

Chapter 1

Jewish Education in a New Century: An Ecosystem in Transition

Jonathan Woocher and Meredith Woocher

American Jewish life is changing, and with it, American Jewish education.

Although this is a statement that likely could have been written many times over the past 200 years, its truth in 2013 is incontestable. The past few decades have seen dramatic developments both in society as a whole and in the Jewish world that have created a new context for the time-honored task of educating new generations of Jews. American Jewry has gone from being an “assimilating” community to a fully assimilated one—but without the disappearance of a distinctive Jewish identity that some predicted. Viewed through a wide lens, Jews have by and large followed societal trends (and sometimes led them) in becoming more diverse as a group and more fluid in their identities (and in becoming more aware of these

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J. Woocher (✉)

Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah, Akron, OH, USA

e-mail: jon@lippmankanfer.org

M. Woocher

Woocher Consulting, Rockville, MD, USA

e-mail: mwoocher@gmail.com

realities); in embracing “prosumerism”¹ and seeking an active voice in choosing and shaping their own experiences (including Jewish experiences); in comfortably moving among multiple communities; in viewing institutions with diminished deference and without long-term loyalties; and in voraciously adopting new communications technologies that change how we work, connect, recreate, and learn.

The confluence of these trends has produced a Jewish populace and a Jewish community markedly different than the one of just 30 years ago. While the institutional structures of American Jewish life, including its educational structures, do not look dramatically different, at least at first glance, the *people* who populate (or fail to populate) these structures and the attitudes and aspirations they bring with them are quite different. In such a situation, Jewish education could not remain static, and, indeed, with accelerating speed, Jewish education *has* begun to change.

This, we suggest, is the central story of American Jewish education in the first years of the twenty-first century—a story of swirling forces pushing and pulling at what is inherently a “conservative” institutional system in society and culture, and of efforts by those responsible for that system to keep it vibrant and relevant amid these changes. It is a complex story, not a simple one, because Jewish education is itself a system with many different elements continuously being affected by and in turn responding to the changes occurring around them. American Jewish education is a vast enterprise involving thousands of institutions, millions of participants (including affected family members), and billions of dollars of annual expenditures (a rough estimate is somewhere between \$4–5 billion).² The scope of the enterprise is needed, its proponents argue, to fulfill Jewish education’s mission. As Isa Aron, Michael Zeldin and Sara Lee note (2006, p. 152), “it is now conventional wisdom ... that a complete Jewish education requires a range of different experiences, formal and informal, throughout one’s life.” Jewish education today encompasses activities for every age group from infants to senior adults. It includes Jewish day schools, complementary programs, Jewish summer camps, early childhood education, adult learning, Israel programs—all these further subdivided by size, sponsorship, geographic location, ideology, and numerous other differentiating factors. And, increasingly, it is occurring not only in schools, synagogues, and camps, but also on farms, in foreign countries from India to Guatemala, and on smart phone screens.

Jewish education and its environment are not unlike an ecosystem in the natural world. The Jewish educational ecosystem incorporates a variety of “species” (domains, institutions, populations) that live in complex interactions with one

¹“Prosumerism” refers to the growing phenomenon in which individuals act simultaneously as *producers* of the products and services they *consume*. As an example, one can think of the way in which music listeners today create personalized playlists and become their own DJs, or computer purchasers design their own computer systems. This mindset and approach to becoming a co-producer of one’s experiences has now spread to domains beyond technology, including learning experiences.

²This is our estimate based on calculations covering the major arenas of Jewish educational activity. It does not include college-level Jewish studies. As we note below, there is a paucity of good economic data about American Jewish education.

another and with the environment they share. They seek to draw resources from that environment; they seek to thrive in their individual niches. They also influence one another as they both compete and cooperate, and give back resources to the system as a whole.³ Jewish education is a dynamic ecosystem, with different regions changing in different ways and at different paces as they adapt to their changing environment. New species are entering the ecosystem. Some weak species are growing stronger; some heretofore strong ones are facing new challenges.⁴

At the same time, the ecosystem as a whole is struggling to adapt to the new situation of twenty-first century Jewish life and to confront a set of challenges that affect many of its residents simultaneously. These challenges have arisen at least on three levels. The first of these is institutional. The delivery of Jewish education is and has been in the hands of literally thousands of autonomous individual institutions. In recent years, the demands on these institutions, both financial and educational, have escalated. Strengthening, transforming, reorganizing, or replacing these institutions has become a preoccupation across the Jewish educational landscape and has generated waves of activity and investment.

Second, Jewish education has been challenged pedagogically (or andragogically, in the case of adults). Traditional approaches to learning and teaching have come under assault in education generally (and from multiple directions). In Jewish education as well, a growing sentiment exists that conventional methods are not having the impact that any of the stakeholders—educators, communal leaders, funders, parents, or learners—seek. Various remedies have been proposed—different content, better training for educators, greater parental involvement, more use of technology—with the current favorite being a turn to more experiential education. But, what this means, how to implement it, and whether it is in fact “the answer” being sought are all still somewhat unclear.

Third, and perhaps most critically, Jewish education is being challenged today with regard to its fundamental purpose. For decades, it has been almost taken for granted that the purpose of Jewish education on the individual level is to instill a strong, positive Jewish identity (variously defined by different camps within the Jewish world). On the collective level, Jewish education has been seen as the critical factor in ensuring Jewish continuity—a strong and enduring Jewish community and people. But these heretofore nearly axiomatic purposes for Jewish education fail to resonate for many younger Jews. What, they ask, is the purpose of my Jewish

³Thinking of Jewish education as an ecosystem echoes Lawrence Cremin’s urging that we look beyond individual educational institutions to consider what he called “configurations of education.” “Each of the institutions within a given configuration interacts with the others and with the larger society that sustains it and that is in turn affected by it” (Cremin 1974).

⁴Jewish education in North America is in reality *multiple* ecosystems interacting to a greater or lesser extent with one another. Each local community, and in some cases each institution, is its own ecosystem—and there are real distinctions in how these systems function (Wertheimer 2007). There are also distinctive ecosystems within various educational domains and denominations. A full analysis of these ecosystems, their differences and their interactions, is well beyond the scope of this chapter. So, we will continue to speak of the Jewish educational ecosystem writ large and focus primarily on those characteristics that are generally applicable across the system.

identity and of Jewish continuity? Jewish education is being challenged to provide answers to a different set of questions today than it did through much of the twentieth century—not how to be Jewish or even why to be Jewish, but how Jewishness makes a difference in individuals' lives and for the world. Education for meaning has replaced education for continuity as the framework within which both institutions and pedagogies must function.

In the pages that follow we will highlight some of the developments over the past decade or so in the major traditional sectors of Jewish education (day school, complementary/supplementary education,⁵ summer camp, etc.). We will also look beyond these arenas to explore how the educational ecosystem is expanding in an effort to better engage and inspire twenty-first century Jewish learners. Indeed, this expansion of the ecosystem, with new actors and new inter-relationships, is one of the major plotlines taking Jewish education's story in new and exciting directions. In so doing, it has also brought to the fore a number of new or newly urgent issues. These too are part of the story of American Jewish education in the first years of the twenty-first century. Finally, we will attempt to assess briefly what comes next: What are Jewish education's prospects as it continues to deal with the challenges of change? This is a question of no little consequence for American Jewish life as a whole, and even if it cannot be answered definitively, it is one that must be asked in light of the central role that Jewish education has played in sustaining Jewish identity and community over the years.

Complementary Education

No single area of Jewish education reaches a larger percentage of Jewish students than complementary Jewish education programs. The most recent Census of Jewish Supplementary Schools conducted by Jack Wertheimer in 2007 found that approximately 230,000 students in grades 1–12 were enrolled in roughly 2,000 complementary schools during the 2006–2007 academic year. About 70 % of these schools were affiliated with the Reform (39 %), Conservative (29 %), and Reconstructionist (3 %) movements. One surprising finding was the relatively high percentage (13 %) of Chabad-affiliated schools, now likely an even larger percentage as their popularity as an alternative to congregational schools has grown. In terms of student age

⁵There is no consensus among observers on what to call Jewish educational programs that meet for one or several hours per week and are attended by students who receive their general education in public or non-Jewish private schools. Various, these are referred to as “supplemental” or “supplementary” school (or program, since not all like to characterize themselves as “schools”), “Hebrew school,” “Sunday school,” “afternoon school,” “congregational school” (though not all are part of congregations), or “religious school” (though not all are religious). In recent years, some activists in the field have sought to popularize the term “complementary education,” largely to avoid the negative connotations of “supplementary school” and a number of the other terms. We will use “complementary” education or programs in this article, except when referring to organizations and initiatives or quoting from publications that themselves use one of the other terms.

distribution, the census found that approximately 60 % of supplemental school students were in grades 3–7, reflecting the desire for Bar and Bat Mitzvah preparation that often drives families to synagogues and religious schools. The decline in enrollment from grades 7–12 was steep, with numbers plunging from 23,340 seventh graders, to 14,971 eighth graders, down to only 3,284 twelfth graders enrolled in any kind of complementary Jewish education (Wertheimer 2008).

Along with their wide reach, supplemental schools have also been frequent targets of criticism and disparagement. While the conventional wisdom that “everyone hates Hebrew school” is exaggerated in its universality, the statement reflects the widespread sense that the typical supplemental school model is ripe for rethinking and reinvention, and that many current programs fall short in their goals of engaging Jewish students and imparting significant Jewish learning. As Wertheimer (2009, p. XIII) writes in the introduction to the volume *Learning and Community: Jewish Supplementary Schools in the 21st Century*:

Graduates of supplementary schools have claimed they learned little, found classes highly repetitious year to year, and in the main felt little incentive to continue their Jewish education beyond the age of 13. In fact, the drop-off after grade 7 is shocking, and by grade 11 only small percentages of students are still enrolled. The record indicates that children are voting with their feet.

Wertheimer enumerates the many challenges supplemental schools face that have contributed to high levels of dissatisfaction, including the many activities and interests that compete with supplemental schools for children’s and families’ time and attention (sports, arts, tutoring, etc.); the part-time nature of most teaching positions, with accompanying low compensation; the small size of many schools (60 % enroll fewer than 100 students) and congregations, which limits funding, staffing, and programming; the great importance placed on B’nai Mitzvah ceremonies as the “goal” of religious school, which both limits the curriculum (prioritizing worship skills) and sends the message that one “graduates” from Jewish learning at age 13; and the “siloed” nature of many congregations, which prevents them from forging collaborations internally between various areas of activity as well as with other synagogues and Jewish institutions that might substantially enhance their ability to provide engaging and enriching Jewish experiences (Wertheimer 2009).

Over the past decade, an increasing number of communities and institutions have sought to respond to these challenges. In some cases, the focus has been on strengthening and improving the quality of supplemental schools, without fundamentally changing their structure. The most comprehensive such initiative, NESS (Nurturing Excellence in Synagogue Schools), engages congregations in a systemic change strategy that includes an initial assessment of the school and synagogue, professional development for teachers, leadership training for school directors, curriculum review and revision, and coaching for Boards and lay leaders in goal-setting and change management. Evaluations of NESS from Philadelphia and San Francisco found that students, parents, and teachers all reported increased satisfaction with the school experience after the NESS process, and that “the schools that implemented all the components of NESS were the ones where the impact was the most comprehensive and pervasive, and thus where sustainability was evident” (Bloomberg and

Goodman 2011, p. 20). Other, less comprehensive change initiatives have focused on one or more of these strategies, such as the Union for Reform Judaism's CHAI curriculum, The Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators professional development program, jointly run by the schools of education at Hebrew Union College (HUC) and the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), and numerous community-based school improvement initiatives, some of which are still in place while others have come and gone within the past decade.

