity and Quality Task Force and Access Task Force meet with 100 members • Five funders invest \$1,000,000 to bring JECEI to Denver/Boulder • New Early Childhood Expert starts at CAJE
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JECEI starts work with nine ECE centers • Loup JCC becomes the first Qualistar-rated Jewish ECE and qualifies for the Denver Preschool Program
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four more ECE centers begin Qualistar ratings and qualify for the Denver Preschool Program • Steering Committee commissions new study about the need for scholarships • MazelTot launched
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allied Jewish Federation granted \$484,000 to create a scholarship fund
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative (JECEI) folds, but work continues • Early Childhood Education financial modeling project commences (economic analysis of eight Jewish early childhood centers).

MAJOR THEMES

The following themes emerged from the research. Descriptions of these themes appear in the “Overview of Research Findings” and in this report. They are:

1. The quality of teaching improved through effective professional development.
2. The CAJE ECE Specialist, a new position created as part of the JECEI initiative, was very effective.
3. Jewish content became a focus of the centers through learning the JECEI lenses and other strategies.
4. The major shift that the ECE educators and centers experienced was moving away from a “cookie cutter” approach to teaching towards Reggio Emilia’s child-oriented focus.
5. Educators want more training and standards.
6. Educators have gained experience in shared leadership and, as a result, feel more engaged in their work and more satisfied.
7. There were challenges working with JECEI. Educators also experienced ambivalence about JECEI.
8. Educators and leaders of host institutions recognize that the physical environment plays a role in the emotional and creative process for children, and classrooms have introduced nature-based learning.
9. There is more integration with the host institution to deepen family engagement.
10. ECE centers could be better pipelines to future Jewish educational options.

11. The families rated the educators at a high level, especially in terms of demonstrating excellence in promoting children’s development and effectively teaching the children about Jewish life—the two critical goals of the initiative.
12. The ECE centers effectively intensify families’ connectedness to Jewish life.
13. Educators report that many core strategies of the initiative will be sustained in the future.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

To what extent was each outcome met?

The Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative articulated four outcomes in its 2008 *Memorandum of Understanding* with JECEI. They are:

- (1) Jewish identity will be cultivated among children;
- (2) Families with young children will intensify their connection to the Jewish community;
- (3) The quality of teaching will continually improve;
- (4) Quality Jewish education options will expand for Jewish families with children from infancy to age five (i.e., the opening of new centers); and access to Jewish early childhood education for all segments of the targeted population will increase through such mechanisms as the scholarship fund.

To what extent were these outcomes met?

Jewish identity was cultivated among children. The initiative met the outcome that Jewish identity would be cultivated among children. This statement is based on several indicators. In order to see how deep JECEI was implemented, the educators were asked which components of the initiative they would continue to implement or implement for the first time. Seventy-nine percent of the educators in the transformational centers indicated “A seamless integration of Jewish values and content with the early childhood curriculum.”

In order to gauge the educators’ perceptions of the level of change over the last four years, they were provided with a series of items that were aligned with the goals of the initiative. For the analysis, only the scores of the educators who have worked more than 6 years in the centers were included. In the transformational centers, 65% agreed that “The Jewish content has become more seamlessly connected to the early childhood curriculum” and 54% agreed that “We have increased the Jewish identity of the children.” Positive change indeed occurred, and the expectations were met (although a higher level of agreement, around 80%, would have indicated that the expectations were exceeded).

Families with young children intensified their connection to the Jewish community. The outcome met expectations. This statement is based, first of all, on the families high level of agreement that the ECE centers help them to provide Jewish experiences for their children (94% agreement). A similar percentage, 93%, of the educators also agreed to this statement. Moreover, 71% of the families agreed that they have formed a stronger connection to the Jewish community, and 73% agreed that they have formed new Jewish friendships as a result of enrolling their children in the ECE centers. In addition, the research found that the length of time families were affiliated with

the ECE centers was an important predictor of the intensity of their engagement in Jewish life. This finding suggests that the longer the families were affiliated with the centers, the greater their connectedness to Jewish life. Thus, an indirect effect was also observed (that is, by increasing the families' engagement in Jewish life, the present and future Jewish connectedness of the children was also enhanced).

The initiative met this outcome, but did not exceed it, because the educators who had worked for more than 6 years in the centers were asked to indicate the level of change that was achieved since the beginning of the initiative. They were provided with a series of items that were aligned with the goals of the initiative. The lowest score on the scale was assigned to "Our families have a stronger connection to the Jewish community" (55% agreement).

The quality of teaching improved. This outcome *exceeded* expectations. This statement is based, first of all, on the families' ratings of the ECE centers. They saw the influence of the Reggio Emilia approach (even if they are unaware of what this approach is all about). For example, the families agreed that the centers tap into children's interests (90% agreement), create classrooms that are a venue for peace and calm (87% agreement), and engage children in hands-on projects that take multiple days or weeks (83% agreement). In addition, 91% agreed that the educators "demonstrate excellence in promoting children's development."

Among the educators who had worked at the centers for 6 years or more, the highest scoring item was "Our knowledge of educationally-sound practices in early childhood education has improved" (77% agreement).

Quality Jewish education options will expand for Jewish families with children from infancy to age five; and access to Jewish early childhood education for all segments of the targeted population will increase through such mechanisms as the scholarship fund. The initiative met expectations. The initiative met expectations primarily through the scholarship fund that was established in 2010, which is managed by Allied Jewish Federation, to provide financial assistance to families in order to encourage greater access to Jewish early childhood education. Qualistar also provided financial assistance to families, despite the skepticism of many educators (only 38% agreed that "Because we are Qualistar rated, our center is more financially accessible to families.").

The initiative met expectations, but did not exceed them, because barriers to increased enrollment in ECE centers still exist. They include, in the words of a leader of a host institution, lack of extended hours (essential for parents who work), ECE centers that do not provide alternative vacation care on Jewish holidays, the need for a clearer differentiation between non-Jewish and Jewish ECE centers, insufficient Jewish content, the need for deeper Jewish knowledge among educators, a certain lack of vitality in Jewish ECE centers, and the cost of tuition.

Which strategies adopted by the centers contributed to positive change?

The following sections also show the most effective strategies of the initiative. Positive change may be attributed, most of all, to these strategies: On-site coaching and mentoring (from CAJE's

ECE specialist, Qualistar, and JECEI coaches); professional development (especially, emotionally-responsive practice; Reggio Emilia and its associated emphasis on beauty, art, and nature); the visions that were created in the centers; and the articulation of complex Judaic concepts in accessible language. Of course, the stipends and scholarships to the families were critical components of the positive change that the centers experienced.

How deeply were JECEI's principles (relationships, vision, learning community, shared leadership, and environment) implemented in the centers?

Engaging educators in creating a vision for their centers and promoting learning communities (especially through the “common read”) were the principles most deeply implemented. A great deal of change occurred in the environment, most notably through introducing a nature-based approach, but it is hard to classify this as either a JECEI principle or a Reggio Emilia principle (although both were part of the JECEI initiative). Shared leadership was the principle that was implemented the least, and it is unclear whether this will continue in its current form. The focus on relationships enhanced the educational change process (for example, between teachers and assistants), but tension in the relationships between several JECEI consultants and the centers impeded the implementation of the initiative.

Which professional development delivery method was the most appealing and effective?

The most effective ways in which professional development was provided by consultants was through visits to other centers, educators helping other educators, a common read in which all the teachers read and discussed the same book, multi-session seminars and courses on specific topics, guidance on the implementation of regulations and standards, coaching to individual teachers, and community training events. The courses that were taught by Judi Morosohk, CAJE ECE Specialist, tended to be described with great enthusiasm by the educators during their interviews in relation to improvements in quality of teaching.

To what extent were positive changes in early childhood centers, if any, aligned with the intended outcomes of the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative and the JECEI partnership?

The work of the Denver/Boulder Jewish community regarding Jewish early childhood education (2006-2007) was presented in the *Report to the Community on The Colorado Jewish Education Initiative* (Miller and Bennet, 2008). The report describes the 2007 Jewish Early Childhood Education Summit, in which 125 stakeholders participated. The goals of the summit were to (p. 9):

1. Learn from funders and national and local experts about trends and opportunities in Jewish ECE.
2. Raise awareness about the value of high quality Jewish ECE and the power it has to cultivate Jewish identity at a formative time for young families.
3. Prioritize action steps and recommendations for the future.

4. Establish working groups to move the agenda forward in the areas of identity, quality, and access.

At the summit, 25 recommendations were offered. Subsequently, the Jewish Early Childhood Education Steering Committee was created. The Task Force on Jewish Identity and Quality and the Task Force on Access were established (100 members), and they assessed and refined the recommendations. The following themes capture these recommendations:

Table 1: Strategic Priority: Quality and Jewish Identity

<i>Professional Development for Teachers and Directors—“Learning Communities”</i>	“This recommendation advocates for ongoing professional development systems and opportunities in the areas of pedagogy and Jewish-content” (p. 13)
<i>Parent Engagement—“Family Centers”</i>	“An important component of this recommendation is to purposefully position ECE centers in a ‘pipeline’ for Jewish education/engagement from infancy through adulthood (p. 13), and “improve existing parent programs at individual schools and share information about parent programs to parents across schools” (p. 16).
<i>Integration of Best School Practices in Child Development and Jewish Life: High Quality</i>	“This recommendation suggests working collaboratively to create standards for high-quality Jewish ECE . . . The recommendation suggests working with a national Jewish ECE initiative (JECEI) to explore its interest in Denver/Boulder as a pilot site, training and support in using standards, and exploration of possible linkages to accreditation processes” (p. 14).
<i>Integration of Best School Practices in Child Development and Jewish Life: Jewish Learning</i>	“This recommendation proposes that Jewish learning infuse both the ECE curriculum and class- and school-wide programming . . . The recommendation suggests developing a Jewish vision, practice, and curriculum within schools and across the community . . . As part of the process, quality indicators related to the schools’ vision, practice, and curriculum would be developed and measured” (p. 14).
<i>Integration of Best School Practices in Child Development and Jewish Life: Professionalism/Compensation/Benefits</i>	“The recommendation maintains the importance of compensation and benefits to the professionalism of teachers” (p. 14).

Table 2: Strategic Priority: Access

<i>Financial Access</i>	“This recommendation suggests ways to investigate options for removing financial barriers to Jewish ECE . . . A community-wide scholarship program for Jewish education in all its forms is another area worth exploring” (p. 15).
<i>Special Needs Access</i>	“This detailed recommendation outlines the areas of investigation for improving services to families that have children with special needs” (p. 15).
<i>Extended Access (Infant & toddler care, hours of operation)</i>	“This recommendation describes what we need to know to increase access to families who need care for their infants and babies, and to families who need full-day care” (p. 15).
<i>Geographic Access</i>	This recommendation addresses geographic barriers to Jewish ECE in Colorado (p. 15).

After the taskforces completed their work, the Jewish Early Childhood Education Steering Committee developed a strategic plan. The steering committee is comprised of representatives from the Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado, the Jewish Early Childhood Center Directors Council, the Rose Community Foundation, and the Colorado Agency for Jewish Education, which provided the lay leadership. The strategic plan incorporated the recommendations of the taskforces and made it into a work plan. The steering committee learned about JECEI’s work and it seemed congruent with what the community hoped to accomplish in terms of promoting Jewish identity. At the same time, the new Early Childhood Specialist position at CAJE was created to work hand in hand with JECEI. In 2008, JECEI started to work with four “transformational” centers, which received “intensive” coaching, and five “transitional” centers, which received fewer direct services from JECEI.

JECEI developed short-term outcomes (1-2 years) and mid-term outcomes (3-4 years). Many of the outcomes were not true outcomes, and others were phrased in ways that did not lend themselves to periodic assessment. Thus, the following outcomes were reformulated or rephrased for the purpose of this study.

- (1) Increase educators’ skills, attitudes, and knowledge of educationally-sound practices in early childhood education;
- (2) Increase educators’ skills, attitudes, and knowledge regarding how to effectively teach young children about Judaism and the Jewish people, past and present. This includes integrating Jewish values and content in the classroom and teaching strategies instead of having Jewish content taught as an “add-on” or “pull out the box” activity. This approach is known as “seamless Judaism.”
- (3) Improve home-school relationships, especially by changing the ways that educators and families interact and communicate with one another;
- (4) Increase the capacity of early childhood centers to engage in whole school reform, especially through increasing the skills, attitudes, and knowledge of the leadership teams.

- (5) Increase the capacity of CAJE to promote structural changes in early childhood centers that will lead to the centers' ability to function well in the service of children's learning (both Jewish and general) and development. Structural changes may include new decision-making teams (e.g., leadership teams), physical environment (e.g., playgrounds), and changes in instructional practice.
- (6) Early childhood centers will serve not only the children, but also their families by providing parenting education and opportunities to explore Jewish life in an engaging way. This also includes creating a climate in the centers that encourage families to be more open to expose themselves to unaccustomed experiences that mark the initiation of Jewish journeys.
- (7) Increase the integration of the early childhood centers with their host institutions; Moreover, the host institutions will benefit from the centers' implementation of JECEI's approach.
- (8) Increase the centers' readiness to become accredited or keep their accreditations;
- (9) Increase families' awareness of educational options for their children after early childhood education and their interest in enrolling their children in these options.

To determine the extent to which positive changes in early childhood centers were aligned with the intended outcomes of the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative and the JECEI partnership, the Steering Committee met to take stock of the community's progress in attaining the hoped-for outcomes at the beginning of the research. The scoring system ranged from 1 to 10, with 10 representing "a great deal of progress." The worksheet was completed as a group. Most of the time, the group quickly achieved consensus regarding the most suitable score. The following "scorecard" presents the results.

Table 3: Scorecard of Attained Outcomes

1 = No Progress, 10 = A Great Deal of Progress

Outcomes	Score
The centers have increased the Jewish identity of the children.	6
Families with young children in ECE centers have a stronger connection to the Jewish community.	7
The quality of teaching is improving.	9
Teachers are improving their skills, attitudes, and knowledge of educationally-sound practices in early childhood education.	9
Teachers have new skills, attitudes, and knowledge regarding how to effectively teach young children about Judaism and the Jewish people, past and present.	5
Home-school relationships are improving, and the ways educators and families interact with one another are better.	8
Leadership teams are working to promote whole school reform, especially through increasing the skills, attitudes, and knowledge of the leadership teams.	3
The institutional capacity of CAJE has increased.	5
Structural changes in ECE centers have improved the environment (e.g., playgrounds, the way the classrooms are designed and resourced).	8
Early childhood centers serve not only the children, but also their families by providing parenting education and opportunities to explore Jewish life in an engaging way.	6

JECEI's work with ECE centers improved the centers' relationships with their host institutions.	5
The centers' readiness to become Qualistar or NAEYC accredited or keep their accreditation has increased.	6
Families' awareness of educational options for their children after early childhood education has increased as well as their interest in enrolling their children in these options.	4
Quality Jewish education options expanded for Jewish families with children from infancy to age five (i.e., the opening of new centers); and access to Jewish early childhood education for all segments of the targeted population increased through such mechanisms as the scholarship fund).	6

The information gleaned from the interviews validated the scores of the Steering Committee and confirmed that the positive changes that were experienced were aligned with the intended outcomes of the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative and the JECEI partnership. The following sections explore these outcomes in detail.

P R O G R E S S I N M E E T I N G O U T C O M E S

The centers have increased the Jewish identity of the children. [Outcome Score = 6]

The community decided to partner with JECEI to create early childhood programs that were of high quality and infused with Jewish life. The need for doing so emerged from a report entitled the *Jewish Early Childhood Education in Denver and Boulder: Mapping the Field* (2006), which noted, for example, that 30 percent of the teachers and assistant teachers were not Jewish. While almost all directors had completed formal training in Jewish education, a third of the teachers and less than half of the assistants had not done so, and those with training indicated that it took place during high school or before.

The following theory of change captures JECEI's approach of how the Jewish identity of the children would be promoted: ECE centers will implement JECEI's educational change approach, which is inspired by Jewish values and ideas, Reggio Emilia philosophy, and Bank Street's emotionally-responsive practice. This approach increases the capacity of lay and professional leaders to effect change. In this way, the centers will come to offer children an education that is of "unprecedented high quality." As a result, children's Jewish identity will be enhanced and the number of engaged Jewish families will increase. As word spreads about the quality of the centers, the demand for high quality Jewish early childhood education will increase. Increased demand will increase enrollment in Jewish early childhood education.

Central to JECEI's approach were five guiding principles: relationships, learning community, shared leadership, environment, and vision. These principles and their impact are described in this section of the report.

In a later section, the results from the *2012 Family Survey* and the *2012 Educator Survey* are presented, which provide data on the extent to which the ECE centers increased the Jewish identity of the children. At this point, it is worthwhile to mention that 94% of the families indicated that the ECE centers help families to provide Jewish experiences for their children.

Families with young children in ECE centers have a stronger connection to the Jewish community. [Outcome Score = 7]

In the 2008 *Memorandum of Understanding* between the Colorado Jewish ECE Initiative and JECEI, the responsibilities for all of the ECE centers and JECEI included the following:

- Reposition all ECE centers to potentially become Jewish Family Life Centers
- Enhance community ECE network for all children and parents seeking Jewish services and programs
- Create awareness of the compelling value and quality of Jewish ECE centers among families with young children not affiliated with the organized Jewish community

As a way of understanding the concept of “Jewish Family Life Centers,” the following description is helpful:

Early childhood education represents a unique opportunity to engage both young children and their parents in a rich and meaningful Jewish communal life. The Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative (JECEI) transforms preschools into Jewish early childhood centers that ignite a desire and commitment in families to continue Jewish learning and living beyond their preschool experience and inspires increasing numbers of new families to enroll in Jewish early childhood centers of the highest quality. [http://www.jecei.org/PDF/Overview_of_Engaging_Families_with_Young_Jewish_Children.pdf]

As envisioned, the ECE centers would serve two generations (children and their parents). One way in which they did so was by trying new strategies to engage families. At one center, for example, instead of saying to families “here’s the Shabbat dinner flyer,” they “flipped it” and encouraged the families to take on the responsibility of organizing the dinner. This example is consistent with JECEI’s educational change model: one of the “assumptions” was that “JECEI centers model a way of engaging families in a lifelong Jewish journey.”

An independent evaluation of JECEI was conducted by Lawrence N. Bailis and Susan Shevitz. In their June 2011 report, they stated that (p. 8):

- “Most parents have been getting what they expected from the center and have been very pleased with the quality of education their children were getting (this relates to the perceived quality of the centers at the time of the child’s enrollment as well as the ongoing influence of JECEI).”
- The Jewish-related experiences of children and parents at the centers have begun to positively affect the majority of participating families’ stated attitudes about Jewish living and learning. They are contributing to the greater involvement of substantial numbers of parents in Jewish activities both in and outside of the centers and their stated intentions for the future Jewish lives of their families.

Bailis and Shevitz also observed that the leaders of the centers felt that JECEI provided a “vocabulary” (p. 20). This is consistent with the finding from the current evaluation that JECEI provided parents with the language to say to friends that they made the right decision about enrolling their children in a Jewish early childhood education center.

The quality of teaching is improving. [Outcome Score = 9]

The most effective ways in which professional development was provided by consultants was through visits to other centers, a common read in which all the teachers read and discussed the same book, multi-session seminars and courses on specific topics, guidance on the implementation of regulations and standards, coaching to individual teachers, teachers helping teachers, and community training events.

The courses that were taught by Judi Morosohk, CAJE ECE Specialist, tended to be described with great enthusiasm by the educators during their interviews in relation to improvements in quality of teaching. The flyers from three courses are presented here in order to provide a sense of the topics and course content.

Facing the Challenge

This professional development seminar is an eight session series focused on working with children who use challenging behaviors. If you find yourself frustrated by children's behavior, unsure of how to respond, reacting rather than proactively preventing and if you desire support around learning new approaches, then this opportunity is for you. This series will provide an opportunity to better understand children's behavior through observation of "real-life" videoed situations, processing examples offered from participants and dialogue with colleagues.

Topics covered include: Why children "misbehave"; Understanding temperament; Risk and protective factors; Developmentally appropriate behavior; Parents as partners; Preventive strategies; Intervention strategies; Developing individualized behavior plans and more.

Appreciative Leadership

In this six-session seminar, colleagues explore the five "I's" of Appreciative Leadership (AL):

- Inquiry: Leading with positively powerful questions
- Illumination: Bringing out the best in people and situations
- Inclusion: Engaging with others to co-create the future
- Inspiration: Awakenning the creative spirit
- Integrity: Making choices for the good of the whole

This progressive and contemporary approach to leadership brings people together, drives organizations (including schools) forward, and takes leadership skills to a new level.

Join us to explore what AL can mean for you and the way you work. Prepare to apply strategies that support your Appreciative Leadership skills. Each session will end with take-aways for practical application and an expectation that leaders will try strategies between sessions, returning to share and reflect with colleagues.

The Hundred Languages in Dialogue with the Natural Environment

This professional development seminar will offer participants the opportunity to experience an “action of listening” within places – places, where we would like to be together with young children, with families and with one another. The relationship between us, and what surrounds us, is a prerequisite for a culture and an environment where empathy, respect and care are the basic ingredients needed for quality of individual and social life. To facilitate and support the process of “an action of listening” in the natural world, during this six session seminar, different kinds of ateliers [studios] of exploration will be proposed to the participants.

The main goal of the seminar is to:

1. Enter into dialogue with the process of being in relationship with the place, of the natural world and consider this as a condition of generating well-being and creativity.
2. Foster the culture of the atelier, a culture where:
 - there is production of individual and collective “thinking”
 - the cognitive meets the imaginative,
 - there are hands- and minds-on experiences,
 - aesthetic and technical knowledge are interwoven.

The Common Read

The common read of Susan Usha Dermond’s (2007) book entitled Calm and Compassionate Children exemplified the most effective way to integrate best practices in child development with Jewish life, according to the educators. They thought it was terrific that they all read the same book at the same time, and were able to talk together about the book.

During the interviews, educators explained that prior to Judi Morosohk’s work, professional development was “disjointed.” A great deal of time and energy was spent on “putting out the fires,” and not on how to address the underlying issues that were causing the “fires.” Previous consultants had “not fully understood what was really needed. They had jumped in without understanding and, therefore, could not support the centers.” Morosohk was exemplary in that she “married knowledge of the children’s age [developmental stage] with Judaism.”

In one center, the director explained that without Judi Morosohk they would not have stayed affiliated with the initiative. Moreover, “Without her, we would not have gained four years’ worth of support.” This is especially important since centers experienced “turmoil” over JECEI’s shifts in consultants. While JECEI consultants would come and go—and there was noticeable tension among JECEI staff members—Morosohk was a stable presence.

Teachers are improving their skills, attitudes, and knowledge of educationally-sound practices in early childhood education. [Outcome Score = 9]

By implementing, at least in part, an educational approach that has been validated by experts in early childhood education, the ECE centers ensured that their new practices were educationally-sound. The approach is known as Reggio Emilia, which reflects the name of the Italian city in which the approach emerged. After World War II, Loris Malaguzzi and (mostly) mothers, who were devastated by the destruction caused by the war, joined together there to develop a new approach to teaching. JECEI folded this educational approach into its change initiative.

According to The Institute for Early Childhood Education & Research, the approach's six fundamental guidelines are [<http://earlychildhood.educ.ubc.ca>]:

1. The child is protagonist, collaborator, and communicator
2. The teacher as partner, nurturer, guide, and researcher
3. Cooperation as the foundation of the educational system
4. The environment as the "third teacher"
5. The parent as partner
6. Documentation as communication

The Institute concludes that "This approach to early childhood education has been widely recognized, its innovative programs acknowledged by educators, psychologists, and researchers from all over the world as the most exceptional example of the highest quality early education that the world has ever seen."

According to the educators, the major shift that the ECE centers experienced was in terms of moving away from a "cookie cutter" approach towards Reggio Emilia's child-oriented focus. The "project-based emergent curriculum" characterizes this approach. Instead of predetermined lessons in which all the children are expected to produce the very same art objects, long-term projects stem from the children's interests. The emergent curriculum, however, does not imply that the curriculum is all based on children's interests. As Jones and Nimmo (1994, NAEYC) explain:

We are the stage directors; curriculum is teacher's responsibility, not children's. People who hear the words emergent curriculum may wrongly assume that everything simply emerges from the children. The children's ideas are an important source of curriculum but only one of many possible sources that reflect the complex ecology of their lives. (Jones and Nimmo, p. 5)

During the interviews, it became clear that many educators had only a surface understanding of this point. For example, educators expressed discontent that they had to continue a project for weeks that may have originally emerged from children's interests, but no longer held their attention. Another center explained, "We think that using this approach will enhance the learning experience greatly, but only if we can successfully train our teachers to use it and teach our parents about its benefits. There are currently many teachers on our staff who understand what an emergent curriculum is and how to use it, but there are more staff that still don't understand it and are unwilling to try and learn."

Implementation of the Reggio Emilia approach was most notable in centers in which educators had previously said to the children, "Let's all now do hand prints!" When drawing faces, educators would say to the children "the eyes go here, the nose goes there." Now, there is considerably more individualization for each child, according to the educators in these centers. Moreover, educators say that there is far more communicating with the children.

Educators who considered themselves effective in using an inquiry-based learning approach explained that this approach "slowed them down," which they deemed very desirable because they stopped "drilling kids with information." They found themselves using the following phrase

with children: “Let’s find out together.” The educators perceived this as a remedy for education in America today: “[Throughout the country,] We’ve squashed children’s eagerness to discover.”

Professional development workshops that were effective helped them realize that “The process is important, not the product.” The workshops that were offered through the initiative on this educational approach were highly valued. Another way in which the educators improved their skills, attitudes, and knowledge of educationally-sound practices in early childhood education was through visiting other ECE centers, a strategy facilitated by the initiative.

Teachers have new skills, attitudes, and knowledge regarding how to effectively teaching young children about Judaism and the Jewish people, past and present. [Outcome Score = 5]

As a method of professional development, JECEI articulated complex Judaic concepts and values in accessible language. These were called “lenses” because they provided a new way of looking at interactions, classroom life, learning activities, etc.