Other approaches to change are grounded in the belief that meeting the needs and goals of twenty-first century Jewish learners requires more dramatic innovation than strengthening and improving the traditional religious school model. The Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE) was launched in 1992 at HUC with the goal of transforming synagogues into "Congregations of Learners" (Aron et al. 1995). Over the past 20 years, ECE has shifted its approach from individual synagogue consultations to multi-congregational, community-wide initiatives focused on religious school reinvention (as opposed to broader congregational transformation). In 2002, the RE-IMAGINE project, ECE's largest communal initiative, was launched in 19 congregations in New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County. Over the 18 months of RE-IMAGINE, congregational teams examine the current religious school's history, mission, strengths, and weaknesses; research innovative learning approaches at other congregations around the country; create a vision for a new school model, and implement first steps to move towards this model. While not all congregations completed the intensive RE-IMAGINE process, overall RE-IMAGINE and ECE propelled the field of complementary education forward in critical ways, proving that creativity and innovation in congregational schools was not an oxymoron (Experiment in Congregational Education 2006).

Today, the Jewish Education Project in New York is the flagship for a range of change initiatives either in partnership with or building upon the work of ECE, such as LOMED (Learner Outcomes and Measurement for Effective Educational Design), the next generation of RE-IMAGINE; "Express Innovation," a shorter path to change that provides congregations with "full access to the blueprints of a variety of new learning models;" and the Coalition of Innovating Congregations, which brings together New York area congregations that have developed new learning models to share ideas and support (The Jewish Education Project 2013). Over the past decade, ECE has also led change initiatives with cohorts of congregations in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Kansas City.

Many of the innovations found in the congregations that have worked with ECE (and similar change initiatives) can be understood through lenses inspired by Joseph Schwab's "commonplaces of education" (Schwab 1973). To enhance their relevance and impact for Jews today, complementary educational programs are finding new answers to such questions as: Who are the learners? (e.g., families learning together; students in multi-age groupings); Who are the educators? (e.g., parents as educators; individualized learning "coaches" drawn from congregants); Where does learning take place? (e.g., homes, community settings, cyberspace); When does learning take place? (e.g., "real Jewish time" such as Shabbat and holidays, retreats,

and other extended time periods); What are the methodologies? (e.g., “camp-like” experiential learning, virtual, technology-based learning, Hebrew immersion); and What is the content? (e.g., learning through the arts, elective choices, personalized “learning journeys”).

Finally, a number of innovative approaches to complementary education have been developed that are either outside of the congregational sphere entirely, or link congregations together, along with other community institutions, to offer a wider array of options and resources than any could provide individually. Most prominent in the first category are the growing number of programs that combine Jewish learning, after-school child care, and camp-like, experiential activities. The pioneer of these programs, the Keshet Community School After School, was founded in Cambridge, MA in 1992. An affiliate program, Keshet Newton, opened a decade later in the nearby Newton, MA community. In the past few years, similar 5-day per week programs have been launched in Berkeley, CA (Edah), Atlanta (Jewish Kids Groups), outside Washington, DC (MoEd), and in Chicago, Toronto, and Boston. Each of these programs has its own emphases and nuances, but as a group they are designed to be models of meaningful, substantive, engaging Jewish education that—because they do not require either congregational membership or a financial commitment equal to day schools—appeal to a wide range of diverse Jewish families.

One striking characteristic of these programs is that most were created by parents or community members who garnered the necessary financial, logistical, and professional support to bring their visions to life, rather than being products of institutional or “top-down” community initiatives. This “grass-roots” inception is shared with a number of other non-institutional and cross-institutional programs: Yerusha, a home-based family education program in Princeton, NJ started in 2009 by a cohort of parents partnering with a community rabbi; HS4HS (Home School for Hebrew School), formed by nine families in Atlanta; Shalom Learning, founded in 2011 by two Washington, DC-area technology entrepreneurs, which uses a blend of on-line, classroom based, and family learning; and the Learning Shuk, launched in 2012 in Phoenix, which describes itself as part content curator, part concierge service, and part new learning facilitator, with the whole community as its classroom (The Learning Shuk 2013).

One of the most ambitious and widely publicized of the new models of complementary education is New York’s Jewish Journey Project—a partnership between two JCCs and six synagogues in which students follow their own learning journeys through classes and hands-on activities at Jewish institutions, museums, theaters, parks, and homes. The Jewish Journey Project grew out of the vision of one Jewish community leader, Rabbi Joy Levitt, who had served as a congregational rabbi for two decades and then took over leadership of the JCC of Manhattan. She describes her rationale for pushing this new model as follows:

By asserting that Jewish education isn’t about institutions but about dynamic, flexible, creative opportunities to engage with the tradition and the community based on children’s passions and talents, we have moved the conversation away from turf issues ... and toward

the central challenge of preparing our young people for our community and the world. If we are right, our synagogues will be free of the burden of sustaining failed schools and able to discover new ways to connect with their children and families. Our JCCs, museums, and other Jewish organizations will all understand that they are partners in this work, and they will think harder about ways to participate in the education of our children. (Levitt 2013, pp. 141–42)

This collaborative approach to redesigning complementary education experiences is also being implemented in eight communities around North America that worked with JESNA (Jewish Education Service of North America) on a project called WOW! The WOW! project, originally conceived by JESNA and a group of central agencies for Jewish education, uses a combination of Appreciative Inquiry and Design Thinking to prod communities to identify populations that are un- or under-served by current offerings and bring a broad array of community resources into play to develop new options that can engage these learners and potential learners more effectively (JESNA 2013).

The proliferation of creative approaches to complementary education, with a variety of emphases including arts, the environment and green living, Hebrew language, social justice, technology, etc., provides those pushing for further change in this arena with a plethora of potential models upon which to draw. The “InnovationXChange” website (www.innovationxchange.jesna.org/), launched by JESNA before its closing, was designed to serve as a program and resource bank, and a virtual gathering site for those experimenting with new models and approaches, with the aim of simplifying access to information about who is doing what, where, and how.

Nonetheless, as exciting as all the innovation of the past decade has been and continues to be, what is equally needed now is serious study and evaluation of these new models to fully understand their potential. While the many anecdotal descriptions of engaged and enthusiastic students and families are encouraging, we can’t yet know the true long-term impacts. In the end, will a wider array of choices encourage more families to engage with Jewish learning, and cease to see Bar and Bat Mitzvah as a terminal destination? What will students actually learn in these programs, how much will they retain, and how will this learning impact their Jewish life choices in the college years and beyond? Ultimately, will the complementary educational programs that reach the vast majority of Jewish students be sufficient to sustain the Jewish community as the twenty-first century unfolds? None of these questions is yet answerable, but exploring them must be a priority for the field over the next decade and beyond.

Jewish Day Schools

In contrast to supplemental schools, Jewish Day Schools have long been recognized as the “gold standard” of Jewish education, unequalled in their ability to offer students rich Jewish content and a strong community of Jewish peers. However, outside of the traditional Orthodox world, day schools also reach far

fewer Jewish students than do complementary schools. The most recent census of day schools, conducted by Marvin Schick in 2012, found 83,000 K-12 students enrolled in 286 schools across the US (this does not include students in “the yeshiva world and Chassidic sectors” in which day school attendance is nearly universal). Of these, approximately 49,000 are in Centrist and Modern Orthodox schools, 10,000 in Solomon Schechter schools, 3,500 in Reform Movement schools, and 20,000 in community schools (Schick 2012). As Schick (2009, p. 4) noted in his introduction to the 2008–2009 day school census, “Whatever the trends in the day school world, this world is at once not reflective and yet also reflective of American Jewish life and both for the same reason. [The majority of] day schoolers are in Orthodox institutions, a statistic that is widely at variance with the profile of American Jewry, as demographers report that no more than 10–12 % of US Jews self-identify as Orthodox.”

Even as day schools and their philanthropic supporters (particularly The Avi Chai Foundation) have worked to expand day school’s appeal beyond the Orthodox community, those schools affiliated with non-Orthodox movements have suffered the greatest negative impact from the challenging financial climate of the past 5 years. While Orthodox affiliated schools have increased enrollments by about 4 % during this time (mostly in Centrist Orthodox institutions), Solomon Schechter schools have seen a 22 % decrease in enrollments; Reform movement schools, a 20 % decrease; and community schools, a 4 % decrease (after experiencing a 20 % increase during the previous 5 years from 2003 to 2008). As a result, support organizations such as the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) have had to increasingly devote themselves to helping existing schools address issues of sustainability, rather than expanding the field by supporting and creating new schools (Schick 2009, 2012).

The financial challenges facing day schools are substantial—not surprising, perhaps, given the overall scope of the enterprise that requires sustenance (approximately 750 schools of all types, with 200,000 students, and total expenditures of around \$2 billion) (Prager 2005). Even with tuitions ranging from \$5,000 to well over \$20,000 annually, nearly every day school faces a gap (from 10 % to over 30 %) between tuition revenues and expenses. Federation funding pays on average only about 5 % of the total bill (Wertheimer 2001). In an impassioned appeal for more communal investment in day schools, Susan Kardos of The Avi Chai Foundation both celebrated the unique strengths of day schools—“At their best, Jewish schools provide a Jewish education that is intensive and immersive... that demands students’ serious attention and engagement ... [in which] Jewish youth experience the central activity of North American childhood through a Jewish lens” (Kardos 2010, p. 85)—and articulated the reasons that such strengths may not be enough to insulate day schools from a “shaky future”:

To be sure, Jewish schools are not flawless institutions, and quality surely varies among schools. Tuition costs are a barrier to entry and are becoming prohibitive even for the most committed and most financially secure... [Day schools] have always been challenged by the lure of excellent and free public schools, high-quality and innovative supplementary school programs ... They are beginning to be challenged now by grassroots parent groups looking

for more affordable alternatives for their children, by homeschooling, and by institutional experiments in the public sector such as Hebrew-language charter schools or bilingual Hebrew immersion programs in traditional public schools. (Kardos 2010, p. 85)

While these challenges are real, the day school field has not been stagnant or complacent in facing them. In part to enhance their appeal in a competitive market, many day schools have worked to embrace innovations in both Judaic and general education. A growing number of Jewish schools have followed secular education in recognizing and addressing the needs of diverse learners, using a range of modalities and pedagogies to engage multiple forms of intelligence, exploring the potential of technology both within and beyond the classroom, investing in professional development for both teachers and educational leadership, and engaging in serious evaluation and assessment of both teachers and learners. Such “best practices” are not universal, of course, but they are increasingly recognized as goals to strive for and standards of quality by which educational institutions can and should be judged.

In terms of Judaics, day schools are seeking new and more effective methods of Hebrew instruction, working to integrate Jewish and general content in ways that enhance both, and, at least in some schools, functioning as “Jewish life laboratories” where students can explore their Jewish identities through creative prayer, ritual and celebration. The national communal infrastructure to support day schools has also strengthened over the past decade, with the growth of the RAVSAK network of community schools; increased philanthropic support from foundations such as Avi Chai and the Jim Joseph Foundation; professional and leadership development programs such as DeLeT at Brandeis and HUC, the Day School Leadership Training Institute at JTS, the Institute for University-School Partnership at Yeshiva University; and the North American Jewish Day School Conference, an annual domain-wide event now jointly sponsored by the umbrella organizations of the Reform, Conservative, modern Orthodox, and community day schools, as well as PEJE.

Ultimately, with their significant strengths and challenges as counter-balancing forces, the direction of Jewish day schools over the next decades is indeed uncertain. The fact that no other Jewish educational option can match the sheer number of instructional hours means that there will always be those—including many communal and philanthropic leaders—who see day school as the only real option for serious and substantive Jewish education. At the same time, just as individual families face hard financial choices that may lead them away from day schools, communities and foundations may also begin to feel pressure to invest in less costly Jewish educational options that have the potential to reach and impact more people. Day schools may increasingly need to function as broader communal resources through partnerships with both established institutions (synagogues, JCCs) and new start-ups in need of facilities and/or professional guidance. There is no doubt that day schools represent a unique and valuable educational resource for the Jewish community—the question is how to best leverage that resource in the Jewish world of today and tomorrow.

Jewish Camps

Over the past decade, Jewish overnight camps have experienced growing enrollments and burgeoning recognition of their capacity to provide rich, immersive Jewish experiences and incubate strong Jewish identities. According to the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC), in summer 2011, 71,626 campers attended Jewish camps, representing a 9 % increase in enrollment since 2006 (despite the economic recession beginning in 2008). FJC estimates that over 140,000 individual campers have attended Jewish camps during this time, along with about 25,000 college age counselors. The largest increase regionally—nearly 20 %—has come in the Western US, where growing enrollments, reaching new families, and incubating new camps has been a particular focus for FJC and other philanthropists. Overall, the Jewish community in North America has invested an estimated \$225 million in the infrastructure, programming, marketing and incubation of Jewish camps, giving them an increasingly significant portion of overall Jewish education funding (Fingerman 2012).

The growth of interest and investment in Jewish camps can be traced in part to the first in-depth study of their milieu and impact, conducted in 2000 by Amy Sales and Leonard Saxe. Sponsored by The Avi Chai Foundation, this groundbreaking study, which was published in *Limud by the Lake: Fulfilling the Educational Potential of Jewish Summer Camps* (2002), and later expanded into “*How Goodly are Thy Tents:*” *Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences* (Sales and Saxe 2003) detailed the educational goals and strategies that “create camp magic”—intense, holistic Jewish experiences, authentic Jewish community, and sheer fun; offered recommendations for strengthening the field—expand camps’ reach in the community, offer more professional development for staff, and conduct further research on enhancing impact on Jewish identity; and concluded with a call for the Jewish community to:

...promote Jewish camping as a central institution in the community’s educational system... The magic of camp has unlimited potential to produce joyous and memorable learning. It is magic that needs to be spread from the sweet-smelling woods and fields of summer camp to the schools, synagogues, and community centers back home. (Sales and Saxe 2003, p. 31)

This call seems to have been heeded, as camps have increasingly come to be viewed alongside day and supplemental schools as meaningful pathways for Jewish education and identity building, worthy of serious research and philanthropic investment. In 2011, Sales revisited her research to learn how the camping field had developed over the previous 8 years. The introductory section of “*Limud by the Lake*” *Revisited: Growth and Change at Jewish Summer Camp* (Sales et al. 2011) detailed how the landscape of interest in and support for Jewish camps had changed dramatically in the first decade of the twenty-first Century:

In 2000 we encountered great difficulty getting camps to participate in the study. They could not see the value of the research and neither Brandeis University, The Avi Chai Foundation, nor Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) were in a position to leverage camps’ participation. Eight years later the situation was completely changed. Camp, which had been ignored as an area for study for decades, had become a hot topic.

Several forces ignited interest and activity in Jewish summer camp: the original Limud by the Lake report; the emergence of FJC with its new chief executive officer, Jerry Silverman, and his vision to “push the field into the 21st century;” and the support of The Avi Chai Foundation and Harold Grinspoon Foundation. As these forces aligned, a number of other funders, foundations, and federations joined in serious support of Jewish summer camp. The resultant changes can be seen in four areas: new initiatives, the new reality of camps, new programming, and emerging target groups. (Sales et al. 2011, p. 4)

Many of the new initiatives that have emerged in the past decade to strengthen Jewish camps have targeted professional development for camp staff, and/or enhancing and expanding what Jewish camps can offer families in a competitive marketplace. The Foundation for Jewish Camp (with support from multiple philanthropies) currently directs six professional development initiatives for camp leadership and staff at all levels: the Executive Leadership Institute and *Lechu Lachem* Fellowship (in partnership with the Jewish Community Center Association—JCCA) for camp directors; the *Yitro* Leadership Program for assistant and associate directors to guide them to the next level of leadership; the Cornerstone Seminar and Fellowship for counselors and senior camp staff; the *Nadiv* program (in partnership with the Union for Reform Judaism—URJ) which develops experiential educators for both camps and community institutions such as day schools and congregations; and the Goodman Camping Initiative to train Israel educators and support Israel-related camp programs. In 2012, the URJ and the Conservative movement’s Ramah camps launched *Kivun*, a joint initiative (funded by The Avi Chai Foundation) to train specialty staff in areas such as music, drama, arts, nature, sports, and waterfront both within their specialty area and in how to infuse their specialties with Jewish content and knowledge (Foundation for Jewish Camp 2013).

In addition to enhancing professionals, the other major new direction in Jewish camping in recent years has been the creation of camps that integrate Jewish content with specialty instruction or experiences that have the potential of attracting campers who might not otherwise choose a Jewish camp. FJC’s “Specialty Incubator Camp” initiative (funded by the Jim Joseph and Avi Chai Foundations) has launched nine new camps around the country over the past 3 years. These camps—operated by URJ, Ramah, JCCA, and independent organizations—offer pre-teen and teen campers a wide range of intensive specialty programs: science, sports, outdoors, environmentalism, health and wellness, entrepreneurialism, New York City culture, and service learning. The goal is to appeal to the interests of campers for whom “Jewishness” per se is not a priority, but who are open to discovering how Jewish learning and community can enhance their summer experience. FJC reported that in 2011 the five specialty camps in the first cohort enrolled just over 1,000 campers, 60 % of whom were attending a Jewish camp for the first time (Fingerman 2012).

With innovations such as these and continued strong support from funders and national leaders, Jewish camps are well positioned for increased impact and influence within the Jewish education field. More and more “formal” educational institutions—particularly supplemental schools—are turning to experiential education and explicitly citing camps as the model to emulate. While this is sometimes more a matter of semantics than reality, initiatives like *Nadiv* will hopefully be a path to more

substantive camp/synagogue/day school partnerships in which each educational setting shares its unique strengths and resources with the others. Although to date, day camps have not received the same attention from the field as overnight camps,⁶ the fact that they are community-based—and therefore ideally situated for communal partnerships—suggests that their value and potential has not yet been fully mined. In addition, both overnight and day camps are beginning to explore strategies for keeping campers connected and involved beyond the summer months through both in-person gatherings and building virtual community through social media. Given their almost unique ability to create intensive social bonds, Jewish camps may well be the best model the Jewish community has today for creating a community (or many sub-communities) that can withstand the pull towards individualization that pervades contemporary society.

Jewish Engagement Through the Lifespan

The three institutional settings described above all focus primarily on the population most reached by formal and informal Jewish education: school-age children age 5–13 (with additional, smaller populations of teens, particularly in camps and day schools). While this age may be the “sweet spot” for engaging Jews and their families, of course Jewish education and engagement also happens both before and after this narrow window. The past decade has brought important developments in early childhood Jewish education, teen engagement, family education, and adult Jewish learning, though each area has also seen some contractions (particularly for initiatives at the national level) given current economic challenges. It has also brought additional attention to efforts to appropriately serve a population—Jews with special learning needs—that has often been marginalized in traditional educational settings.

Early Childhood

Jewish early childhood education has increasingly been recognized as a potentially valuable pathway to engaging families in Jewish life. While no overall numbers have been collected of children in Jewish preschools, community studies from the past 10 years report that an average of 38 % of Jewish children had attended Jewish

⁶Such attention is now beginning to come in the form of recent initiatives undertaken by the JCC Association (Jewish community centers being sponsors of numerous day camps) and the UJA Federation of New York (which supports a network of day camps), and philanthropic support from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, which has been a major player alongside the Foundation for Jewish Camp in helping overnight camps develop new financial resources through its JCamp180 consulting service.

preschools at the time of the study (with individual community figures ranging from 14 % in Las Vegas to 63 % in Baltimore) (JESNA 2012). To try to increase these percentages further, funders and communities have made critical investments in improving the quality of both pedagogy and leadership in the field. Though not all of the initiatives launched over the past decade have survived in their original forms, they succeeded in raising the profile of Jewish early childhood educators and education, planting seeds of innovation and excellence that—with enough continued support—will hopefully sprout more fully in future years.

One such initiative was JECEI, the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative, founded in 2004 by a cohort of prominent Jewish philanthropists. JECEI's mission was to enhance the quality and appeal of Jewish early childhood centers by blending the principles and practices of the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy (which emphasizes constructivist, child-centered learning) and Jewish content and values. Over its 6-year life as an active organization, JECEI engaged seven centers across the country in an in-depth training and accreditation process (JECEI 2013). In 2007, JECEI partnered with the Covenant Foundation to create a Leadership Training Fellowship for 18 Jewish early childhood professionals (ranging from teachers to Directors) who showed exceptional leadership potential. Through seminars, retreats, networking and one-on-one mentoring, these Fellows expanded their knowledge of best practices in early childhood education and developed an ongoing network of support that has since launched satellite Communities of Practice in four communities (The Covenant Foundation 2007).

Although JECEI was not sustained as an organization (it exists today as a web-based resource center), many of the practices and principles it promoted have continued to influence and shape the field: more intentional pedagogy and educational philosophy (such as Reggio Emilia or Montessori); increased emphasis on professional and leadership development; the view of the center as a gateway for family engagement; and the recognition that Jewish early childhood programs can empower parents as well as children. Though much of the work in early childhood is still coordinated locally, there are some resources and initiatives at the national level through the denominational movements and the JCCA, which together reach the vast majority of Jewish early childcare centers that are housed at congregations and JCCs.

The Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute (JECLEI), a joint program of HUC and JTS funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation, is one such initiative, aiming to enhance professional leadership for the field. Through seminars, reflective practice and mentoring, JECLEI offers an intensive program of Jewish learning, leadership development, and community building to early childhood center directors who have been in their positions for 5 years or less. JECLEI currently has 16 participants in its first cohort. If it continues with similar numbers, the program has the potential to have a significant impact on the quality of leadership across the field, and potentially even on the ability to attract new cohorts of high-quality educators into the field (much as the Wexner Fellowship has done for Jewish leaders in general). This would allow Jewish programs to attract more Jewish families who are seeking high quality early childhood

education, whether in a Jewish or secular setting, thus starting them on a path to greater Jewish connection and engagement (JECALI 2013).

Recent years have also seen a growing appreciation that educating young Jewish children requires attention to more than just formal Jewish early childhood settings. The earliest educational opportunities take place in the home. Recognizing this, a number of initiatives have been created—beginning even before birth with Jewish Lamaze classes, and including programs like Shalom Baby (for families with newborns) and Our Jewish Home (which brings Jewish mentors into the homes of young families)—to encourage parents to create a Jewish environment for their young children. By far, the most striking achievement of the past decade is the dramatic growth of a program called PJ Library, sponsored and disseminated by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. PJ Library is based on literacy promoting programs in the general world that send books to parents to read with their young children. Here, enrolled children (from birth through the age of 8) receive a specially selected Jewish book (or CD) once a month to be read with their parents at bedtime. By taking a familiar and nearly universal family ritual—reading to one’s children at night—and giving it a Jewish twist, PJ Library (with the help of a broad group of philanthropists and organizations who have joined in providing financial support) has provided tens of thousands of families (now, all over the world as well as in the US) with an engaging and entertaining introduction to Jewish holidays, history, and values that also sets the stage for ongoing Jewish involvement (PJ Library 2013).