The lenses open windows to transcendent Jewish values, serve as foundational and transformative guides, and are lived in the classroom as well as the extended school community. These lenses articulate our approach to our work, and beyond that become our very paradigm for being. They are ideally manifest daily in each of our early childhood centers - in the ways in which we structure our time, our curricula and our classrooms; the quality of our relationships with our students, our faculties, our host institutions; and the partnerships we forge with the families in our communities. They improve and sharpen our vision, and enable us to see our world more clearly and in a particularly focused way. [[http://jecei.org/PDF/JECEI Lenses Long Version.pdf](http://jecei.org/PDF/JECEI_Lenses_Long_Version.pdf)]

The following are the lenses, according to *The JECEI Lenses*, a document that appears on JECEI’s website :

Table 4: The Lenses and their Descriptions

Lenses	Descriptions
Masa: Journey (Reflection, Return and Renewal)	Judaism calls upon us to understand that our individual life journeys are both reflected in and illuminated by the larger journeys of our people (and vice versa), and that our success in life depends as much upon the integrity with which we progress as it does upon reaching our goals.
B'rit: Covenant (Belonging and Commitment)	A covenantal relationship enables us to partner with others in pursuit of shared vision, to grow, to risk, and to communicate with honesty.
Tzelem Elokim: Divine Image (Dignity and Potential)	Just when our awareness of being created in the Divine image might fill us with egotistical urges and an overblown sense of self, we are reminded that each of us is equal in our divine nature, and that our treatment of others is a reflection of our faith and our respect for our role in our society and our universe.
K'dushah: Holiness (Intentionality and Presence)	Holy times are ones in which various mundane activities are either suspended or imbued with special meaning . . . A time, place, or community becomes sacred to an individual when it is treasured, treated differently, and accorded a sense of powerful significance in one's life.
Hit'orerut: Awakening (Amazement and Gratitude)	Although the potential for "awakenings" exists every day, our lives are filled with emotional and material obstacles and blinders which we need to remove if we are to live in a state of awe and readiness. Judaism provides the tools that we need to sharpen our skills and maintain this kind of focus.
D'rash: Interpretation (Inquiry, Dialogue, and Transmission)	To ask, to argue, to interpret, and to transmit are all essential elements of our growth and maturity as human beings. [Inquiry] leads to discovery, broadens one's horizons, and uncovers information from which others will grow and learn.
Tikkun Olam: Repair of the World (Responsibility)	We live in a fragmented world, and it is our nature to be somewhat dis-satisfied with the acceptance of things the way that they are . . . Our responsibility extends from the environment to interpersonal ethics, from political action to small, everyday kindness.

Source: <http://www.jeccei.org/PDF/JECEI Lenses Short Version.pdf>

During interviews with directors, educators, and families, a consistent theme was heard: Through teaching JECEI's lenses, Jewish content became a focus of the centers. The advantage of teaching Jewish content through a series of lenses is that there is a structure to the learning. In Jewish education, one of the major topics of the field is the decision of what to include in the curriculum, given that the Jewish people has a considerable sociocultural inheritance. Thus, it is far more manageable and focused to teach the Jewish content of seven lenses than to teach "Judaism." With this, a rare few were able to articulate all the lenses.

It took centers time to realize that “JECEI [lenses] was not a curriculum.” When effective, the educators modeled the thrust of the lenses. For example, they modeled to the children “Tzelem Elokim: Divine Image” (Dignity and Potential) by making it explicit to the children the importance of treating all children with equal value.

According to its website, JECEI intended the lens to “help create a framework for teachers and parents for study, discussion, and development of a shared vision in the classroom.” Moreover, JECEI stated in reference to the lenses that “We seek to provide bridges between inspiration and information, the concrete and the abstract . . .” [http://jecei.org/PDF/JECEI_Lenses_Long_Version.pdf]. However, educators who were interviewed were not quite sure what to do with the lenses, beyond their own personal learning of Jewish content. As one educator explained, “We need continued training on the lenses—how do you transform the big ideas into the classroom?” Another educator explained that JECEI’s lenses were fantastic on paper, but very abstract. She asked, “How am I going to teach this to one-year-olds?”

When JECEI’s approach was effective, the educators shifted in their teaching of Jewish holidays. Whereas in the past, educators would go to the storeroom and take down the box with the materials for a particular Jewish holiday, now educators think more “deeply” about the holidays. Educators now are drawing on Reggio Emilia’s “emergent curriculum” approach when teaching about the holidays. In one center, the children experienced an enactment of the Exodus (e.g., they walked through building blocks to the red sea, which was made of red paper). The scale of the enactment required it be a whole school project, and not just the initiative of one or two educators. Another center held a “Sour New Year” celebration. Instead of pulling out the usual apples and honey, the educators organizing “taste tests.” They discussed why sweet foods were associated with the holiday, and not sour ones.

In some centers, educators spoke about “staff walkthroughs” early on in the JECEI implementation process in which they would walk through the centers to see “Where are Jewish values in our building?” They found the “staff walkthrough” very helpful in terms of looking anew at their work in teaching the children about Judaism. They felt that the lenses to realize that “We are Jewish not only on holidays.” During the early stages of the implementation process, key members of the national JECEI professional staff inspired them and motivated them to think about “How can we make sure that we are all that we can be.” They received the message to “Don’t just do what you did last year. Look deeper.” They felt that these professional staff members were “passionate” about Judaism and the lenses. Thus, they expressed a sense of loss when these professional staff members left JECEI.

Home-school relationships are improving, and the ways educators and families interact with one another are better. [Outcome Score = 8]

Four years ago, centers felt that it was difficult to engage families in the ongoing daily activities of the ECE centers. For example, one center explained, “We have tried to communicate the importance of there being an equal partnership between the parents, children, teachers—but we often feel that there is a disconnect. Parents are willing to volunteer to work on a big program, but seldom want to share in a hands-on-experience in the classroom.”

One of the fundamental guidelines of Reggio Emilia is “Documentation as communication.” During the interviews, parents spoke about the effectiveness of the documentation in enhancing

their understanding of their children's experiences at the centers. Prior to the initiative, families would see art work and, perhaps, photographs of the children. Yet, neither was revealing in terms of showing the activities in which the children were engaged. As one educator, explained there is now a greater emphasis on showing the children "doing activities" and describing the reasons why these particular activities were selected. At one center, it was estimated that it took the educators about 2-3 hours per month to create the "panels" (the photographs and accompanying text). One parent expressed her appreciation for the documentation because "you can't hear everything from your child."

Interviews were conducted with parents who had been affiliated with centers for a number of years (that is, they had an older child enrolled in the centers in the past). When asked to describe the changes over the last several years, parents talked about how welcome they now feel to wander into classrooms. More than this, they never "pop in" and see children who are not engaged. They see educators actively working with the children. They sense an openness that was not there before and appreciate the greater communication. Educators have time to talk with parents in a way that was not the case previously. They see children eating healthier snacks, which is important to them. They were shocked at the changes in the classrooms, which were implemented in accordance with Reggio Emilia's approach, but their children declared it "cool." Parents expressed that the teaching of Jewish holidays now "carries over to home." One parent added, "It really helps when you want an active Jewish home."

Leadership teams are working to promote whole school reform, especially through increasing the skills, attitudes, and knowledge of the leadership teams. [Outcome Score = 3]

Promoting shared leadership was a priority for consultant Lori Geismar Ryan. She uses the term "shared leading" to convey that increasing the leadership capacity of ECE centers ensures lasting school improvement. Her approach is rooted in Linda Lambert's (2003) publication *Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement*. A new definition of leadership is offered in this publication: Leadership is the "reciprocal processes that engage community participants in the creation and enactment of a shared purpose for learning." This definition means . . .

- Reciprocity means being invested in and responsible for the learning of others while expecting others to assume responsibility for your learning.
- Community is composed of a group of people who share common goals and aspirations for the future.
- Purpose means sharing a vision, set of beliefs, and goals about school and about children's (and family's) learning.
- Learning means constructing meaning and knowledge together through dialogue, reflection, inquiry and action.

In Linda Lambert's words, "When we learn together as a community toward a shared purpose, we are creating an environment in which we feel congruence and worth. Inherent to this view is the belief that all humans are capable of leadership which complements our conviction that all children can learn."

Lori Geismar Ryan's consultation regarding shared leading was built on the idea that everyone has the right, responsibility, and capability to be a leader. Moreover, how leadership is defined frames how people will participate. The leadership team of a center was described in the following way: The leadership team is comprised of the director, parents, teacher representatives,

former parents, educators from the community, and outside coaches. They meet monthly. When the leadership teams were first established they engaged in a process of “visionizing,” that is, strategic planning on how to grow. During interviews conducted at ECE centers in Denver and Boulder, educators described the “visionizing” process. The purpose of this process was to create new strategies. Educators spoke fondly of placing “post-it” notes in the staff lounge with their ideas written on them.

Today, leadership team members explained, the team “brings everything together in a natural way.” At another center, the establishment of the leadership team was described thus: “Created a six member ECC shared leadership team for sharing roles, responsibilities, and decision making. Each member has oversight of one of the following: curriculum, early and after care, Synagogue liaison, Hebrew, Judaics, art, administration (staffing, etc.).”

A major focus of the leadership team is on encouraging educators to engage in professional development, and to provide opportunities for professional development. One primary aim of the professional development is to ensure that there is a “consistency throughout the community.” The following excerpt from an interim report captures that this process:

Administration purchased a copy of the book, Calm and Compassionate Children by Susan Dermond, for every staff member and parents purchased copies for sale at the school. Parents and staff engaged in a shared reading and study of supporting the development of compassion in young children. This resulted from a reflective conversation at the school’s Leadership Team meeting focused on deepening the ECC’s approach to Tzedakah and developing more authentic and meaningful connections of the children. At the meeting, they examined the underlying values of Tzedakah and determined that it would be productive for staff and parents to delve deeper into understanding the development of empathy and compassion in young children as they are the basis for caring about and giving to those in need. The study has been the underpinning of teacher reflection, curriculum development, documentation and professional development throughout the year. [Interim Report by the ECE Specialist, CAJE. July 2010-2011]

Other areas of responsibility of leadership teams include planning the content of staff meetings, promoting documentation of children’s learning experiences, offering a new staff orientation, involving parents, and examining “systems” (i.e., sick leave, shared jobs, communication). In terms of changing the nature of parent involvement, one center’s leadership team members explained that parents used to hold a teacher appreciation night; Now, parents and educators learn together on a regular basis.

The movement toward a model of shared leadership has supported the objective of *Train others in the community to be able to sustain and further the work both during the time of the JECEI partnership and beyond*, according to the ECE Specialist. She provides an example:

In one school, five teachers representing all age groups are active members on the leadership team, which meets regularly each month. In this same school, a group

of eight teachers worked with administration and their coach to plan and implement a week of professional development for the staff, with session facilitated by teachers every day. This widening of the circle of leadership within programs, tapping into the strengths of individual staff members has supported a deeper understanding of the work by more individuals in the program, which ultimately supports sustainability.

Another center wrote in an interim report, “The work of the lay and professional Leadership Team is poised to move forward in strong and innovative ways. Those who attend these meetings share that the kind of conversations that take place in this context are rich, deep, meaningful, and unusual. A next step for the team is to fluidly grow action out of shared vision and dialogue.”

Team members spoke of how they personally changed as a result of participating in team meetings. As one team member explained, the team used the JECEI lenses “to relate to ourselves first, and then as a way to explore how to relate to children.” The lenses enabled leadership teams “to create a shared language” among the educators. However, they estimated that only about half of the educators outside of the leadership teams knew about the lenses. Moreover, at one center the sentiment was expressed that the leadership team’s focus on the lenses engendered a “lost focus on children with special needs.”

“Teacher leaders” who sit on leadership teams reflected on the changes over the last four years that occurred as a result of shared leadership. They are keenly aware that they have not yet incorporated all the educators in the change process. A salient change is the increased satisfaction with their employment that teacher leaders experienced as a result of having a “voice” in the curriculum of the centers. They described their previous approach that entailed delivering one-week curricular units in isolation from an overall curricular framework. For example, Tu B’Shevat formerly was a one-week event “and then it was over.” As a result of shared leadership, teams “now talk in terms of values, and not just themes.” In contrast to the top-down curricular decisions that were prevalent previously, they now work as a team to think through ideas and implement them. As a result, the teacher leaders feel more engaged in their work and more satisfied.

Members of leadership teams in different centers expressed that

- Their “progress is not visible to the community.”
- The community needs to embrace early childhood education.
- Changes associated with the initiative “haven’t fully gained traction,” and without continued support “we may slip back.”
- Community meetings need to be differentiated—educators “do not want to sit in basic lenses meetings anymore.”
- The national initiative (JECEI) sometimes “constrained our own identity as a community.” On the other hand, “It was exciting to be on the cutting edge.”

According to team leadership members, JECEI encouraged “self-examination,” in the words of one educator, which “was very positive.” They felt that meetings were often a “dialogue,” which they appreciated. With this, they felt that they were not taught the skill set to emotionally handle this process of self-examination. They felt that the JECEI consultants should have helped them more in “containing” the emotions that emerged as part of this process.

The emotions that members of the leadership teams tended to feel dealt with their sense that “We are letting the families down.” “We don’t have the training we need.” “We are missing so many children.” “Our children are changing, but our ratios haven’t changed, which is especially critical since we are seeing more children with special needs.” “If we can’t figure out how to help children with special needs, I feel guilty as a teacher.” “We need to build a toolbox that will help us address the real issues that our center faces.”