Many communities have understood the opportunity that PJ Library represents and have complemented the distribution of books with a variety of activities (pajama parties, book clubs, holiday programs) to further engage and educate PJ families, and to connect them to one another and to community institutions. This strategy is tied to a broader recognition that young families have a variety of needs and interests that are not specifically Jewish and are often primary in their consciousness. When the Jewish community is able to respond to these broader needs for connection, community, parenting guidance, etc., it can engage these families in ways that Jewish programming alone cannot (Rosen et al. 2010). This insight has led a number of voices to call for reframing early childhood education into a comprehensive approach to families with young children that includes, but is not limited to, Jewish pre-school programs.

Engaging Jewish Teens

At the other end of the school-age cohort, Jewish educators face the challenge of continuing to engage and attract Jewish students past B’nai Mitzvah at age 13 (or 12 for some girls) and through adolescence. We saw above how participation in formal complementary education drops off precipitously during the teen years. Enrollments in non-Orthodox day schools also drop by nearly 50 % between 8th and 9th grade, both because many communities do not have non-Orthodox Jewish high schools and because even in those that do, many families choose that point to switch to

public schools. The task of engaging teens in Jewish life, therefore, must largely be taken up by informal and experiential programs—camps and other summer programs, youth groups and Jewish clubs, Israel trips, etc. Recent research compiled by the Jim Joseph Foundation estimates that out of a potential market of 332,000 Jewish teens in the US, approximately 60,000 participate in Jewish youth groups, 16,000 attend a Jewish summer camp, and 11,000 travel to Israel (Miller 2013).

Given the room for growth these numbers illustrate, it is not surprising that teen engagement has emerged as a growing focus of Jewish funders and institutions. The Jim Joseph Foundation has to date invested over \$90 million in Jewish teen education and engagement (Irie and Rosov 2013, p. 1). Philanthropist Lynn Schusterman (a major funder of BBYO and other teen programs), in her 2011 Op-Ed piece “Upping the Ante: Why I Am Doubling Down on the Teen Years,” cited the potential impact of meaningful teen programs on life-long Jewish involvement as evidence that teen engagement needs to be a priority for the Jewish community:

A new study commissioned by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation shows that the BBYO experience results in young adults who...are more inclined to remain involved in Jewish life, hold leadership roles in their community, invest time and money in Jewish causes, develop a strong Jewish network, and give their children a Jewish education... Recent studies from the Foundation for Jewish Camp and Moving Traditions support similar underlying findings: that effectively designed Jewish teen experiences successfully reach and engage youth, helping them feel pride in their Jewish identity, encouraging them to contribute to Jewish life and even ensuring a greater resiliency against the pressures that are commonplace in the teen years.

It is clear that fun, meaningful, affordable Jewish experiences have a deep and significant impact on teens. It is clear that they are vital to ensuring our teens stay engaged with our community and develop the necessary skills to lead it. And it is clear that it is time for us to elevate our investment in the teen years—when individuals begin exploring their identity, defining their values and shaping who they will become as adults—as a priority on our communal agenda. (Schusterman 2011)

The challenge for the community is to determine which approaches will be “fun, meaningful, and affordable” enough to attract the many Jewish teens who are not currently engaged. Efforts to rethink traditional avenues of engagement—youth groups and Hebrew High Schools—have increased in the past decade. In 2012, the Union for Reform Judaism launched its Campaign for Youth Engagement to strengthen the ability of Reform institutions (synagogues, day schools, camps, and youth programs) to engage teens and involve them in meaningful Jewish experiences. The Campaign seeks to accomplish this goal through leadership training of youth professionals, and fostering partnerships between Reform institutions and other Jewish and non-Jewish communal institutions to create multiple paths of engagement for Jewish teens. The North American Association of Community and Congregational Hebrew High Schools (NAACCHHS), founded in 2006, provides a network for Hebrew High Schools and a channel for disseminating curricula, best practices, and resources, helping to keep schools connected to innovation in the field. And BBYO, the largest pluralistic Jewish youth organization in North America (approximately 40,000 teens participate in its programs each year), has moved beyond the standard youth group model and developed new programming focused on immersive experiences, service learning, and teen leadership development.

Even as current programs and institutions work to reinvent themselves, growing recognition exists that additional and alternative approaches are needed to attract the tens of thousands of teens who are still going unreached. A 2013 report from the Jim Joseph Foundation examined 21 innovative youth engagement programs—both Jewish and secular—to better understand what factors contribute to successful teen engagement. Among the Jewish youth programs profiled in the report are:

- The Diller Teen Fellowship, a pluralistic, multi-community teen leadership institute that includes workshops, retreats, and service projects;
- The Jewish Lens, an experiential workshop that uses photography as a means for exploring Jewish identity;
- Jewish Student Connection (formerly Jewish Student Union), a network of Jewish identity clubs in public and private high schools across the country;
- The Jewish Teen Funders Network, a support organization for Jewish Youth Philanthropy groups; and
- Moving Traditions, whose gender-based programs “Rosh Hodesh: It’s a Girl Thing” and “Shevet Achim: The Brotherhood” offer monthly facilitated peer groups for teens to explore their identities and the relevance of Judaism to their lives.

Each of these programs uses different approaches and content to reach teens, but, as the report explains, many have certain traits in common: they meet teens “where they are” by engaging them in familiar locations (such as their schools)⁷; they give teens a voice in the programming and encourage ownership of their experiences; they emphasize relationships, both among teens and with trusted staff members or adult volunteers; and they seek to connect teens to Jewish life by starting with the teens’ own lives and experiences, and building links and connections from there.

While the interest of funders and growth of innovative programs are very positive developments for Jewish youth and teen engagement, the field also faces a significant challenge in the lack of professional networks and clear career ladders for Jewish youth educators. JEXNET: The Network for Experiential Youth Education filled the professional network role for several years, but since its demise in 2007 no similar organization has arisen to take its place. While local professional development networks do exist in some communities, as a whole the field of youth and teen

⁷In addition to Jewish Student Union/Connection operating in public schools, one of the most intriguing new youth programs of the past decade is The Curriculum Initiative (TCI), which works with Jewish students “and their allies” at independent high schools and prep schools. Although the national office for TCI was recently shut down, it still continues as a locally-run program under the auspices of the central agencies for Jewish education in the Baltimore and San Francisco Bay areas. The philosophy of TCI was summarized as follows in a report (2012) issued by its primary funding sponsor, the Samuel Bronfman Foundation, entitled *Through the Prism: Reflections on the Curriculum Initiative*, www.tcionline.org/Through_the_Prism_Reflections_on_TCI.pdf: (1) Meet students where they are, rather than pulling them out of their environment. (2) Engage students’ total environments. (3) Engage the people students trust and respect. (4) Create an intellectual discourse and high caliber programs that are open to all. (5) Ground Jewish learning in multicultural theory and practice. (6) Prioritize “emergent” curricula. (7) Promote process-based learning over outcome-based learning.

engagement is far less organized and connected at a national level than other areas of Jewish education. Hopefully, as the denominations and major foundations increase their focus on youth and teens—as they seem to be poised to do—the development of a strong professional infrastructure to support burgeoning innovations will be the breakthrough that defines the next decade.

Adult Jewish Learning

Even though adulthood represents the longest period in the life-span, adult Jewish learning (post-college) has received a fraction of the resources and attention given to other dimensions of Jewish education, as the childhood/adolescent/college-age years are seen as the prime years for enculturation, intellectual growth, identity development, interpersonal connections, and all the other explicit and implicit goals of Jewish education and engagement. However, research has shown that adult Jewish learning can have a profound impact on the Jewish growth and identity development of adults as well by opening up new understandings of Jewish texts and practices that can impact learners' lives beyond the classroom (Grant et al. 2004).

In part because of this research, adult learning enjoyed a period of growth in the 1990s and 2000s, particularly through the expansion of the Florence Melton Adult-Mini Schools (now the Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning). There are currently 51 North American Melton sites in 24 states and provinces, with a student/alumni base of nearly 20,000, making it the largest single source of adult Jewish learning courses in North America today. The core of the Melton program is a 2-year (60 session) text-based course that covers fundamental topics in Jewish belief, practices, history, and values (Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning 2013). Melton is one of the very few programs to offer such a comprehensive and coordinated approach, as most adult Jewish learning occurs in short-term or one-time classes and lectures offered by synagogues, JCCs, and a small number of independent adult learning institutes. Melton shares this in-depth approach with the former Me'ah program in Boston (now the "Contexts" course from the Jewish Theological Seminary), and the Wexner Heritage Program, which admits a small number of prominent lay leaders in a few communities each year.

While Melton continues to offer its 2-year core program, over the past years it has become more challenging to fill spaces, as many learners are reluctant to make the necessary commitment of finances and time. Thus, the growth of Melton has slowed overall, and its largest area of expansion has been through increasing its short-term (6–10 week) course options. Melton, along with nearly all purveyors of adult Jewish learning opportunities, faces the ongoing challenge of attracting busy adults in prime work and child-rearing years, for whom finding the time for learning of any kind can be nearly impossible. Thus, the vast majority of adult Jewish learners are of retirement age, meaning that the pool of potential learners is not nearly as large as the overall number of Jewish adults in the population might suggest. One response by Melton and others has been to try to connect adult learning more

directly to family learning by offering “Foundations of Jewish Family Living,” a 20-week course for parents of young Jewish children. “At a time in your family’s life when your child is experiencing his or her own Jewish education,” the course description on the Melton website explains, “Foundations of Jewish Family Living provides you with the learning, the language, and the confidence to be a teacher to your own children.” To further strengthen the link between educating adults and enriching families, Melton has partnered with Shalom Sesame to offer videos for children which mirror the topics their parents are studying (Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning 2013).

The one area in which participation in adult Jewish learning has clearly expanded over the past decade is in the proliferation of Limmud learning conferences across North America. Founded and run almost entirely by volunteers, the first Limmud conference was held in the UK in 1994. Limmud expanded across the Atlantic with the first New York conference in 2005, followed by conferences in 13 cities in the US and Canada over the next 8 years, most of which have now become annual events with hundreds of participants (Limmud International 2013). Limmud conferences range from day-long to multi-day gatherings. They bring together Jewish learners of all ages and backgrounds, lay and professional, for an immersive “festival” of Jewish learning and activity in an atmosphere of openness, choice, mutual respect, community, celebration, and self-directed engagement. The typical Limmud program encompasses everything from traditional text study to classes on almost any Jewish subject to film showings to hands-on arts projects to concerts to worship to panels on current issues of Jewish interest. Teachers are generally unpaid, and community-building in a pluralistic key is a major goal and theme. Though Limmud may only provide a “taste of learning” when compared to a multi-year program such as the Melton School, its communal, grass-roots and volunteer-led approach and strategy afford it the opportunity to empower and engage learners in unique ways, and offer a model for Jewish learning that is accessible to busy adults (as long as they can spare a weekend a year), yet still has the potential for genuine meaning and impact. The message of Limmud is that everyone is a Jewish learner, (nearly) everyone can be a Jewish teacher, and the scope of Jewish learning is as encompassing as our imaginations allow.

Jewish Family Education

One of the strong motivating factors for the expansion of adult Jewish learning initiatives in the 1990s was the recognition that educating children in the absence of parental modeling and support is an uphill struggle at best. Not surprisingly, therefore, that decade also saw a steady and dramatic growth in Jewish family education, in which parents are involved directly in joint or parallel learning with their children. As a result, what was once exceptional became normative. As one of the domain’s leading figures, Ron Wolfson (2012), noted recently, “there is hardly a synagogue, religious or day school, early childhood program or summer camp

that does not offer some form of Jewish family education.” And, as we have seen, families with young children have been the targets of major new efforts to bring Jewish learning into the home from the very earliest ages.

Ironically, though, with this success came diminishing impetus and support for further development of the overall field of Jewish family education. The Whizin Institute for Jewish Family Life, which had become the intellectual and professional training epicenter of the field, ceased operations several years ago, and it took until 2010 for a potential successor organization to gel in the form of Shevet: The Jewish Family Education Exchange, a community of practice for professionals working in the area. Thus, though family education remains popular at the grass-roots level, the extent to which it will continue to advance both conceptually and practically as a field is unclear, as is the extent of philanthropic support it will receive.

Special Needs Students

One population that cuts across all ages and settings where additional support is also needed is students with special needs, including learning challenges, physical disabilities, and students on the autism spectrum. The past decade has seen both growth and setbacks in the Jewish community’s response to the needs of this growing population. On the one hand, the high financial cost of providing education to students with special needs has meant that many communities have had to cut back on the direct support they can give to schools and families, as well as positions in Federations and Central Agencies focused on Special Education. The contraction of Central Agencies of Jewish Education (as a number have closed or been downsized) has meant the virtual disappearance of the Jewish Special Education Consortium, a once prominent network of education professionals focused on the needs of this population.

However, a few organizations have arisen over the past decade that have brought new thinking and innovative approaches, most prominently Matan, founded in New York in 2000 as part of the first cohort of new organizations incubated by Bikkurim (an initiative, also new at the time, established by the Kaminer Family Foundation, JESNA, and the then United Jewish Communities [now The Jewish Federations of North America] to nurture start-up organizations); and Gateways, formed in 2006 through the merger of two Boston-based organizations serving special needs students and their families since the 1990s. Matan has evolved from primarily providing direct services to schools and families to its current focus on broader communal advocacy and professional development. Gateways provides programming, professional development, and support to schools and families throughout Greater Boston, spanning denominations, age-groups, and educational settings. Gateways’ unique role as the central address for special needs education throughout the area—together with the significant support provided by Boston’s Combined Jewish Philanthropies and the Ruderman Family Foundation—have made Boston a hub for innovation and best practices in this field (Matan 2013; Gateways 2013).

Through their work, *Matan and Gateways*—along with other organizations and professionals across the county—have helped create a significant shift in the way special needs education is viewed and prioritized. While, in the past, special education was something compartmentalized from general Jewish education—with special teachers and classrooms that isolated students from broader settings—today the goal is more often inclusion, with Jewish educators given training and support to teach learners with different needs together in the same settings. While this goal may be more challenging, many believe it ultimately results in better learning outcomes for everyone as educators become more attuned to recognizing and addressing the needs of a diverse array of learners. The innovations that are being brought to Jewish education overall—new settings and models, creative use of technology, more whole family involvement, and experiential learning—may particularly benefit the growing numbers of students for whom traditional educational strategies are not merely less engaging, but wholly inadequate.

The Expanding Jewish Educational Ecosystem

Of all the changes that have occurred in American Jewish education over the past two decades, perhaps the most potentially far-reaching in its impact is the expansion of the field itself. When new resources or “species” enter an ecosystem, they can enhance the vibrancy of the overall system and engage in mutually advantageous exchanges with existing residents. However, they can also disrupt delicate balances, displace existing residents, and cause the ecosystem to become more fragile. The potential for the first outcome is clearly present in Jewish education today, but so too is the danger of the second. Whether the potential for adding robustness is realized will depend in large measure on how the elements of the system, both old and new, respond.

The expansion of the ecosystem of Jewish education has two components: One, as outlined in the sections above, has to do with the emergence of new models within existing forms—new types of complementary programs, specialty summer camps, youth programs in alternative venues like public and private secondary schools, etc. The second form of expansion involves the emergence and spread of new frameworks and foci for Jewish learning. The rapid growth of entrepreneurial programs in heretofore sparsely populated domains like Jewish environmental education, service learning, Jewish learning in connection with spiritual practice, and learning through the arts represents a significant expansion not only in who is involved in Jewish education and where Jewish learning occurs, but in what we think of as constituting “Jewish education” itself.

It needs to be noted at the outset that the boundaries between these two forms of expansion—within and beyond traditional institutions—are often blurred. “Intrapreneurship,” what Maya Bernstein (2010) felicitously calls entrepreneurship’s “more humble, but at least equally impactful cousin,” is itself an important source of innovation for the Jewish educational ecosystem writ large. “Intrapreneurs

do exactly what entrepreneurs do—they challenge the status-quo, and come up with cutting-edge ideas to meet a population’s most pressing needs. Instead of starting from scratch, though, they work within existing structures” (Bernstein 2010). And, even where intrapreneurial energy may be lacking, new approaches to Jewish learning that emanate from the “edges” of the ecosystem are increasingly penetrating mainstream institutions, helping them to expand their reach and impact. Still, the two sub-systems—entrepreneurial and established—remain distinct in many ways—in who they engage, in how they operate, and in how they are funded. Building stronger bridges between these sectors looms as one of the major challenges and opportunities for Jewish education going forward.

There have been several imperfect efforts in recent years to gauge the scope of the expansion in the number and variety of new Jewish educational programs outside mainstream institutions and the scale of participation in them. In a 2010 study of the Jewish innovation ecosystem, Jewish Jumpstart identified more than 600 Jewish “start-up” organizations in North America (i.e., organizations founded within the past decade), with total budgets of around \$200 million. Among the respondents to the Jumpstart survey, 53 % listed Jewish education as among the five top areas in which they operated (Jumpstart 2011). (Some work in multiple areas, and indeed, the connection of Jewish learning to other arenas of Jewish activity—community-building, spirituality, social justice, Israel—is one of the hallmarks of many of the startup endeavors.) A separate compilation of innovative education organizations and programs completed by JESNA in 2011 identified more than 220 such programs, at least half of which operated outside of traditional institutions. At a minimum, therefore, we are dealing with a set of programs numbering in the hundreds.

How many participants these new learning opportunities reach also requires some estimation. The groups that responded to the Jumpstart survey, covering a wide range of activities, claimed to touch more than 600,000 individuals in the aggregate, with regular participation by more than 100,000 (Jumpstart 2011). In a study conducted 2 years previously, Jumpstart found that more than a quarter of participants in startup initiatives have no other Jewish involvement and another 30 % only moderate involvement elsewhere (Jumpstart 2009). Combining the various survey findings, it is reasonable to conclude that the expansion of the Jewish education ecosystem has resulted in a not insubstantial increase in the number of Jews engaged in Jewish learning.

What is more, the new types of programs represented in the expanded ecosystem, programs that often deal with unconventional thematic areas in non-traditional settings, are frequently aimed at population groups that previously had low rates of participation in any type of Jewish learning. Steven M. Cohen (2010), a leading sociologist of American Jewry, describes the goals of these entrepreneurs as follows:

If there’s a common theme that runs through the work of numerous young social innovators ... it’s the emphasis on using new tools, culture, and new digital media to bring Jewish learning and Jewish meaning to the Jewishly unengaged or Judaically uninformed. In essence, we have a cohort of entrepreneurial teachers, who use contexts other than the

classroom and teaching materials other than classic texts, to reach far out to audiences they haven't met, with the hope of enticing Jewishly uninitiated people to gain more appreciation of the resources of Jewish life, culture, and wisdom.

One of the primary target groups for these engagement efforts is young adults who have finished college and not yet formed families. Elie Kaunfer (2013), a celebrated educational innovator of the past decade and an acute analyst of the ethos underlying much of this innovation, notes that:

...in the previous decades the biggest growth story was college education, as Jewish studies exploded onto the university. The 90s also expanded adult education to people younger than retirees with the Wexner Heritage model (albeit for a few elites), the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School and Meah. But in the past decade, the space of post-college has seen massive growth.

The result has been a plethora of new programs that have targeted this demographic with not insignificant success. Some, including Birthright Israel, Moishe House,⁸ and a loose network of independent minyanim and emergent spiritual communities around the continent, operate at considerable scale, involving thousands (and in Birthright's case, hundreds of thousands) of young adults. Others are localized and smaller, but their collective reach is substantial. Combined with the continuing invigoration of Hillel (which is itself introducing more high level Jewish learning opportunities through initiatives like its Senior Jewish Educators program), the rapid growth of Chabad on campus, and the expansion of Jewish studies in colleges and universities noted by Kaunfer and illustrated by Chap. 17 in this volume, the new programs focusing on young adults have helped fill a long-term "gap" in the Jewish educational system between the time that youth graduate from high school (or, more often, have their Bar or Bat Mitzvah) and when, as relatively senior adults, they might join conventional adult education classes.

Many of the programs experiencing success with young adults are doing so precisely because they take Jewish learning into areas—both physical locations and topical arenas—that appeal to American Jewish young people today, but that have not historically been foci for Jewish educational activity. These areas include service and social justice, the environment and food, arts and culture, and spiritual practice (including meditation and the like). New endeavors in these areas are not limited in their focus to young adults, but young adults have been among the most enthusiastic participants in programs of these types.

Perhaps the area that has seen the most explosive growth over the past decade is that of environmental and food education. Program leaders in this arena cite almost with amazement the change over that period from a field with literally just a handful of programs to one in which dozens now dot the landscape (both physical and Jewish), and are coalescing into a powerful movement in Jewish life (Marzouk 2013; Berman 2013; Manela 2013; Golden 2013; Savage 2013a). These include

⁸Moishe House is an international non-profit organization comprised of a collection of homes throughout the world that serve as hubs for the young adult Jewish community. It provides a rent subsidy and program budget to Moishe House residents who then use their home to create their ideal Jewish communal space.

programs that operate farms, take Jews into the wilderness, seed community supported agriculture distribution centers in mainstream Jewish institutions, teach sustainable living practices, and conduct retreats with environmental themes. Much of the appeal of these programs, both to young adults and to growing numbers of younger and older participants (many brought by mainstream institutions) is that they directly connect contemporary concerns and Jewish teaching. Also critical is the strong experiential dimension of these programs. As Adam Berman (2013), director of Urban Adamah, notes, it is here that learners can have an experience of Jewish education that engages the mind, heart, *and* body.

Nigel Savage (2013b, p. 181), founder of perhaps the most influential young organization operating in the Jewish environmental and food education arena, Hazon, explains the appeal of the Jewish food movement in these terms, which could be applied as aptly to many of the new programs operating in other arenas as well:

The Jewish food movement is informed by and brings to life something I learned from the late Reb Shlomo Carlebach, something that has become Hazon's theme quote. He said, "The Torah is a commentary on the world, and the world is a commentary on the Torah." I take this to be both prescriptive and descriptive. The explosion of interest in Jewish farming around the country is evidence of what happens when we allow our ancient tradition to engage with one of the most vital and complex issues of our time. How should a person eat? This is both a Jewish question and a twenty-first-century question.