Other emotions that surfaced dealt with how the educators work and interact with one another. This was particularly true with respect to the relations between educators and their assistants. As one educator stated, “We can’t afford to have assistants who just sweep the floors.” Educators attributed to JECEI changes in the relationships among educators. Educators expressed that there has been an increase in the “give and take” of the staff. There has been a decrease of people saying, “I’m the lead teacher and this is how it is.” In one center, the educators spoke about the changing nature of the relationships between the teachers and assistant teachers. The center had decided to refer to the assistant teachers as “co-teachers,” and had encouraged them to take on more responsibility in the classrooms.

Educators also expressed ambivalence about JECEI. As one educator explained, “We weren’t able to say no to a consultant.” When we tried, the response was “Oh no, you need to do it this way.” “We wanted feedback, There wasn’t really a right way.” “JECEI answered questions with a question.” They also felt that JECEI was “imposed” upon educators, rather than “change through inspiration.” Comments such as these were made in the context of discussions about the changes at JECEI’s national office as well as the turnover of JECEI consultants, which they felt created a certain amount of turmoil.

Lori Geismar Ryan was asked about these comments. In her response, she felt it was important that people realize that “four different initiatives” were implemented. Instead of one four-year initiative that unfolded in an orderly and natural way, each year was very different from the preceding one. Consider, for example, the switch that was made from using the term “melavah” (coach) to “consultant.” She explained that the idea of the term “melavah” is that the coach walks with the centers on a transformational journey. By way of contrast, a consultant is not expected to help people construct their own knowledge. The role of the consultant is to offer the expertise of experts. The educators experienced different approaches in large part because of the turnover in professionals engaged by JECEI to work in the community. She offered another example of the “four different initiatives.” During the first two years, JECEI and the lenses were at the forefront of the change process. As a result of changes in JECEI’s national office, the lenses were taught far less. It was not surprising to her that a rare few of the educators who were interviewed were able to name all the lenses.

During the interviews, team members offered recommendations:

- Expand the CAJE team
- CAJE should make early childhood education a priority
- Create “our own JECEI” (i.e., create our own system of excellence, with educators involved in the process).
- Establish learning groups among the centers

- Expose more people in the community to the centers
- Address the issue of compensation and benefits

Team members also suggested that the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative should organize a community event to celebrate the accomplishments of the last four years.

The institutional capacity of CAJE has increased. [Outcome Score = 5]

When the steering committee considered the extent to which this outcome was attained, it was hard for them to reach consensus (and the score of 5 on a ten-point scale reflects this). The original intent of the outcome was on CAJE's capacity. Later, the position of Early Childhood Education Specialist was created at CAJE so the discussion addressed whether this outcome currently relates to both the capacity of the organization and to the specific early childhood education position.

In terms of the CAJE ECE specialist position, a consistent theme was heard during the interviews: this position should absolutely be sustained in the future. In the words of one interviewee, "Having this position makes a huge statement." Directors and educators mentioned that the CAJE ECE specialist is able to promote cross fertilization of ideas among the centers, provide a global perspective of the progress of improvements in all the centers in Denver and Boulder, and connect people who are working on similar ideas in different settings.

CAJE's role in early childhood also increased awareness in the community about the importance of early childhood education, according to those interviewed. They felt that CAJE was positioned to do so as a "neutral party."

Structural changes in ECE centers have improved the environment (e.g., playgrounds, the way the classrooms are designed and resourced). [Outcome Score = 8]

When asked about changes in their ECE centers over the last several years, the most salient answer among the educators was the improvement of the environment. Classrooms were described as less "cluttered." Walls were painted in tan, cloth covered florescent light bulbs to make the light "softer," and comfortable chairs and pillows were introduced. In many classrooms, objects found in nature tended to be placed where children could reach them. For example, pine cones were seen in many classrooms. At some centers, drastic changes occurred. For example, the plastic furniture and toys at an ECE center were replaced with wooden ones. The idea was to create an "a venue for peace and calm, which enables the children to feel safe and secure." Educators heard the message of the consultants that "rooms should be chapters in the same book."

Playgrounds were changed as well. Plastic climbing equipment was replaced with natural materials. In one center, a tree was designated as a "sound" tree and musical instruments were hung from the branches for the children to use to make musical sounds. Grass, trees, and bushes were planted where gravel and small stones used to be. Classrooms had designated areas in which they planted "their" gardens.

In the words of one educator, "During my first year at this center, we spent most of the time inside during winter." Today, she explained, the children spend time "being in nature" all year

round. An educator in another center explained the purpose of working in the garden the whole year. She said, “We are planting our garden in this season so that we will have material for our Sukkah and Havdalah later on in the year.”

Early childhood centers serve not only the children, but also their families by providing parenting education and opportunities to explore Jewish life in an engaging way. [Outcome Score = 6]

Four years ago, centers were challenged to develop creative programs that truly engaged families. One center explained, “When we have tried to offer supplemental Jewish programming, there seems to be a lack of interest among parents.”

One parent distinguished between “parenting classes” and “classes for parents.” The former is an expert model: the expert teaches families parenting skills. By way of contrast, “classes for parents” are often combined classes with both families and teachers and together they learn Jewish content, for example, and how to develop a continuity in the children’s learning from school to home. This shift in thinking about parent education is one way in which JECEI helped the centers to change the nature of parent engagement.

The ECE Specialist offered the following description:

During the 2010-2011 school year, three of the centers had regularly scheduled parenting programs with varying formats. The ECE Specialist facilitated two sessions of the parent program in one school, one focused on the development of empathy and compassion in young children and another related to creating meaningful rituals around Passover at home. In another program, she facilitated a class for parents and young children in anticipation of the birth of new babies into the family. One center incorporated the learning around how to raise calm and compassionate children through shared reading between parents and teachers, and gatherings to experientially explore the concepts in the book and dialogue around connections to Jewish values.

Parents spoke warmly of such activities as the “Shabbat sing,” in which families and children sing together on Friday afternoons. The Shabbat Sing is an opportunity for families to get to know one another and to interact with the educators and professional staff from the host institution. Another type of activity that was described fondly by the parents was Shabbat in family homes. Families and educators would gather together in a family home to celebrate Shabbat. One parent explained that this increased the “closeness” of the families and educators.

JECEI’s work with ECE centers improved the centers’ relationships with their host institutions. [Outcome Score = 5]

Prior to JECEI, according to one educator, the Temple, religious school, and ECE center “did not mesh.” At another center, an administrator in the host institution described the institution during the pre-initiative stage as “segmented.” Rarely was there coordination among the faculty, lay leaders, teachers, religious staff, and organizers of family programs. The Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative helped them to “fit all the pieces together.” They coordinated their efforts to deepen the engagement of the families. In another center, a leader expressed that she learned that “it takes a community to get things done.” They now engage in “same-page behavior.”

During the interviews, examples were offered of the changes. One center implemented a Shabbat program that engaged the whole synagogue. In another center, the leadership of the host institute took into consideration the needs of the ECE center when designing a new wing. They knew what the center needed because of the relationships that had been formed as a result of the initiative. In another host institution, the center recently introduced infant care. This was the result of the executive director receiving phone calls over the years from parents who sought this care.

Examples were provided of how the host institutions changed as a result of JECEI implementation. For example, one leader of a host institution described how the Hebrew School picked up the need for documentation after observing the ECE Center's work in this area. In the words of one leader, "We used to be this side of the building and that side. Now we are one community." A center established a Parent Leadership Team with representatives of the center, host institution, and the center's educators.

In other interviews, leaders of the host institutions expressed disappointment that relatively few families of children enrolled in the ECE center became active members of the host institution or enrolled their children in other educational programming after preschool. The topic of the percent of non-Jewish families with children in the ECE center was also raised in this context.

In the recently released (March 2012) economic study of the centers, Ehrhardt Keefe Steiner & Hotman PC (EKS&H), a Colorado-based accounting and business consulting firm, reported on the financial relationships between the centers and their host institutions. They stated:

The schools have a positive financial impact on the host institutions and serve as a beneficial influence within their community. The schools create a portal for many young Jewish families to become involved in Jewish life and the host organizations. (p. 4)

ECE Centers within synagogues reported that a cumulative 79 new families enrolled a child in the school and simultaneously joined the synagogue as a member (presumably to qualify for the ECE Center discount). This results in a significant financial impact. ECE directors stated anecdotally that many families continue with the synagogue even after their children graduate from the ECE Center. Assuming these families remain members in the synagogue for 10 years, this equates to approximately \$600,000 of additional "dues" revenue generated by the seven school programs to their respective host organizations. If they attract 79 new families *every* year, this \$600,000 amount is realized *each* year. This will have a significant cash flow infusion to the host organizations.

If ECE Centers were performing at best practice standards, the potential revenue generated for the host organizations and the Jewish community at large would be approximately \$7.6 million. (p. 9)

They also noted that the opportunity to connect with new young members is greatest through the ECE centers.

The centers' readiness to become Qualistar or NAEYC accredited or keep their accreditation has increased. [Outcome Score = 6]

Some ECE centers decided to pursue Qualistar Colorado in tandem with implementation of the JECEI initiative. In general, there was a sense of appreciation to Qualistar, but families and educators were ambivalent about continuing with Qualistar in the future.

During the interviews, parents explained that Qualistar rating does not indicate a good program. There are preschools that receive a high rating, “but you wouldn’t want to send your children there.” Most families, they said, come to the centers because they are looking for a Jewish space for their children. They acknowledged that Qualistar rating is important for families who are checking around and/or are new to the area. People find about centers through Qualistar’s website, parents explained, and there is an advantage to Qualistar because of this.

Educators described Qualistar’s focus on health and safety (“all the hand washing!”), the learning environment, and attention to detail. The educators especially appreciated Qualistar’s play-based educational approach. They felt that they benefited from having an expert examine the classrooms, playgrounds, and other areas in the buildings. Qualistar, it was felt by some, provided them with a “competitive edge” and helped families with the cost of tuition.

On the other hand, they felt that the requirements of Qualistar detracted from the instructional time available to them. In the words of one educator, “We lost focus of what was really important.” Directors also tended to highlight the cost of participating in Qualistar (\$9,000 in two years).

Professional development was provided by coaches from different organizations (i.e., Qualistar, JECEI, the national JCC’s An Ethical Start), often without coordination and with contrasting approaches. As the teachers in one center explained, the Qualistar coach told them what, specifically, to do whereas the JECEI coach provided them with a philosophy. Centers expressed appreciation for the CAJE Early Childhood Education Specialist who help them to “marry” the two approaches.

An educator remarked, “What we need is a Jewish Qualistar.” The intent of this remark was to articulate a felt need for standards that would encompass the alignment of Jewish values with play-based learning. The accreditation process of a Jewish Qualistar would not only entail a process of completing a checklist (i.e., “Not about whether you touched your nose or not”). Rather, it would focus more directly on promoting the learning and development of the children.

Families’ awareness of educational options for their children after early childhood education has increased as well as their interest in enrolling their children in these options. [Outcome Score =4]

The following table presents findings from the 2012 Family Survey, which is described in a later section of this report. The families were asked to indicate whether the experiences of their children at the ECE centers changed the likelihood that they will enroll them in Jewish education in the future. In general, the families said that the likelihood did not change. In terms of future enrollment in Jewish day schools, 22% of the families were already planning to enroll their children so the ECE center did not have an impact; 10% said the likelihood increased “a little” and 6% said that it increased “a lot.” The shift was seen in potential enrollment of children in Jewish camps: a quarter said that the likelihood increased a little and 10% said it increased a lot.

Table 5: Impact of ECE center on future Jewish education

Has the experience of your child at the ECE center changed the likelihood that you will enroll him/her in Jewish education in the future?	NA-because already certain that would happen before child attended this ECE center	Decreased	Did not change	Increased a little	Increased a lot
My child(ren) will attend a Jewish day school	22.3	2.0	59.4	10.2	6.1
My child(ren) will attend a congregational/Hebrew school	31.0	2.1	40.1	18.7	8.0
My child(ren) will attend a Jewish camp	31.8	1.5	31.8	24.6	10.3
My child(ren) will participate in a havurah or home-based program to continue my child's Jewish education	19.0	4.3	64.1	7.1	5.4

Moreover, only 49% of the respondents agreed that the ECE centers encourage families to consider future Jewish educational options (after preschool) for their children.

Quality Jewish education options expanded for Jewish families with children from infancy to age five (i.e., the opening of new centers); and access to Jewish early childhood education for all segments of the targeted population increased through such mechanisms as the scholarship fund). [Outcome Score = 6]

In describing the Jewish community, one leader of a host institution explained that fewer than half of the Jewish children in the appropriate age group are enrolled in Jewish ECE centers. According to *The 2007 Metro Denver/Boulder Jewish Community Study* conducted by Ukeles Associates, Inc., the number of Jewish persons was 83,900. Of the households with one or more children under five, 24% belonged to a synagogue, 24% belonged to a JCC (7% of JCC members also belonged to a synagogue), 17% had regular meetings with groups of Jewish friends, 31% felt that it is “very important” to be part of a Jewish community and 16% actually did indeed feel this (the gap between “very important to be part of community” and “feeling part of community” is revealing). Of the households, 1,000 were inmarried, 800 were conversionary, 3,200 were intermarried, and 300 were “other” (e.g., single parent). In terms of religion, 46% were being

raised Jewish, 9% Jewish and something else, 13% not Jewish in no religion, 13% not Jewish in another religion (includes intermarried and conversionary households), and 19% were undecided.