This is not Jewish education "lite." Rather, it seeks to connect serious and thoughtful Jewish learning with learners' particular passions and interests, whether ecological, social, artistic, or spiritual. The approach clearly works to attract and engage Jews who might otherwise have little interest in Jewish study. Service learning programs and programs focused on advancing social justice have grown at a pace similar to those dealing with the environment. Organizations like the American Jewish World Service, Repair the World, Bend the Arc, Avodah, American Jewish Society for Service, Panim (now part of BBYO), and Uri L'Tzedek have all succeeded in providing opportunities for Jewish young people to blend practical work devoted to bettering society and/or furthering social and economic justice with Jewish identity development and exploration of the Jewish values shaping their efforts. In these opportunities, one leader in the field noted, "the classroom is the world, and the text is a community they're working with. The service learning becomes like a docent, or a naturalist, helping the learners interpret what they're seeing and encountering. Ancient texts come into dialogue with experiences on the ground" (Berkovitz 2013).

In parallel, there has been a substantial increase in the number and variety of programs that use the arts—music, dance, drama, video and film, the plastic arts—as focal points for Jewish self-expression and for exploring connections between the aesthetic, moral, and spiritual concerns that animate so much artistic creativity and Jewish themes and experiences. Other fields of endeavor—law, journalism, science, medicine—have also proven to be fertile areas for forging linkages between the interests and talents of young Jews and questions and ideas that emanate from classical Jewish sources and contemporary Jewish life.

Together, these types of programs have both opened up and deepened the process of Jewish learning and made it integral to the lives and aspirations of some individuals in ways that conventional Jewish “schooling” has had great difficulty in doing. However, this type of embedded learning in action is not without its challenges. One of these is ensuring that the Jewish learning is serious and not superficial. In part, this challenge is tied to the need for sophisticated curricular and resource materials—a challenge the field has been responding to, including through the development of websites like www.On1Foot.org, which collects Jewish texts for social justice, and www.Jewcology.org, which offers multiple resources for Jewish learning on the environment. Equally important is the need for program staff who have both strong Jewish backgrounds and the skills to guide experiential learning. Here, the past several years have seen a number of highly positive steps toward professionalization. These include new graduate level academic programs in experiential learning and the development of a “pipeline” of talented and committed educators coming out of some of the pioneering experiential programs like Teva, which has trained numerous environmental educators who have now gone on to found, lead, and fill positions in many of the newer programs.

A second challenge that many of these programs have been grappling with is in some ways a converse of the first. While many observers and funders support these programs because of their capacity to promote Jewish identity development, including among individuals who are unenthusiastic about conventional Jewish education, program sponsors are equally or more concerned about the substance, quality, and impact of the activities participants are undertaking in their own terms: Are service programs really helping their intended beneficiaries? Is the environment being improved? Is the art that learners are producing of high quality? This is a tension that is being increasingly noted and is, perhaps, an inevitable corollary of the effort to recast Jewish learning as an experience that both connects with individual passions and aims to color and enrich learners’ engagement with the world around them.

We have noted that while much of the entrepreneurial energy that is manifest in Jewish education today is directed toward developing programs that use real-world experiences to expand the modes and settings for Jewish learning, this does not mean that traditional texts and text study are being set aside as irrelevant. Quite to the contrary, intensive text study is undergoing something of a revival in new settings, with programs like Pardes (in Israel), Yeshivat Hadar⁹ (in New York), and Kevah (initiated in the Bay Area, but now with groups in multiple cities) attracting significant numbers of young adults (and others), many not from traditional backgrounds. Jewish texts are also the focus for a variety of creative efforts that draw on

⁹Yeshivat Hadar is part of Mechon Hadar, which is itself an outgrowth of Kehillat Hadar, a pioneering independent minyan founded in New York in 2001. Encouraged by the success of and broad interest in the minyan and its guiding principles, several of its founders went on to found Mechon Hadar in 2006, which consults to and networks other minyanim around the continent and also sponsors an egalitarian yeshiva offering intensive full-time, summer, and community learning programs focused on the study of traditional texts.

new artistic forms to make these texts more accessible and meaningful for contemporary audiences. Storahelling uses drama and music, G-dcast offers clever animations and hip commentaries, and Bible Raps uses rap—all with serious pedagogic purpose and deep respect for the texts they seek to bring alive in new ways.

Wayne Firestone (2013), former International Director of Hillel, describes the success that Hillel has enjoyed with its recent initiatives to expand Jewish learning opportunities on campus in these terms:

Over the past few years, Hillel has proactively facilitated deep, substantive, compelling, and meaningful Jewish learning among Jewish students across the globe. Perhaps our greatest discovery during this time has been that marginally affiliated Jewish students are willing to seek out such meaningful Jewish learning experiences.... Of course, the approach is not as simple as posting a class and enrolling dozens of students. Success depends on connecting students with talented and skilled educators capable of interpreting and translating the richness of our texts, traditions, and values in relevant and compelling ways.

Toby Rubin (2013), CEO/Founder of UpStart Bay Area, a prominent accelerator of and advocate for innovation in both startup and legacy institutions, notes that many of the new programs go beyond just teaching texts to empower learners: the programs are themselves interpreters of Jewish text and tradition in ways that resonate with twenty-first century sensibilities. The ability to take Jewish texts and “remix” them to heighten their relevance (an ability aided by today’s technology) allows Jews to approach these texts with intensified interest and to expand their contact with primary sources that might otherwise remain inaccessible or off-putting. And while there is a danger that placing texts in a new narrative and interpretive context might distort their original meaning, the opportunity this provides for contemporary learners to become annotators and commentators on these texts in their own voice and to find renewed relevance in them (something Jews have done for centuries), should outweigh any fear of mishandling the texts themselves (Schwartz 2012).

The expansion of the Jewish educational ecosystem thus embraces, and often synthesizes, both of Jewish learning’s traditional modes: *torah lishmah* (learning for its own sake) and *torah l’ma’aseh* (learning linked to doing). The many programs noted above that share a focus on empowering learners to be active agents in creating an “applied” Judaism for themselves and others are part of a contemporary rebellion against a Jewish education that too often taught “about” Judaism and Jewish life, but did not foster direct engagement with and experience of that which it described. More broadly, they are part of the paradigm shift we noted in the introduction to this chapter in which Jewish education is moving from a focus on *continuity* to a primary concern with *meaning*.

Most of the new programs in today’s Jewish educational ecosystem seek to inspire Jews not just to identify as Jews (which they do anyway), but in one fashion or another to make their Jewishness an integral dimension of their lives, to use it to enrich and inform how they think and how they live. One foundation that is a major supporter of innovation in Jewish education, the Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah, has introduced the concept of “Jewish fluency” to describe its goal. “Jewish fluency” is a concept that includes, but goes beyond, both identity and

literacy to emphasize the ways in which Jews put their learning to use in multiple arenas of daily life. To have this impact, Jewish learning must speak to the lives Jews actually lead—lives that are not exclusively lived in Jewish spaces, physical or metaphorical—and do so in idioms they recognize. This kind of Jewish education is necessarily both learner-centered, taking its cue from the needs, interests, concerns, talents, and aspirations that learners bring to the educational process, and values-centered, seeking out the insights from Jewish tradition and experience that can illuminate, motivate, inspire, and occasionally challenge learners as they seek to make their way in the world.

The two projects—“continuity” and “meaning”—are not incompatible. Indeed, one could argue that today, the latter is the route to the former. So, even those for whom promoting continuity looms large as a desired outcome, the idea that Jewish learning in whatever form it takes and whatever content it covers must be personally relevant to the learners is becoming nearly axiomatic. One area that illustrates how this process is playing out with respect to subject matter that is hardly unconventional for Jewish education is Israel education.

Over the past decade, driven at least in part by concerns that younger Jews were feeling less connected and committed to Israel,¹⁰ there has been significant new attention, investment, and success in Israel education. Despite Israel’s continuing prominence as a focal point for American Jewish organizational activity, levels of basic knowledge about Israeli history, society, and culture are in many cases not necessarily great. Not knowing Israel’s story, argues Ken Stein, a professor at Emory University actively involved in training Israel educators, often weakens identity, pride, and commitment to the Jewish state (Stein 2013). Much of the new investment in Israel education has been motivated by a concern that ill-informed Jewish students are unprepared to be advocates for Israel on college campuses and in the wider society. As a result, numerous efforts have been launched to equip young people in high school and college with the motivation and knowledge to be able to defend Israel effectively in today’s contentious political climate.

However, there have also been noteworthy efforts to reinvigorate and reframe Israel education outside an advocacy context in ways that reflect the personalized, meaning-focused ethos that is spreading throughout Jewish education today. Two of the most significant new players in the arena of Israel education—the iCenter (supported by major American-based foundations) and Makom (part of the Jewish Agency for Israel)—have both characterized their goal in terms of helping students develop a personal relationship to Israel (and Israelis) and integrating this relationship into their own Jewish narratives. This approach emphasizes emotional engagement as much as cognitive appropriation, encouraging students, in the phrase used by Makom, to simultaneously “hug and wrestle” with Israel. Anne Lanski, Director of the iCenter, and Barry Chazan (2013), a long-time leader in both Israel and informal education, articulate this approach (and illustrates how in keeping this is with current directions in Jewish education as a whole) in a recent article:

¹⁰A proposition which may or may not be true. See Volume 30 of *Contemporary Jewry*.

We take an “I-centered” approach to Israel education.... This approach maximizes the potential meaning of Israel for youth in their everyday life. Israel will only become an inner force in the lives of American Jews when it is linked to their genuine search for personal meaning, spirituality, and self-fulfillment as Jews.... For those worried about a next generation that will care about Israel, this approach assumes that inner-directed, Israel-engaged young people are the best guarantors of a continued American Jewish community that supports Israel.

The big story in Israel education since 2000 is, of course, Taglit-Birthright Israel. Birthright may be a unique phenomenon in Jewish educational history: a global effort to engage masses of young Jews in a common experience under a single broad umbrella. The unprecedented success of Birthright in both attracting hundreds of thousands of participants and having a demonstrable and enduring impact on no small number of them is undoubtedly due to a number of factors working together—the intense social experience of being together, away from familiar surroundings, with large numbers of other Jewish young people, the carefully designed experiential educational process built into the program, the time spent with Israeli counterparts (the *mifgash*—“meeting”), and the sense of historical connection that comes with encountering one’s ancient past. We have learned that even just 10 days is sufficient to generate a powerful educational experience when all of the components are aligned toward this end. For those who have been most deeply affected by it (which is not everyone, to be sure), Birthright Israel seems to provoke a cognitive, emotional, and even spiritual re-orientation that can set them on a new trajectory in their lives in which their Jewishness becomes more meaningful, and therefore more central in their future life choices (Saxe et al. 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012).

Achieving this kind of impact has always been easiest in immersive settings, those that place participants together with others for concentrated periods of time, most often in environments that are out-of-the-norm and infused with a strong sense of community and Jewish purpose. An important part of the expansion of the Jewish education ecosystem today is that the traditional settings for these immersive experiences—Jewish summer camps, trips to Israel, and retreats—are now being augmented both through greater varieties of opportunities within these categories (e.g., the opening of new specialty camps or the many Birthright Israel trips that now target populations with particular interests or life circumstances) and through the development of new possibilities (working on a Jewish farm, spending a year in community service as part of a Jewish cohort). What makes immersive settings so powerful is that they engage the “whole person,” tying together cognitive, affective, physical, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions of learning and growth. Increasingly, this understanding of Jewish education as inherently holistic, embracing all of these dimensions, is penetrating the entirety of the field. Day schools and even complementary programs are now gearing themselves to do whole person learning.¹¹ Here, again, the shift from an educational stance that largely emphasizes the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills and the performance of specific acts that serve as markers of Jewishness to one

¹¹ See, e.g., the programs described in the JESNA web publication at www.jesna.org/about/lippman-kanfer-institute/whole-person-learning).

that focuses on how this knowledge and behavior fits into a larger pattern of living in the contemporary world marks an important step in the evolution of American Jewish education.

No discussion of the expansion of Jewish education's ecosystem in the early years of the twenty-first century could be complete without addressing the dramatic changes in technology that are transforming life for everyone around the globe. In his now classic writings on innovation, Clayton Christensen (1997) argues that innovation comes in two forms: sustaining, which allows us to improve how we are already doing things, and disruptive, which creates new approaches to providing value that often engage new markets not previously being served. Both forms of innovation are important, and new technologies often drive both. Jewish education has been neither especially swift nor especially bold in embracing new communications technologies and the applications that put these to use. Nonetheless, these technologies and applications are inexorably making their impact felt in nearly every setting for Jewish learning and in creating new settings online. The web is now filled with sites that offer Jewish content in the form of everything from games and mobile apps to original texts and serious scholarly articles. Schools are also using technology to connect teachers to students and parents and students with one another across geographic boundaries. In this vein, a number of ambitious efforts have been launched in recent years to create full-fledged virtual environments for Jewish learning, such as JLand (www.jlandonline.com) and Sviva Israel Ecocampus (www.ecocamp.us), that can be used collaboratively by schools around the globe. It is safe to say that technology has now proven itself as a sustaining innovation in Jewish education, fostering more engaging learning, more effective teaching, better management of educational programs, and easier communication with existing constituencies.

The more interesting question is whether technology is also fostering disruptive innovation in Jewish education, i.e., new ways of engaging potential learners that render existing institutional arrangements problematic. There are some signs this is beginning to happen. A growing number of day school and complementary programs are incorporating forms of online or blended learning, allowing them to diversify their offerings and making these more flexible and more customizable to meet learners' skills and interests. Proponents of online learning argue that it is less expensive and more accessible to individuals who want to learn at times and places other than those favored by institutions, and will thereby engage students and families who currently do not participate, though these claims are still being tested. Online learning has blossomed even more rapidly in the domain of adult Jewish education, where virtual yeshivot and classes now dot the cyber-landscape, and online professional development has become commonplace.

The Internet has made it possible for entirely new organizations to emerge who deliver their product or service virtually. Aharon Horwitz (2012), co-founder of PresenTense, one of the pioneering organizations in supporting innovation across the Jewish world, and now CEO of Israeli tech startup 40Nuggets, describes technology's impact in this fashion: "It's the era of the Insta.org. The biggest single factor is the accessible nature of cheap technology and platforms for instant creation

of organizations for causes and missions.” This impact is magnified because some of the major effects of technology—“democratizing” and personalizing learning by making access to sources of information and to other individuals so much easier—align with other broader social and cultural trends like DIY (do it yourself) Judaism that are pushing in the same direction. The result, according to Russel Neiss (2013), a prominent Jewish educational technologist, is a “flatter” field, less centralized, with fewer gatekeepers, and opportunities for successful innovators to scale their products more quickly. At the same time, however, Neiss and others caution, the ease of production and distribution via technology does not guarantee quality and may, in fact, encourage needless duplication and overlap in what is being produced. It has also led some to embrace technology as a panacea and an end in itself, rather than as one tool among many in education’s toolkit (Neiss 2013; Septimus 2013; Schwartz 2012).

From an institutional standpoint, the existence of alternatives to traditional programs, whether these are technologically-based or simply cheaper or more appealing models, can certainly represent a threat. (Rabbis may already feel somewhat threatened by the proliferation of websites that offer basic Jewish knowledge and opportunities to have one’s questions answered that bypass their role as religious authorities—though some have jumped in to embrace technology as a vehicle for disseminating their own thinking and connecting with new audiences.) However, if disruptive innovations do in fact meet needs that the current system is not adequately addressing—and stimulate existing players to respond with innovations of their own—then there will be an overall gain for Jewish education.

The delicate dialectic between the “old” and the “new” in Jewish education’s evolving ecosystem is strikingly illustrated when we look at the individuals most responsible for introducing the new elements that have multiplied in recent years. The emergence of a significant cadre of Jewish educational entrepreneurs over the past 15 or so years is a highly encouraging development. Many of these entrepreneurs have been nurtured and assisted by programs, themselves the product of entrepreneurial energies, that have made fostering innovation and innovators their mission: Bikkurim, Joshua Venture, Upstart Bay Area, Jumpstart, Presentense, ROI, Slingshot, and others internationally. It is to these entrepreneurs that we owe many of the new programs and initiatives that fill out the educational landscape and disrupt (whether with intent or not) conventional “legacy” institutions.

What is in a sense ironic about this group of innovators is that a large proportion received their own education in these legacy institutions—day schools, movement summer camps, Israel programs (Wertheimer 2010). For the institutions that feel themselves under assault from the current wave of innovation, this can be somewhat frustrating—the very leaders whom they nurtured now seem eager to create alternatives to the frameworks from which they emerged.

This may, though, be just the first chapter in a larger story that is emerging. The expanding Jewish educational ecosystem is, in fact, bringing new leaders to the forefront. Until now, perhaps not surprisingly, many of these new leaders have sought out “under-developed regions” of the system in which to settle and make their mark. But, as the larger ecosystem adapts, and existing actors seek to absorb

lessons from the new entrants, conditions can begin to change. Entrepreneurial leaders find allies among the “intrapreneurs” and innovation-minded in existing settings. Some even move over into these settings to help remake them. As a result, the boundaries between the two regions start to blur, and the new leaders emerge as field-wide leaders in a reconfigured ecosystem.

This process is now occurring in Jewish education. What was previously seen as “marginal” activity is now becoming normative, and figures who were “outliers” are becoming more prominent and more influential. Collaborations between “startup” and “legacy” institutions are growing. Nigel Savage (2013a) reports that:

Hazon now has over 60 CSAs (Community-Supported Agriculture projects), and *every single one* is a partnership with a synagogue or JCC. One of their explicit goals is to increase the engagement of people who are already members of the host institution, and bring new people through the door, and they have succeeded in doing both.

He cites additional examples of such partnerships—“Teva partners extensively with Jewish day schools; Jewish Farm School has worked closely with Hillel”—and notes that professionals from established organizations who frequently attend Hazon’s Food Conference or a Teva Seminar “go back to their host institutions re-energized and with new ideas and working relationships.”

The idea of startups and established institutions coming together for mutual benefit is an alluring one, and, as Savage notes, one happening with increasing frequency. In truth, Jewish education needs the infusion of the energy and alternative approaches that many of the new organizations and programs bring, since engaging those who are either at the margins or altogether outside existing frameworks for Jewish learning remains a challenge. Participation in Jewish education is remarkably high for an entirely voluntary activity, but it is far from universal. For some non-participants, the reason is clearly lack of interest. They do not see the relevance of Jewish education for their lives. But, lack of interest can also shade over into a perceived lack of attractive opportunities. Segments of the Jewish population—immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Israel, interfaith families, secular Jews, Jews living outside primary areas of Jewish residence, and simply those looking for something “different”—have difficulty finding programs that appeal to them and to their sense of Jewishness. The lack of attractive educational options affects particular age cohorts as well: families with children in the “gap” years of early elementary school, teens, and young adults. The reality is that Jewish education today, despite the multitude of actors, remains in some ways a “narrow” field, with many institutions offering programs that are similar in both format and content.

The entrepreneurial programs that now dot the educational landscape have often addressed these untapped markets. Alternative complementary programs, teen clubs, specialty camps, Chabad-sponsored campus learning fellowships, Moishe Houses, outdoor and farm-based programs, service and travel opportunities, and other new programs are engaging Jews who might otherwise remain outside Jewish education altogether. At the same time, they also provide additional options for those who have been or would be participants regardless, but are seeking additional and different opportunities for learning than are available in mainstream institutions.

Nonetheless, many of these alternative programs and their participants remain largely disconnected from the larger educational ecosystem—sometimes little noticed, sometimes viewed with hostility by mainstream institutions. On the positive side, this disconnect may actually give these alternatives the room they need to grow without being crowded out or co-opted (and thereby having their appeal to un- or under-served market segments diminished). However, in the long run, a healthy Jewish educational ecosystem needs to integrate these alternatives into networks of relationships with established institutions and to provide them with the resources to reach their market potential.

However, this is not a simple or straightforward process. Growing attention is now being given to the twin challenges both of sustaining innovation and the often fragile organizations that undertake it and capitalizing fully on the fruits of the entrepreneurial energies and investments that have been made over the past decade. One of the hallmarks of an ecosystem is the set of multiple dependencies that exist among its components. Ron Adner (2012), who has written about business ecosystems, notes that successfully reaching consumers with any innovation often involves engaging other actors either as “co-innovators” (which often requires changing how they operate) or as supportive intermediary elements in an “adoption chain.” In today’s Jewish educational ecosystem, entrepreneurial innovators often face a major challenge in bringing their products to market. Developing an attractive program or resource is not enough to ensure success. Entrepreneurs (and even intrapreneurs) either need established institutions like synagogues, day schools, camps, JCCs, and Hillels to become effective distribution channels for their creations, or to find new ways of reaching potential beneficiaries directly (e.g., via technology).

Some efforts in this direction have been made already, especially by the Jewish Education Project, New York’s central agency for Jewish education, in connecting “ERPs” (entrepreneurial educational resource providers) with synagogues, day schools, and early childhood programs. But, while some established institutions are eager to serve as such channels or as partners for entrepreneurs, doing so often requires resources they may not have and changes in their own modes of operation they may find difficult to make even with the best will in the world. Similarly, the entrepreneurs may find it difficult to fit their ways of working into the patterns of established institutions. And any business model adopted must be financially sustainable and advantageous for all parties involved. Serving large numbers of potential beneficiaries directly generally requires that startup organizations scale their operations substantially, which in turn requires both significant additional financial investment and organizational capabilities beyond those a small organization is likely to possess.

A number of innovation-promoting organizations and funders including Bikkurim, Upstart Bay Area, Jumpstart, Slingshot, JESNA, the Jewish Education Project, the Lippman Kanfer Family Foundation, the Jim Joseph Foundation, and the Samuel Bronfman Foundation have focused in on these challenges from slightly different angles and sought ways to enhance the overall impact of the innovation sector on Jewish education. Strategies being implemented or proposed include:

targeted funding to enable the most successful entrepreneurial organizations to scale up; assistance in developing stronger management frameworks to enable startups to move to the next stage; matching entrepreneurial educational resource providers with established institutions to broaden distribution channels for their programs and products; and finding supportive homes for innovators and their projects within larger organizations. All these approaches will likely be needed, though none has yet proven itself to be *the* or even a big part of the answer to the considerable challenges involved in embedding new endeavors successfully into the overall educational ecosystem.

What is clear is that many educational entrepreneurs still feel themselves scrambling to stay afloat, even as their programs prove successful. Grant funding from foundations often comes with time limitations and expectations of sustainability that may be unrealistic.¹² Support structures for innovators have until now been weighted overwhelmingly toward early-stage ventures. Federations have by and large not been able to integrate new organizations into their regular funding streams, especially in the face of declining allocations. Existing institutions (synagogues, day schools, camps, JCCs) that represent potential markets and distribution channels for new programs often are strapped for resources themselves and are unable or unwilling to develop mutually beneficial long-term relationships with entrepreneurial enterprises. Revenue-generating business models are difficult to find for these endeavors, and many newer organizations lack the skills and resources to mount successful large-scale fundraising efforts.