Based on these numbers and the interviewee's estimate of the number of affiliated Jews (approximately 20,000), it could have been expected that there would be 2,000 or so Jewish children in the ECE centers. Currently, less than 1,000 Jewish children are enrolled in the centers. The 2012 economic study conducted by EKS&H noted that . . .

6.5% of members in the host institutions have age-eligible children (ages 0-4 years old) and that of those families 34.9% are enrolled in the ECE Center. This means that **64.1%** of those families are not enrolled and presumably may be enrolled in other early care and education services outside of the host organization. (p. 5)

Barriers to further enrollment, the leader of the host institution mentioned, include lack of extended hours (essential for parents who work), ECE centers that do not provide alternative vacation care on Jewish holidays, the need for a clearer differentiation between non-Jewish and Jewish ECE centers, insufficient Jewish content, the need for deeper Jewish knowledge among educators, a certain lack of vitality in Jewish ECE centers, and the cost of tuition.

In recognition of the pressing financial situation families were facing, a scholarship fund was established in 2010, which is managed by Allied Jewish Federation, to provide financial assistance to families in order to encourage greater access to Jewish early childhood education. A permanent lay committee was created at the Federation to oversee this new fund. The Federation granted a total of \$285,000 as of April 30, 2012, according to Shere Kahn. An initial grant was received from Rose Community Foundation for \$85,000. For 2011 and 2012, the Federation received a \$50,000 matching grant each year for ECE scholarships. Federation raised an additional \$50,000 each year for a total of \$100,000 for scholarships each year. Funds were also used to award a one-time grant of \$360 for every Qualistar-rated classroom in the ECE centers, which was \$10,000 last year and an estimated \$5,000 this year.

In terms of access, the economic study calls for offering extended hours, alternative child care on Jewish holidays, and infant care. These recommendations and more were framed in terms of enhancing revenue streams—a compelling argument for organizations that have been operating on reduced budgets.

The Most Salient Comment: Intentionality

When thinking about the changes since the establishment of the Colorado Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative, educators tended to remark on how much more “purposeful and meaningful” their teaching had become. Today, their actions are far more “intentional,” a change that they attributed to the initiative.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH AMONG FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS

Baseline data were gathered in Fall 2008 by Dr. Roberta Goodman, who at that time was JECEI's Director of Accreditation and Standards. For the purpose of collecting baseline data, online surveys were administered to families and educators. In 2010, Drs. Susan Shevitz and Larry Bailis, external evaluators from Brandeis University, administered family and educator surveys as part of a larger national external evaluation of JECEI's effectiveness. Many of the same survey items from the 2008 study were repeated in the 2010 study, and some new questions about the JECEI change process were added. As Bailis and Shevitz (2011) write, "Some items on the surveys are identical to ones in previous surveys of JECEI participants in order to facilitate comparisons of results over time."

In this section, only those items that appeared in both waves of data collection are considered. Given that only half of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers that participated in the 2008 study also participated in the 2010 study, strong claims cannot be made regarding the findings. The number of family members who completed the survey in 2008 was 724, and the number who did so in 2010 was 204.

Family Survey

Quality Indicators: The families were asked to rate the ECE centers on quality indicators both in 2008 and 2010. In terms of the specifically Jewish aspect of the program, the results were generally stable over time. An increase was observed from 66% to 75% on "Helping parents to promote Jewish family life."

Rating Educators: The families were also asked to rate the educators. A notable increase was found from 2008 to 2010 on "The teachers in my child(ren)'s classroom foster a love for Judaism" (from 66% to 80%). With this, there was a ten percent decrease from 90% to 80% on the families' ratings of the overall excellence of the early childhood centers.

Raising Children in Judaism: The families were asked to indicate in which religion(s) they are raising their children. Of the 724 respondents, 56% were raising their children Jewish only; 17% both Jewish and another religion; 15% only in a religion other than Judaism; and 13% indicated that they are not raising their children in a religion.

Impact of the ECE Centers: In 2008, the families were provided with a list of possible ways in which the ECE centers could have influenced them since enrolling their children. The highest scores were all in areas of life that were not necessarily Jewish, and the lowest scores were on items that dealt with Jewish living. For example, high scores were found on these items: "Aiding us in our parenting skills," "Assisting us to develop ourselves more fully socially and emotionally," and "Encouraging us to be mensches (good people)." The ECE centers had the least impact on specifically Jewish realms of life. For example, the following items had the lowest mean scores: Providing a rhythm to our family's day, week, and year through Jewish

practice (e.g. holidays), Making us feel more comfortable participating in Jewish practice, Leading us to use Hebrew words in our home, and Leading us to experience joy in Jewish life.

Engaging in Jewish Activities: In 2008, the families were provided with a list of Jewish activities and asked to indicate the frequency in which they engaged in these activities prior to enrolling their children in an ECE center and afterwards. In every instance, with the exception of *Attend adult Jewish classes*, an increase that was not due to chance was found. It is interesting that in 2010, “Attending adult Jewish education activity” was observed to be the activity in which the highest level of change was found.

Influencing families that tended not to engage in Jewish life prior to enrolling their children in an ECE center: According to Bailis and Shevitz, analysis of the impact of ECE on families’ Jewish lives is complicated by the fact that many families who enroll children in ECE centers are already engaged in Jewish life and practice Jewish rituals: “To cite a trivial example, if a family already lights Shabbat candles on a regular basis, we could not reasonably expect to see them increase this behavior as a result of enrollment of their children in a Jewish ECE.” Therefore, Bailis and Shevitz included in their analysis only the families who had room to grow in terms of Jewish engagement. In their words, “This means that when we calculated the families’ engagement on each measure, we looked at families who were not already high on that item – exactly the kind of family that Jewish ECE hopes to influence.”

According to the external evaluators, “Our research has shown that the vast majority of parents who were not already deeply engaged in Jewish living who participated in our surveys reported that, since enrolling their children at JECEI centers they were more positive about Jewish life, more engaged in Jewish living and learning, and anticipate increased engagement in the future” (Bailis and Shevitz, p. 8).

The families were provided with a list of typical Jewish behaviors and asked to indicate whether they experienced “some” or “a lot” of increase since enrolling their children in an ECE center. Of the Jewish and interfaith families that tended not to engage in Jewish life, 92% indicated that they somewhat increased their celebrations of Jewish holidays and 8% increased their celebrations of Jewish holidays “a lot.”

The percentage of families with increased levels of holiday celebration changes considerably when only Jewish families are considered. Of all the options, the lowest levels of change was seen on this item: In total, 25% reported an increase at any level. These findings are consistent with the research that Bailis and Shevitz conducted; They wrote, “A consistent theme we heard in all the parent focus groups was how valuable parent sessions and family events at the centers have been for Jews-by-choice now establishing Jewish homes, (born) Jews who don’t feel knowledgeable, and intermarried parents, especially when the non-Jewish spouse is assuming a major role in raising a Jewish child” (p. 17).

Attending Jewish adult education activity: The greatest change among the Jewish and interfaith families that tended not to engage in Jewish life prior to enrolling their children in an ECE center was “One or more adults in the family attending (or has attended) a Jewish adult education activity this school year.” Of the families, 79% reported “a lot” of increase and 21% indicated

some increase. Taking into consideration only the Jewish families, the total percentage was 69% (18% “some increase” and 51% “a lot” of increase).

Educator Survey

Sections of the online educator survey included the same sections that were on the family survey as well as sections that dealt with salaries, benefits, educational credentials, career choices, and engaging families in Jewish living and learning. In 2010, the family and educator surveys were re-administered by Shevitz and Bailis, but only to four ECE centers that were categorized as “transformative,” to use JECEI’s term. In this section, the information about the educators’ understanding and application of JECEI’s approach, and their ratings of JECEI are from the 2010 wave of data collection.

Educators’ engagement in Jewish life: The educators were provided with a list of common Jewish activities and asked to indicate the frequency with which their families engaged in these activities prior to working at their Jewish early childhood centers and afterwards. Increases that were not due to chance were found along these activities: attendance at adult Jewish classes, attendance at synagogue, celebration of Shabbat, and participation in parent education programs. In addition, an increase was found in terms of the educators’ affiliation with other Jewish organizations. Change was not found in terms of their reading of Jewish books and/or the singing of Jewish songs. Decreases were seen in the celebration of Jewish holidays and the giving of tzedakah.

Quality Rankings: The educators rated the quality of their early childhood centers at a very high level. Ninety-five percent strongly agreed or agreed that their ECE center helps parents provide Jewish experiences for their children. They also consider their leadership to be actively engaged in efforts to improve the quality of the ECE center (95% total agreement). When asked to indicate their rate of agreement with the following item, 95% strongly agreed or agreed: “Our center has excellent teachers.” Moreover, the overall quality of the centers were excellent (95% total agreement). The item that received the lowest rating was “Our center provides information about child development to our families” (43% total agreement).

When asked to consider their own work, the highest ranking items dealt with relations with parents: “I welcome and respond to questions from parents” (100% total agreement), “I regularly communicate what happens in the classroom to the parents” (97% total agreement), and “I regularly make active efforts to tell parents what has happened with their own children” (97%). The item with the lowest ranking was “I use the JECEI lenses regularly with the parents of my students” (32% agreed and 14% strongly agreed for a total agreement of 46%).

Rating JECEI: The educators rated themselves highly on the quality of Jewish life programming for the children and the degree to which the center helps parents with useful ideas on child development. The items that received the lowest scores were “The degree to which most teachers in our center follow the JECEI approach” and “Most of our teachers’ understanding of the JECEI approach.”

In 2010, Shevitz and Bailis reported on the educators’ understanding and use of JECEI components.

	Proportion of educators giving a rating of “high” or “very high”
Degree to which most teachers follow the JECEI approach	42%
Degree to which own teaching follows the JECEI approach	54%
Degree to which most teachers understand the JECEI approach	43%
Own understanding of JECEI approach	62%

JECEI’s support: The educators’ work with JECEI (consultant/s, staff members, and materials) increased “a lot” for almost a quarter of the educators in terms of “ability to deepen Jewish living and learning experiences for the children” and “ability to help parents value the school/center as a place to explore Jewish life.” Of the educators, 65% agreed or strongly agreed that JECEI helped them to use constructivist and Reggio-inspired approaches, 57% agreed or strongly agreed that the support given to the centers by JECEI helped them to clarify their approach to early childhood education, and 54% indicated that the support helped them to develop their approach to Jewish living and learning.

Creating conflict. With this, 59% strongly agreed or agreed that JECEI created conflict among the educators. Bailis and Shevitz noted, “We also saw evidence that at some centers, JECEI became the lightning rod for staff discontent, especially when there were already divisions among the staff about what they believed early childhood education should look like and become” (p. 11).

JECEI’s contribution: According to the educators, JECEI provided them with a vocabulary for what they were already doing (78% agreement) and JECEI created higher expectations for Jewish early childhood education (70% agreement). The items that elicited the lowest scores were “Made us more prominent in the local Jewish community” (32%), “Energized our teachers” (38%), and “Fostered a sense of camaraderie among our teachers” (40%). Of the educators, 22% selected “not really changed anything at our center.” The key contribution of JECEI was in terms of helping the educators to increase their competencies with a constructivist/Reggio-inspired approach to early childhood education.

2012 WAVE OF FAMILY AND EDUCATOR SURVEYS

As an integral part of the current study, family and educator surveys were designed and administered during spring 2012. The surveys were developed in collaboration with leaders of the Colorado Jewish Education Initiative to ensure their validity and relevancy to the ongoing work of the initiative. The family survey was an online survey and the directors distributed the link to the surveys to their families. The surveys met statisticians' criteria for reliability surveys (the survey was comprised of 71 items and the Cronbach's alpha was .928, which is in the very high range. The educator survey was a paper survey and the educators generally completed the survey during staff meetings. The Cronbach's alpha was found to be .951, which is also in the very high range.).

The Family Survey

Demographic Information

The following shows the response rate. The overall response rate was 34%, which is respectable for this type of survey.

Table 6: Response rate by ECE center

Center	# sent	Final # received	Response Rate
Aish Denver Preschool	18	13	72%
Boulder JCC Preschool	75	63	84%
BMH-BJ Preschool	140	35	25%
Garden Preschool	30	1	less than 1%
Hebrew Educational Alliance	40	17	43%
Loup JCC ECC	205	65	32%
Rodef Shalom Preschool	55	39	71%
Temple Emanuel ECC	200	42	21%
Temple Sinai Preschool	115	25	22%
Unknown		2	less than 1%

TOTAL Number	878	302	34%
---------------------	-----	-----	-----

The respondents were asked to indicate the length of time their children attended the ECE center and the length of time that they had been affiliated with the center (many families, for example, had older children who had also attended the center). With respect to the children currently enrolled in the center, 34% indicated one year, 35% two years, 23% three years, 4% four years, and 4% five or more years. With respect to their affiliation with the center, 19% indicated one year, 23% two years, 19% three years, 14% four years, 10% five years, and 15% six years or more.

In terms of paying the center’s tuition, 57% said that paying the tuition “does not really require me to sacrifice anything that is important to me.” Thirty-seven percent indicated that paying the tuition “makes me unable to have or do some things that are important to me.” Six percent said that “it is a tremendous sacrifice for me.”

The families were also asked whether they pay membership dues to the host institution. They were provided with a list of reasons why they may have paid dues and asked to indicate all that apply. A third (34.8%) said that they do not pay membership dues. Twenty-one percent paid membership dues “because I was already a member of the host institution prior to enrolling my child in the ECE center.” Fourteen percent said that they pay membership dues “because I received a discount or was able to register for preschool early.” A third said they pay the membership dues “because it was a requirement of enrolling my child in the ECE center.” In addition, 21% said that they pay the membership dues “because I want to participate in other programs offered by the host institution.” When asked how often they participate in programs at the host institutions, a third (32.8%) indicated “never or rarely,” 40% “on holidays or other special occasions,” 15% monthly, 10% weekly, and 3% daily.

In terms of participation in MazelTot, a quarter was not sure what this is, 57% said that they were registered with MazelTot, 30% said that they use mazeltot.org (the website) for information on events for families with young children, and 32% said that they use MazelTot discounts.

The families tended to live in the immediate vicinity of the ECE centers. It took 70% less than 15 minutes to drive from their homes to the centers. Another quarter indicated that it took 16 to 30 minutes. Seven respondents drove between 31 to 45 minutes and 2 drive more than 46 minutes.

Of the respondents, 47% participated in 1-3 adult Jewish learning classes offered at the ECE centers and another 9 respondents indicated more than this. This is a high rate, given that 46% said that their ECE centers did not offer any classes.

Jewish Experiences

The families agreed that the ECE centers help families provide Jewish experiences for their children (94% agreement). With this, only 49% said that the centers encourage families to consider future Jewish educational options (after preschool) for their children.

They also see the influence of the Reggio Emilia approach (even if they are unaware of what this approach is all about). For example, the families agreed that the centers tap into children’s

interests (90% agreement), create classrooms that are a venue for peace and calm (87% agreement), and engage children in hands-on projects that take multiple days or weeks (83% agreement).

Table 7: Our ECE center

Our ECE center . . .	Percent Agreement
Helps families provide Jewish experiences for their children	93.7
Taps into children’s interests	90.2
Creates classrooms that are a venue for peace and calm	87.3
Engages children in hands-on projects that take multiple days or weeks	82.9
Communicates well with families	79.7
Serves two generations (children and families)	79.5
Is efficiently run	79.4
Documents children’s engagement in activities	75.8
Effectively prepares children for Kindergarten	73.1
Actively promotes opportunities for families to become involved in the ECE center’s leadership	64.2
Encourages families to consider future Jewish educational options (after preschool) for their children.	49.1

For most of the families, enrolling their children in a Jewish ECE center had the side benefit of increasing the number of friendships they have with other Jewish families.

Table 8: Impact of ECE

As a result of enrolling our child(ren) in this center . . .	Percent Agreement
We have formed new Jewish friendships.	72.5
We have a stronger connection to the Jewish community.	71.4
We tend to get together with other Jewish families involved in the center.	58.8

Quality

The families rated the teachers at a high level, especially in terms of demonstrating excellence in promoting children’s development and effectively teaching the children about Jewish life; however, only half of the families said that the teachers talked to them about how to promote their families’ Jewish living and learning. The teachers also received high marks for regularly welcoming families into the classrooms and responding to their questions.

Table 9: Teachers in my child’s classroom

The teacher(s) in my child(ren)'s classroom . . . [Note: If a question is not relevant to your family's religious background, please just skip it]	Percent Agreement
Effectively teaches children about Jewish life.	92.4

Demonstrates excellence in promoting children's development.	90.9
Regularly welcomes and responds to questions from parents.	90.5
Makes efforts on a regular basis to tell families about what happens in the classroom.	83.9
Actively promotes children's initiative to shape what goes on in the classroom.	81.6
Is responsive to differences in children's cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds.	80.9
Talks to me about how to promote my family's Jewish living and learning.	51.7

In this scale, there were two items that were negatively worded—the most desirable score was the lowest score. Indeed, low scores were found on “In this ECE center, my child has had a teacher(s) who did not act on my input regarding my child's needs” and “Something in my child's behavior, mood, or comments indicates that he/she has an ongoing problem that is unacknowledged by ECE center personnel.” Desirable high scores were seen on this item: “In this ECE center, the teachers respond appropriately to my child's feelings.” The families perceive the teachers as emotionally-responsive to children, which reflects the thrust of training provided by the ECE Early Childhood Specialist.

It is interesting that 12% indicated that they would not recommend their ECE centers to other parents and only half agreed that the overall excellence of the centers have increased in the last several years. These are important indicators that should be tracked over time.

Since Qualistar has served as a central component of the initiative, it is noteworthy that only 52% consider it important.

Table 10: At the ECE center

At the ECE center	Percent Agreement
In this ECE center, the teachers respond appropriately to my child's feelings.	92.3
I would recommend this ECE center to other parents.	88.4
The children receive individualized attention at this ECE center.	88.1
I am aware of the ECE center's approach to Jewish values and ideas [<i>Note: some centers refer to these as the "lenses"</i>].	83.1
The ECE center seamlessly connects Jewish content with the early childhood curriculum.	82.9
This ECE center offers support services to children with special needs. [<i>Please skip this question if you feel that you do not have the necessary information to answer it</i>]	53
If a child is not thriving in this ECE center, administrators and educators enhance their efforts to keep the child in the program (e.g., staff development, getting outside help, working with parents).	52.2
It is very important to me that my child's ECE center is rated by Qualistar [Qualistar Early Learning is a statewide nonprofit organization that rates the quality of early childhood education in Colorado].	51.9
The overall excellence of the ECE center has increased in the last several years.	50.3
I am familiar with the Reggio Emilia educational approach.	47.1
In this ECE center, my child has had a teacher(s) who did not act on my input regarding my child's needs.	13.7
Something in my child's behavior, mood, or comments indicates that he/she has an	12.7

The Families' Engagement in Jewish Life Scale

The *Families' Engagement in Jewish Life* scale was developed so that the measurement of Jewish identity would not be limited to the performance of Jewish rituals (e.g., lighting candles on Shabbat). The scale, therefore, reflects a far more encompassing way in which one may form a relationship to the Jewish people, past and present. Included in the scale are items that are framed in terms of cognitions, emotions, actions, and ways of partaking of community. Because one's relationship to the Jewish people is far more complex than a simple yes/no, the scale measures the intensity of the relationship. For example, instead of asking whether parents light Shabbat candles or not, the parents are asked to indicate how frequently they light candles (never, sometimes, usually, always). Instead of asking whether they celebrate Jewish holidays or not, the scale asks how regularly they celebrate Jewish holidays with other families. So, too, families are asked to indicate the intensity of their attendance at religious services at a synagogue, and not whether they are members of a synagogue or not. The following are the items on the scale:

- Celebrate Jewish holidays with other families
- Sing or listen to Jewish or Israeli music
- Tell stories about Jewish events or holidays
- Attend religious services at Temple or Synagogue
- Wear clothing or jewelry that shows that one is Jewish
- Read Jewish websites, books, magazines
- Celebrate Shabbat (e.g., light candles, special family dinner, say blessings)
- Socialize with other Jewish families
- Use Yiddish, Hebrew or Jewish words
- Attend events and/or programs at the JCC or other Jewish organizations
- Say Jewish blessings
- Attend Jewish cultural events, film festivals, educational lectures, or workshops
- Participate in a Jewish program for families
- Participate in classes for parents run by the ECE center
- Read Jewish books or sing Jewish songs with our child(ren)
- Discuss Jewish values with our child(ren)
- Spend time talking about Jewish matters (e.g., ideas, topics, events, values) with others.

The respondents were asked to skip these questions if they were not relevant to their religious backgrounds.

The Intensity Quotient

The Jewish life quotient is also based on the items that appear in the *Families' Engagement in Jewish Life* scale. The difference is the way that these two scores are calculated. The *Families' Engagement in Jewish Life* scale results in a mean score ("average" score). By way of contrast, The intensity quotient was computed by assigning an even number of points to each item on the scale (that is, all items in the scale had the same weight). This "intensity" quotient can be understood as the summed total of a number of ways that Jewish families with young children

may demonstrate their engagement to the Jewish people, past and present. One person, for example, may have an intensity rating of 10 and another person, 8. The higher the score, the more intensive the participants' connectedness to Jewish life.

With the quotient, it is possible to see, for example, that the families whose children attended an ECE center for one year had the lowest quotients and the families whose children attended an ECE for five or more years had the highest quotients, and the differences in scores was not due to chance. The families were also asked how long they were affiliated with the centers (i.e., if they had other children who were enrolled in the past). The scores on the quotient were in the following order (from lowest to highest): one year, two years, three years, four years, five years, six or more years. In summary, the research found that the length of time families were affiliated with the ECE centers was an important predictor of the intensity of their engagement in Jewish life. This finding suggests that the longer the families were affiliated with the centers, the greater their connectedness to Jewish life.

Impact of ECE centers on families

What impact, if any, has the ECE center (e.g., curriculum, teachers, my child's friends, the fact that it is part of my synagogue) had on your family?

The families were provided with space to respond to the open-ended question above. The following are representative responses to this question:

- A huge impact...it has brought us more fully into Jewish life.
- All of these are the impact we have seen: Bringing Judaism into the home through a child's lens, getting the children excited about Jewish holidays and customs, giving the children a place where they feel comfortable and surrounded by other Jews, helping create a friendly school community in and outside of school (my child's friends), and a place to go to celebrate Jewish holidays with our community.
- Allowed us to become part of the synagogue and meet many parents and members we otherwise would not.
- As a non-Jewish family at the ECE, our family still shares many of the values of the school and feels our daughter has grown intellectually and emotionally. In addition, we have made close family friends with both Jewish and non-Jewish families. This has enriched our lives immensely.
- Enhanced our connection to Jewish tradition and community. Made it easier to attend services if we can due to the generosity of free membership in the shul with Preschool tuition! Sense of community has awakened old memories and good feelings about my own Jewish upbringing. Opportunities to engage more if comfortable and when able.
- Helped me to better appreciate the importance of ritual and custom for children, and the value of social interaction for development.
- I think we view the Jewish community more positively, but the Jewish half in our family still doesn't really identify as Jewish, nor does he feel the children need to be raised Jewish. We are very happy to have gone to the JCC and donated money to the new building, but this will probably be the last formal Jewish program our children participate in. There is a new rabbi here that seems to focus on interfaith, though, that could be a possibility
- It's been fundamental in helping to build a sense of a Jewish community in a place where Jews are a minority, and where many of us moved here from other locations that had

strong Jewish communities. It has tightly integrated Jewish education with education in general and with the local community for our children, so that they consider them one and the same rather than thinking of Judaism as a separate lens. Finally, the JCC has been an anchor for our middle-class, two-working-parent family. We're not currently members of a synagogue but we still feel like we're a part of the Jewish community, thanks to the education our children receive, the friends we've made, and the sense of belonging that we feel from our experience.

- It has had a tremendous impact on our family. My son has made all of his best friends at the center and truly feels like his teachers are his family members. He has received a remarkable Jewish education. At only three years old he comes home and tells me stories about holidays or Jewish teachings that I had no idea a three year old could comprehend. His teachers and the faculty treat him as though he is a relative and for me that is absolutely priceless.
- It has increased my family's knowledge of the Jewish faith and traditions. We have more friends that are Jewish.
- It has had a great and wonderful impact on my kids and myself. I love this place and started attending it more often after my daughter started attending the ECE center. My kids have lots of friends and my daughter is very happy to see her class mates friends during regular Sabbath services and holiday programs.
- It is nice to see my daughter come home from school singing Jewish songs and knowing all about the different holidays.
- Our preschool has been a wonderful place for all of my children to come into themselves as little people. I have watched teachers nurture them, love them, encourage them. It has reinforced and supplemented the Jewish education we are offering our children at home, with real learning going on. This preschool has been my home base for many years, and I will miss it when my youngest goes to kindergarten next year.
- The ECE center has really propelled our critical thinking about our children's Jewish education. There are certain things we knew would always be a part of our lives but the Boulder JCC ECE has definitely taken it to a new level. We have given much more thought to how we teach Jewish values and traditions. The warmth and thoughtfulness of the ECE center has given a beautiful introduction of our Jewish community and Judaism to our kids. They have Jewish friends which we relish. And we feel that this 'good feeling' about our community is incredibly important for our children's pride in their Judaism.
- The seamless integration of Jewish curriculum has been extraordinary to watch and experience. We now celebrate family Shabbat every week where our daughter leads the blessings. She recited the 4 questions at the Seder both nights and told the entire story of Passover to a room full of people whose jaws hit the floor. She has blossomed with self-confidence and charm. One of her preschool teachers taught us (synagogue families) how to bake challah and told us about a charitable organization that provides Shabbat meals for families in need. Now my daughter saves her tzedakah money to donate to the organization because "everyone needs Shabbat." Truly extraordinary. I don't care so much about whether she knows her letters or her numbers. I do care that she grows into a quality human being with a sense of responsibility for those around her. Watching our daughter experience Jewish curriculum taught by Jews who live what they teach has been meaningful for all of us.

- We live in an area without many Jewish families, and it was important to us that our son experience being a part of a Jewish community. He's learned a lot about the Jewish holidays this year as well as Jewish values, like mitzvahs and taking care of the earth.
- We moved here in the middle of the year and our son had not been attending a Jewish pre-K program before, but in less than two months he has learned more about Jewish traditions and has developed more of a Jewish identity than he has in 4 1/2 years before and far more than I ever would have imagined. And he often did not want to go to school before, but he tells me all the time that he loves his "new" school here and he counts down the days until it is time to go!
- We socialize with families from the school and feel connected to school and institution as a whole. We are grateful for the experience.

What kinds of programs would you like to see offered at the host institution?

- A more organized Tot Shabbat.
- A program that is similar to the MOPS program for mothers and their children but for Jewish families
- Classes for parents to learn more about Judaism.
- Family events for on a Sunday or a short fun thing for the kids after school
- Family picnics, hikes, Shabbatons
- Family programs for both preschool and religious school
- FREE ones, it seems that even as a member every event (or most!) cost and for a family of 4 it is often easily \$50 for a dinner that my kids likely won't eat!
- Hands-on creative pre-holiday programs for children that involve learning and arts and crafts.
- Hebrew basics for adults. I felt disconnected when I visited because I don't know Hebrew.
- Hebrew classes, Israeli dance, adult Jewish education, health and nutrition, safety issues for kids, business networking, hip mama club, Kabbalah studies
- Hebrew for adults
- Hebrew language enrichment
- Holiday events, swimming lessons, and other toddler "move and learn" classes
- I'd like to see Tot Shabbat every Friday night and/or Saturday morning so that our kids know that we go to Synagogue every week and it just becomes part of our routine.
- I'm already pretty involved, so I'm not really looking for anything new. Perhaps just more programs to reach out to young families and especially parents, to continue building our synagogue's community.
- I think they are doing a GREAT job! I love the programming for families and individuals! The only thing I can think of would be a "Jewish 101" class for people like me who are not familiar with Jewish customs, language, traditions etc.
- I would like to see more programs for ECE parents (i.e. book clubs, maj jongg, coffee klatches)
- Kindergarten after school program
- Mom and tot music
- More about heritage and tradition with less of an emphasis on religion
- More family programming
- More family/tot shabbat programs. A way for families to socialize. More opportunities

- to bridge the school with the congregation.
- More for parents and kids with young kids. Tot Shabbat is the only thing that is really offered.
 - More Hebrew,
 - More sports for children
 - Parsha class; parenting from torah perspective,
 - Programs for Preschool families.
 - Soccer camps, swimming.
 - Tot Shabbat's more often, especially the summer hikes with the guitar-rabbi.
 - Yoga

The Educator Survey

Demographic Information

There was 100% participation of the ECE centers in the *Educator Survey* ($n=151$). The *Educator Survey* was a paper survey and the educators generally completed the survey during staff meetings.

Of the respondents, 26% worked at their ECE centers from between 3 to 5 years; 15% between 6-10 years, 17% between 11-20 years, and 17% more than 21 years. Also, 12% worked less than 1 year and 14% between 1 and 2 years. Thus, there was a diverse mix of veteran and new educators. The stability of the educators is greater than most communities. According to the Educators in Jewish Schools Study (Ben-Avie and Kress, 2008), only 13% of educators in Jewish day schools worked for more than 20 years and only 7% in congregational schools.

The educators were asked whether, if they could start over again, they would become a Jewish educator in a Jewish ECE center—an indicator of their satisfaction with their current careers. Of the respondents, less than 1% indicated that they would not become an educator in a Jewish ECE center, 6% “probably would not,” 25% “would have an even chance,” 31% “probably would,” and 38% indicated that they “certainly would become an educator in a Jewish ECE center.” By way of comparison, in the Educator in Jewish Schools Study, 3% said they would not become an educator in a Jewish school, 7% said they would probably not, 30% said “an even chance,” 26% said probably, and 34% said that they certainly would.

When asked whether they would describe themselves as having a career in Jewish education, 60% strongly agreed or agreed. Slightly less, 55%, strongly agreed or agreed that “This job is part of a career path that I have planned.”

Extent to which outcomes were met

The Steering Committee assigned a score of 4 (out of 10) to “Families’ awareness of educational options for their children after early childhood education has increased as well as their interest in enrolling their children in these options.” This score appears to be consistent with the educators’ self-ratings. While some items in the section of the *Educator Survey* that measures how well the centers function had high scores, 65% of the educators agreed that their centers encourage families to consider future Jewish educational options (after preschool) for their children. The families, however, had a different opinion than the educators: only 49% of the families agreed to this statement.

The educators and families tended to agree on other items. For example, 93% of the educators indicated that the centers help families provide Jewish experiences for their children; 94% of the families also agreed. Ninety percent of both the families and educators agreed that the centers “tap into children’s interests.”

Table 11: Our ECE center . . .

	Percent Agreement Educators	Percent Agreement Families
Helps families provide Jewish experiences for their children.	92.7	93.7
Taps into children’s interests.	90.0	90.2
Serves two generations (children and families).	84.7	79.5
Effectively prepares children for Kindergarten.	84.1	73.1
Creates classrooms that are a venue for peace and calm.	82.1	87.3
Communicates well with families.	82.0	79.7
Engages children in hands-on projects that take multiple days or weeks.	81.5	82.9
Documents children’s engagement in activities.	80.7	75.8
Actively promotes opportunities for families to become involved in the ECE center’s leadership.	69.4	64.2
Encourages families to consider future Jewish educational options (after preschool) for their children.	65.3	49.1
Is efficiently run.	63.8	79.4

JECEI’s principles of excellence include “relationships.” Based on the scores of the educators on items that measure teamwork among the educators, about half of the educators felt that positive change had occurred in the level of teamwork among the educators. For example, 57% of the educators indicated that they are satisfied with the level of teamwork among the educators. Also, 55% indicated that they frequently develop ideas, materials, and/or lesson plans with colleagues.

Table 12: My efforts

	Percent Agreement
My efforts are validated and/or recognized by my students’ parents.	85.9

My efforts are validated and/or recognized by my colleagues.	73.7
My efforts are validated and/or recognized by the ECE center’s administrators.	62.4
The educators at this ECE center spend a great deal of time and effort learning from each other and sharing effective teaching strategies.	57.4
I am satisfied with the level of teamwork among the educators.	56.7
I frequently develop ideas, materials, and/or lesson plans with colleagues.	54.7

In order to gauge the educators’ perceptions of the level of change over the last four years, they were provided with a series of items that were aligned with the goals of the initiative. For the analysis, only the scores of the educators who have worked more than 6 years in the centers were included. The lowest score on the scale was assigned to “Our families have a stronger connection to the Jewish community” (55% agreement). The second lowest score was “We have increased the Jewish identity of the children” (57% agreement). These two items reflect key goals of the initiative.

The highest scoring item was “Our knowledge of educationally-sound practices in early childhood education has improved” (77% agreement).

Table 13: Over the last four years . . .

Note: For this analysis, only the scores of the educators who have worked more than 6 years were included

	Percent Agreement
Our knowledge of educationally-sound practices in early childhood education has improved.	77.1
Communication with families has improved.	70.4
The quality of teaching has improved.	67.6
There has been more individualization for each child.	66.7
The Jewish content has become more seamlessly connected to the early childhood curriculum.	65.2
There has been more direction in staff meetings.	63.4
The overall level of excellence has improved at our ECE center.	63.3
We have increased the Jewish identity of the children.	57.2
Our families have a stronger connection to the Jewish community.	54.9

N = 72

Core strategies of the initiative were included on the *Educator Survey* and the educators were asked to indicate whether, in the future, their centers will implement these for the first time or continue to implement them. A play-based educational approach had the highest score (84% agreement) followed by “Documentation of children’s engagement in activities” (76% agreement). Seventy-three percent agreed that “A seamless integration of Jewish values and content with the early childhood curriculum” would continue. “A Reggio Emilia-inspired approach to early childhood education” received 60% agreement rate. It was unexpected that “A nature-based environment” received only 66% agreement rate. The teaching of complex Jewish

ideas and values through referring to the JECEI’s lenses also had a lower score (50% agreement). It is worth keeping in mind that all the centers participated in the survey, including those that were not “transformational” centers. The only statistically significant difference between the “transformational” and “transitional” centers was observed in terms of “Documentation of children’s engagement in activities” (the “transformational” centers had the higher scores).

Table 14: In the future, our ECE center will implement for the first time or continue to implement . . .

	Percent Agreement Overall	Percent Agreement Transformational	Percent Agreement Transitional
A play-based educational approach.	84.2	86.0	81.4
Documentation of children’s engagement in activities.	75.7	82.1	66.1
A seamless integration of Jewish values and content with the early childhood curriculum.	73.1	78.8	64.4
Emotionally-responsive practice.	71.7	73.3	69.0
Collaboration with colleagues in different classrooms when planning learning experiences.	67.3	67.8	66.1
A nature-based environment.	66.2	72.4	56.7
Project-based “emergent curriculum”	66.0	69.4	60.3
A Reggio Emilia-inspired approach to early childhood education.	59.6	63.5	53.3
Shared leadership.	59.2	57.0	61.7
JECEI’s “lenses”	50.3	55.3	42.1

The educators tended to assign low scores to Qualistar. The initiative promoted Qualistar, in part, due to its commitment to extend access to Jewish early childhood education among families. The educators indicated that this strategy was not effective: 38% agreed that “Because we are Qualistar rated, our center is more financially accessible to families.”

Table 15: Qualistar

Note: The following are only for educators whose centers are Qualistar rated.

	Percent Agreement
I have learned a great deal from going through the process of preparing for a Qualistar rating.	54.4
Qualistar rating attracts new families.	52.0
Qualistar is an important part of our ECE center’s efforts to improve our quality.	49.0
It is important for our center to be Qualistar rated to be competitive with other centers.	48.5
It would be helpful if the Qualistar coach would continue working with our center.	44.1
I see the benefit of participating in ongoing Qualistar ratings.	43.1

I am in favor of continuing with Qualistar in the future.	42.8
Because we are Qualistar rated, our center is more financially accessible to families.	38.2

N= 102

According to the educators, the most effective professional development strategies are “teachers helping other teachers” and “visits to other centers.”

Table 16: Please indicate which professional development experiences were effective in recent years: [check all that apply]

	Percent Agreement
Teachers helping other teachers	78.7
Visits to other centers	75.2
Presentations during staff meetings or other gatherings	58.9
Coaching by CAJE’s early childhood specialist to individual teachers	57.4
Multi-session seminars and courses on specific topics	52.5
A common read in which all the teachers or a group of teachers read and discussed the same book or articles	41.8
Guidance from experts on the implementation of regulations and standards	41.8
Coaching by director to individual teachers	40.4
Coaching by JECEI consultant(s) to individual teachers	34.0
Community-training events	33.3
Qualistar coaching	27.7

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is noteworthy that 90% of the educators agreed that “I would say that our intentionality and purposefulness when planning learning experiences have increased in recent years.” This finding is consistent with the findings from the interviews that were conducted.

THAT WHICH WILL BE SUSTAINED

On the Educator Survey, the educators were asked the following question: *Of all that you learned through engagement with this initiative (from Judi Morosohk, Lori Geismer-Ryan (former JECEI consultant), JECEI seminars, colleagues, readings, etc.), which elements will continue to be part of your practice in the future?* This section presents the analysis of the responses.

Moreover, during the interviews, educators were asked their thoughts on what elements of the initiative would be sustained. The elements included “children in the natural world” (the physical environment, nature in the curriculum, outdoor spaces, and using natural materials), increased comfort with Jewish learning among the educators, intentionality in the design of the learning activities, language to talk about what they were doing intuitively, and the “strong image of the child; art, beauty as well as play based on children’s interests, abilities, and perceptions.”

“Children in the natural world”

A consistent theme was that the tangible changes that were made to the physical environment of the centers would be sustained. These changes included using nature in the curriculum, outdoor classrooms, and using natural materials. Representative comments were “We will continue more nature-based learning,” “The physical environment plays a role in the emotional and creative process for children,” “More nature appreciation; connection with Judaism and nature,” and “Using more nature-based items.” Along these same lines, leaders of the host institutions have become more attentive to this nature-based approach when reorganizing, designing, or renovating buildings.

Increased comfort level with Jewish learning

The shift to “seamless Judaism” has the potential to be sustained: (i.e., “We’re Jewish the whole year, not only on holidays”). The initiative introduced the idea that Jewish values are a litmus test for what the educators should or should not do. The strategy for introducing “seamless Judaism” was Jewish learning. The comfort level with learning Jewish sources of wisdom has increased among educators as a result of the initiative. Educators wrote, “The Jewish lenses are helping with being more patient, sensitive; They help with communication,” and “Will always keep the lenses (values) of Judaism in all of my planning.” While the particular educative strategy of JECEI’s lenses may not be sustained in its current form, the openness to exploring Jewish ideas, values, and traditions is likely to be sustained, if this aspect of the initiative continues.

The outcome of this willingness to change classroom practices to mirror more closely “seamless Judaism” is the work of the educators to integrate Jewish ideas and practices into routine classroom activities. The following are representative comments:

- I’ll try to improve each child’s Jewish identity through furthering my understanding of the Jewish religion.

- Educating children in a way that they can understand Judaism in the classroom and take it home [will be sustained]. What they soak up in a Jewish environment will stick!
- Integration of Jewish content [will be sustained]
- How to bring Judaism into the classroom when some of the kids aren't Jewish

Implementing seamless Judaism is most clearly seen in the work of the educators to enact Jewish holidays (instead of just pulling a “holiday box” from the shelf with superficial arts and crafts projects) and to engage children in experiential learning activities that incorporate Jewish ideas and values. This work will likely be sustained.

Language to talk about what they were doing intuitively; intentionality

An educator wrote, “Integrating Jewish values, ideals, and content into daily work [will be sustained]. A play-based, child-directed approach. Collaboration and sharing ideas to plan lessons and experiences. Emotionally-responsive practice has been and will continue. All of the above have been part of my practice—I have just sharpened my awareness.” It’s this sharpened awareness that characterizes sustainable change. The enhanced awareness emerged, in part, through providing the educators with the language to examine their actions. The following representative comments depict that the language on the initiative has entered into the consciousness of the educators when they talk about what will be sustained:

- Emergent curriculum; emotionally responsive practice; shared leadership; play-based educational approach
- To be more in tune with what young children want to know and learn. To “teach” with them and be their resource and advocate for where they want their learning to go.
- Shared leadership; emergent curriculum; documentation of learning experiences
- Children are more capable than we think.
- Constructivist style teaching
- Emotionally-responsive practice. Communication with parents. Collaboration with colleagues. Child-directed projects. Play-based approach.

The outcome of this enhanced awareness is an intentionality in actions. As mentioned previously in this report, an increase in intentionality is the most salient change which was attributed to the initiative. As an educator wrote, [that which will be sustained is] “being intentional in my teaching; knowing what my purpose is in each project or unit.” In the language of the educators, the initiative facilitated their “going deeper” and becoming more “purposeful” in their planning.

Parents’ language to tell their friends about the center to show that they made the right decision

The families also gained new language to understand and talk about the changes at their children’s centers. During interviews, parents explained how they talked about the centers with their friends. Such terms as “documentation,” “play-based,” “emotionally-responsive,” and “Reggio Emilia” helped them describe to others why they made the right choice in enrolling their children in the centers. Documentation—making learning visible—could very well be sustained, given the families’ appreciation of this. The families’ use of such terms as “classes for parents” (instead of “parenting classes”) and “family engagement” also speak of changes that will likely be sustained.

Strong image of the child; art; beauty; play based on child's interest, ability, and perception.

Implementation of the Reggio Emilia educational approach resulted in an increase in educators' knowledge and skills related to child development. Educators wrote about the "emergent curriculum" (i.e., the process, not the product) and the "blank canvas" (i.e., enticing kids; letting them choose materials). The term "blank canvas" evokes a sense of a beauty in seeing children's grow. An educator wrote that the following will be sustained: "Compassion, understanding, and love of children; watching them grow and develop and discover." Related to Reggio Emilia, another educator wrote that this will be sustained: "Maintaining educational strategies that encourage ritual, peace, and calm. Value fostering the individual child. Supporting all the languages of children." Educators experienced a new sense of professionalism as a result of deepening their knowledge of how to promote children's learning and development, and this professionalism promises to be sustainable.

This increase was further strengthened by CAJE's ECE specialist's seminars on such topics as working with children who use challenging behaviors and awakening the creative spirit. That which will be sustained is the impact of these increased knowledge and skills when interacting with children. As one educator wrote, "Judi has been a wonder asset to our program. Having her come into the classroom and watching how she interacts with the children is inspirational."

"Now we are a community"

The initiative engendered "same-page behavior"—the end result of educators collaborating together to promote children's learning and development, which is in contrast to the ad-hoc initiative of a single educator or two. That which will be sustained is the recognition of the importance of dialogue among educators, the need to develop shared understandings, the willingness of educators to share curricular ideas with one another and engage in joint learning activities, and the appreciation of the "common read" (i.e., learning together).

On another level, the educators' sense of community has extended beyond their own classrooms. There is a growing recognition of the early childhood centers as part of an integrated system that includes Hebrew schools, summer camps, synagogue events for families with young children, etc. There is great potential for this enhanced sense of community will be sustained and result in more multi-faceted and long-term educational experiences for children.

LESSONS LEARNED

This section deals with "lessons learned." They emerged from the interviews that were conducted, the review of archival documents, the statistical analyses of previous research and this year's research, and knowledge of the process of educational change.

An inspiring philosophy: Mark Horowitz, the first director of JECEI, and Diana Ganger (former Program Director at JECEI) articulated a philosophy that inspired the centers. While the standards and "nuts and bolts" of an educational change initiative are important for implementation, it is a compelling philosophy that awakens educators to new ideas and practices, and evokes in them the interest and motivation to consider changing.

Under-prepared for both JECEI and Qualistar: The centers were under-prepared to implement both JECEI and Qualistar at the same time. Educational institutions are bombarded with initiatives, often with conflicting mandates. When leadership teams function well, they develop a comprehensive school plan that aligns all the initiatives, ensure professional development is in accordance with the plan, and design methods for determining which combination of initiatives makes the most sense. The leadership teams, however, were either not in place or strong enough to fulfill this function.

A further note regarding Qualistar: Regulations are put into place for the benefit of the children, and not the educators. Although many educators perceive Qualistar in a negative light, this does not necessarily imply that Qualistar is ineffective or not good for the children. The reverse may be true: the more arduous the regulations, the better it is for the children. This depends, of course, on the nature and quality of the regulations as well as their suitability for the particular educational setting.

Professional development: All forms of professional development are needed. It was clear that some educators benefited from the common read, some from long-term courses, some from workshops, some from ideas learned while visiting colleagues, some from on-site coaching, some from material discussed at staff meetings, and so forth. The initiative benefited from offering professional development in all these formats. Moreover, it was clear that some educators learned the most from presentations on the underlying philosophy of the initiative and others from hands-on workshops.

Common planning time: Educators need common planning time or similar in order to implement an initiative as comprehensive as the initiative under discussion. They need to talk to one another, visit each other's classrooms and those of other centers, and learn together. Many centers implemented common planning time, and the benefit was keenly felt.

Parents as partners in education: Families are willing to help implement an initiative when they understand it. Families were baffled, for example, when classrooms were transformed (in order to be more nature-based) and they did not know the reason behind this shift. They were also surprised when they no longer received home the type of artwork that children typically produce in ECE centers ("decorated cut-out shapes"). Changes need to be explained to families on a regular and ongoing basis. The most effective strategy for communicating with the families was the "Documentation" (photographs of children engaged in activities plus explanatory text).

Special education: Comprehensive educational change initiatives stop being comprehensive when they do not address a subpopulation of the children. The case in point is children who qualify for special services. JECEI did not directly address this subpopulation and the educators wished that it had.

The Jewish lenses: It is not easy to take a cultural inheritance that is thousands of years old and use it to reform early childhood education. The JECEI lenses were helpful in the sense that they limited Judaic content and ideas to only a few categories. The lenses were Masa: Journey (Reflection, Return and Renewal); B'rit: Covenant (Belonging and Commitment); Tzelem Elokim: Divine Image (Dignity and Potential); K'dushah: Holiness (Intentionality and Presence);

Hit'orerut: Awakening (Amazement and Gratitude); D'rash: Interpretation (Inquiry, Dialogue, and Transmission); and Tikkun Olam: Repair of the World (Responsibility).

However, it is not at all clear why these specific lenses were selected and whether these lenses are the most relevant for early childhood education. Furthermore, it is not clear whether all the lenses had the same weight in terms of guiding the work of the educators. It is worth keeping in mind that a rare few educators were able to name all the lenses. The lesson learned here is that a compelling philosophy motivates people to try new ideas, but rigorous evidence is warranted after the initial pilot phase to determine whether each and every aspect of the change process is necessary and effective.

Data-driven process of change: The community did not have the data it needed in order to make modifications to the way the initiative was implemented because the interim reports provided by JECEI did not provide actionable data (the focus was more on process than outcomes). The purpose of interim reports is to inform course corrections, if needed, in the implementation of an initiative. It is helpful to distinguish between “process” and “outcomes.” Notes on the process detail how many workshops were held, for example. Notes on the outcomes describe whether these workshops resulted in positive changes in the lives of children and their families. In an interim report, it is trivial to know how many meetings an external consultant attended. It is critically important to know what happened after the consultant attended these meetings. The consultant’s impressions of meetings are interesting, but not useful. In this context, it is worthwhile to remember that “In G-d we trust, all else bring data.”

Need for lifecycle: In terms of the “nuts and bolts,” there is a need to articulate a lifecycle to manage the change process and expectations at every stage. For example, a leading educational change initiative describes what is expected to happen at the pre-implementation stage, the initial implementation stage, and so forth until “institutionalization” and “renewal.” In this way, centers have a “road map” and are able to see their growth over time. For example, the lifecycle would say when leadership teams should be established, when changes to the physical layout of classrooms should occur, when it would be ideal to schedule professional development activities on certain topics, at which stage should the center consider expanding, and so forth. It is easy for implementation of an educational change initiative to be sidetracked by turmoil and “burning fires.” The lifecycle is a remedy to centers implementing some parts of an educational change initiative and not others. It ensures balanced growth.

In-house capacity: The Colorado Jewish community has started on the path to develop its own local, “in-house” capacity to manage the change process with the establishment of the ECE specialist position at CAJE and the fortuitous decision by one of the former JECEI consultants to move to Denver. A national, external educational change initiative is very helpful during the first years of a new initiative. With this, two year contracts instead of longer contracts provide the community with the opportunity to take stock of the effectiveness of an initiative and decide whether to renew the contract “as is,” renew the contract with modifications, or not renew the contract. When making this decision, the key question is whether the community has developed sufficient capacity to “own” the initiative and provide local coaching. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the role of the external change agent is to work himself/herself out of a job.

It's all about relationships. Every interaction either builds community or disrupts it. It's all about relationships. The tear in the directors' relationships with one another as a result of JECEI's categorization of centers as either not "ready" for JECEI implementation or "ready" caused more disruption than benefit. In this case, an external consultant imposed a new reality on the community of early childhood centers. Regardless of the reasons why this differentiation was deemed important, it would have been preferable that all the centers received the same level of intervention (e.g., the "ready" centers could have received less intervention and the "not-ready" centers could have received more intervention). This is important because after external consultants leave town, the community still has to face—and repair—relationships that were disrupted. Effective "community-wide" interventions work with the community as a whole, and not only some of the members of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

Developing standards: A "Jewish Qualistar" would benefit the centers, and there is a growing recognition among the educators that this would be the case. National educational change initiatives tend to pay attention to both task and process. Qualistar is primarily concerned with the "task" and JECEI tended to focus more on the "process." Qualistar's "task" is to promote evidence-based standards among early childhood providers. The recommendation is to "marry" the two approaches and develop criteria for exemplary practices in Jewish early childhood education.

More than this, the educational change initiatives that thrive are very clear about their "nonnegotiables." In the specific case of the Colorado Early Childhood Education Initiative, this would mean determining which components of the initiative—such as Reggio Emilia's educational approach, nature environment, shared leadership, JECEI lenses, and so forth—are essential and which ones are optional. The more that components are optional, the more diluted is the strength of the educational change initiative.

Developing the capacity to promote educational change: It is recommended that the community continues to develop the capacity to coordinating all the efforts in the Jewish community on behalf of young children and their families. In particular, it is recommended that the community builds on the JECEI initiative to develop standards; research national trends and engage in model development; provide professional development to educators and directors on such topics as a data-driven process of educational change and developing standards; write grants; engage in assessment and modification; provide technical support to leadership teams and host institutions; and further advocate for early childhood education.

Conclusion

The initiative engendered “same-page behavior”—the end result of educators collaborating together to promote children’s learning and development, which is in contrast to the ad-hoc initiative of a single educator or two. That which will be sustained is the recognition of the importance of dialogue among educators, the need to develop shared understandings, and the willingness of educators to share curricular ideas with one another and engage in joint learning activities.

When thinking about the changes since the establishment of the initiative, educators tended to remark on how much more “purposeful and meaningful” their teaching had become. Today, their actions are far more “intentional,” a change that they attributed to the initiative. In conclusion, it is noteworthy that 90% of the educators agreed that “I would say that our intentionality and purposefulness when planning learning experiences have increased in recent years.”

During the early days of JECEI implementation, centers were categorized into “transformative” and “transitional” centers based on their perceived readiness to engage in educational change, and because resources were limited and needed to be rationed. The “transformative” or “intensive” centers received far more support from JECEI. The directors and educators at ECE centers that were not selected to become “intensive” sites said that they were glad that they were not selected. They appreciated having been spared from the “turmoil” that accompanied JECEI (meaning staff churn and process changes as well as its demise). Lori Geismar Ryan reflected: “How beautiful it would have been if we were to have had four years of continuity. The amount of change and shift in philosophy was extreme compared to what most of us experience in our work. We make great progress despite, at times, JECEI. Imagine what we could have accomplished without the turmoil. This positions us pretty well to achieve great things going forward.”

CITATIONS

- Bailis, L. and Shevitz, S. (June 2011). *Independent third party evaluation of the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative: Special report on Denver-Boulder centers*. Boston, MA.
- Hanleybrown, F., Kania, J. and Kramer, M. (2012). Channeling change: Making collective impact work. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, pp. 1-8.
- Howley, J. P. (2004). A team approach to educational change. In James P. Comer, Edward T. Joyner, and Michael Ben-Avie (Eds.), Six pathways to healthy child development and academic success (pp. 97-112). CA: Corwin Press.
- Jones, E. and Nimmo, J. (1994). *Emergent curriculum*. Washington, D.C. NAEYC.
- Roosevelt, T. (1913). *History as literature and other essays*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.