As a result of these factors, the new, expanded Jewish education ecosystem remains a fragile one. If the promise of the past decade is to be realized in the next, it will require more than just a proliferation of new actors. The system as a whole must evolve to enable growth across the landscape. This may involve some judicious pruning—not every “species” is destined to (or ought to) survive. But, it will also involve new relationships among heretofore separate actors and regions. This is a theme we will return to in the final section of this chapter.

Sustaining Infrastructure

While most attention in any description of developments in Jewish education rightly focuses on the institutions, programs, and people actually delivering the education, they could not succeed without an infrastructure of supporting frameworks that

¹²One recent overview of Jewish education nationally put it this way: “A survey of AVI CHAI grantees revealed that their number one concern was the continuity of funded programs. This result is not surprising. Big philanthropy is always looking to create something new, leaving open the question of the future of the programs that it creates. This issue is seen across the field. Very few of the programs established in recent years have stable financial bases.... The lesson for foundations is that, from the outset, they need to be thinking not just about how a program gets started but about how it is sustained” (Sales et al. 2006, p. 21).

supply critical resources to those on the front lines. American Jewish education has a fairly elaborate, if diffuse, support infrastructure that provides financial, human, and intellectual capital for segments of the system.

In recent years, three elements of this support infrastructure in particular have undergone major change: (1) central support structures, both national and local; (2) professional recruitment, training, and development; and (3) the role of foundations and major funders. Of these, the last may have the greatest import, since the expanding role of foundations has affected nearly every other development discussed in this chapter, including the two others addressed in this section.

Local and National Support Frameworks

One could make the argument that the “modern era” in American Jewish education began a little more than a century ago with the founding of the first bureau of Jewish education in New York, headed by Samson Benderly. Benderly, his followers (the so-called “Benderly boys,” though the group most definitely included women as well), and his supporters, a mix of communal leaders, rabbis, and philanthropists, had an unabashedly reformist and progressive vision for Jewish education. To implement this vision, they believed, communal leadership was required. The effort would be spearheaded by a central instrumentality that would model and promote innovation, prepare educators, and set and oversee standards for the field. Over the next several decades, this idea of a communal central agency for Jewish education took hold in most major Jewish communities. However, even as the form spread widely, the role of such agencies was gradually transformed from one of “leadership” to one of “service”—providing guidance and support via curriculum, professional development, and consultation to the institutions and educators actually doing the educating. This shift was tied in part to the “denominalization” of Jewish education, which was marked also by the emergence of national support structures for each major denominational grouping (Krasner 2011). Overall, however, the infrastructure supporting frontline educational institutions remained weak and fragmented. Jewish education, like American Jewish life in general, has shied away from strong umbrella structures at every level. Institutional autonomy largely reigns.

This situation presents a formidable challenge to anyone seeking to advance an agenda of change. So, as change increasingly became the watchword for communal and philanthropic leaders surveying the educational scene from the 1980s onward, changing the support infrastructure to become more dynamic and impactful also became part of their endeavors. Over the roughly quarter century since, several key changes have occurred:

First, Jewish federations have become more deeply and directly engaged in Jewish educational planning and support. Pushed by some of their donors and concerned by statistics showing declining levels of affiliation and communal involvement, federations have often not been content to leave Jewish education to the

central agencies that were ostensibly established to be the communal instruments for this arena. Whether through special commissions or standing committees, most major federations are today active players, not only in funding Jewish education, but in guiding its development in their communities. In some cases, federations have absorbed or otherwise taken control of the local central agencies. In some, they have established what are, in effect, parallel structures for educational planning. In a few instances, federations have dismantled their central agencies (although most have brought them back under a different name or in a different form). Many federations, faced with flat or declining campaigns and pressures for greater efficiency and accountability, have either reduced funding to their central agencies or shifted to “program by program” funding, rather than general operating allocations. Generally, these efforts have been undertaken out of what federation leaders believe are positive motivations: a desire to put more “weight” behind educational initiatives, frustration with perceived inefficacy on the part of central agencies, and/or eagerness to act more comprehensively to expand Jewish engagement and strengthen Jewish identity.

The rise and spread of this new wave of federation activism in Jewish education has not been uniform across the continent. Whether it has really produced gains for Jewish education in terms of greater support, more effective planning and coordination of activities, more effective and efficient use of resources, and more rapid and thoughtful innovation may be debated (the answer likely varies from community to community). What is clear is that central agencies themselves have been pressed by the changing communal and funding climate to revisit and, in a growing number of instances, reframe their roles and operations. Robert Sherman (2013), chief professional officer of New York’s Jewish Education Project, the oldest and largest central agency, and itself one that has undergone substantial recent change, affirms that “the agencies that have survived have had to rethink their missions, be more creative, sharpen their focus somewhat, and be more entrepreneurial.”

Several central agencies have moved boldly to reclaim the mantle of educational leadership and innovation that most ceded decades ago. In addition to New York, agencies in San Francisco, Philadelphia, Greater MetroWest, NJ,¹³ and several other communities have worked to reposition themselves as change agents, guiding local institutions in new directions and reaching out to build relationships with entrepreneurially minded educators. They have often accompanied this shift with changes in name designed to signal the new posture and focus.¹⁴

The attitudes of federations toward these more activist agencies have differed. Some have been firmly supportive, even pushing for these changes, while others have held the agencies at arm’s length (or worse). It is unclear, especially in those communities where federations have not been supportive, whether the agencies will be able to marshal the financial resources needed to be major

¹³ Greater MetroWest, NJ includes Essex, Morris, Sussex, Union, and northern Somerset Counties.

¹⁴ The central agency in Philadelphia is now the Jewish Learning Venture; the San Francisco agency is Jewish Learning Works; Greater MetroWest’s agency is the Partnership for Jewish Learning and Life; and the Los Angeles agency is Builders of Jewish Education.

catalytic and leadership forces. Nonetheless, something of a sea change in the central agency world has occurred in the past five years which could result in new prominence and importance for these agencies in an era of educational expansion and transformation.

A second major development that is transforming the infrastructure of support for frontline educational institutions has occurred at the national level: the emergence of what might be called “domain champions”—organizations dedicated to promoting and advancing specific arenas like day school education, Jewish camp, early childhood education, Hebrew language, and complementary education. Often the product of philanthropic initiative, several of these organizations have succeeded in drawing new attention and resources to the domains they champion and have provided concrete assistance in the form of grants, leadership development, capacity building, professional training, and new program initiatives to the institutions and educators operating in these domains. PEJE, the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, created by a group of philanthropists seeking to expand enrollment in Jewish day schools, was perhaps the first in this new wave of national bodies. The Foundation for Jewish Camp adopted a similar model and became a dynamic force helping to propel the expansion and dramatic rise in interest in and support for Jewish overnight summer camps. In some instances, often with expanded philanthropic support, existing national frameworks have been able to share in this dynamism. In the day school world, RAVSAK: the Jewish Community Day School Network, and the Institute for School-University Partnership at Yeshiva University, have both enjoyed rapid growth, as has Ramah, the Conservative movement’s camp arm. Even as PEJE has contracted its work to some extent in the past few years, the day school world as a whole has begun to coalesce through a joint conference mounted by the various day school associations (excepting the traditional Orthodox) and PEJE, which now attracts close to 1,000 participants annually. In the JCC world, which began to focus more intensively on Jewish education several decades ago, the JCC Association has continued to push forward with new initiatives in areas like day camp and early childhood education. Nonetheless, the commitment of individual Centers to Jewish education varies considerably, and the field-wide impact of JCC initiatives has not been felt to the extent that it might have (partially because of indifference and resistance from those who do not see JCCs as “educational” institutions).

Other national organizations and initiatives have not thus far had the broad impact of the endeavors in the arenas of day school and camp—and, indeed, as noted above, some, like JECEI, focused on early childhood education, and JEXNET (The Network for Experiential Youth Education), bringing together youth educators from across that field, have ceased to operate after a flurry of initial activity. The “formula for success” for such efforts to organize at the national level is not yet clear, if one even exists. But, the pattern that has been established of bringing together stakeholders and supporters in a specific educational domain to promote that domain, garner additional resources for it, and guide its development and improvement through strategic investments and leadership convenings appears to have taken hold as an enduring feature of the continental Jewish education landscape.

In doing so, these endeavors have called into question the roles of some of the traditional “umbrella” organizations that have supported Jewish education, notably the educational departments of the major synagogue associations and JESNA, the educational agency of the federation-central agency system. The Union for Reform Judaism disbanded its department of Jewish education in favor of a more targeted strategy of networking congregations and brokering access to expert resources, the effectiveness of which remains to be seen. The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism has recently reorganized its education functions to help advance a new, more integrated vision for Conservative Jewish learning that it has adopted and seeks to champion with other arms of the movement. The long-term impact of this reorganization cannot be known at this point. JESNA, in the face of substantial cuts in federation financial support for all of their traditional national organization beneficiaries, refocused its work around promoting innovation and systemic communal change, particularly in the arena of complementary education, rather than trying to provide a broad array of educational services. Despite some programmatic successes in this arena and efforts to merge or partner with another similarly focused organization, it was unable to secure a commitment to ongoing funding from the federated system and decided to close operations at the end of June 2013. Whether a new national framework will emerge to fill the gap JESNA’s closing leaves, and how such a framework might be constituted and funded, remain to be seen.

The proliferation of specialized national frameworks focused on single domains and the decline of those that have historically operated across different areas (and could, therefore, at least in theory, help link these), while undoubtedly a boon to those educational arenas, raises some challenging questions about what the Jewish educational ecosystem will look like going forward. The “silozation” of Jewish education noted above as characteristic of many synagogues is, in fact, a system-wide feature, with institutions and programs in different domains (complementary education, day school, camp, early childhood programs, youth programs, adult learning, etc.), even those in the same community, generally operating at best alongside, but hardly coordinated with one another. Knowing, as we do, that Jewish education operates with a multiplier effect—the more experiences, the greater the impact—having this local pattern of silozation reinforced (even if inadvertently) by the prominence of single domain focused organizations operating nationally, represents at the least a missed opportunity. We will return to this issue below.

Professional Training and Development

Since the days of the “Benderly Boys,” the need to do more to recruit, train, and support effective educators has been a constant refrain in the Jewish educational world. If there is such a thing as a “chronic crisis,” the frequently cited and persistent shortage of talented, well-prepared Jewish educators may be it. Although documentation of the extent of such a shortage is difficult to come by (another notable gap in our research knowledge), it is certainly true that no one speaks about having a surfeit of good educators for any part of the educational system.

Because of the diversity and breadth of what constitutes “Jewish education,” multiple personnel challenges exist in the various domains that differ both in their nature and their intensity. Some parts of the field, e.g., day school education, are highly professionalized already, but need ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers and suffer from an especially acute shortage of top flight leadership (the job of a day school head may be among the most demanding in the entire field). Other areas, like complementary education, have large numbers of part-time and non-professional personnel, whose needs and availability for professional improvement opportunities are quite different. The bulk of camp personnel are quite young—often college students—and their training needs are different still. Overlay this situation with issues like whether professional development opportunities are accessible, both geographically and in terms of time; who will pay the cost of such training; who is qualified to provide such development; how new technologies will be employed; and how field-wide trends like a growing emphasis on experiential learning will be reflected; and it is clear that the landscape for professional training and development cannot be a simple or orderly one.

Not surprisingly, therefore, efforts to address the challenges of professional training and development over the past decade have been numerous, varied, and largely uncoordinated with one another. These efforts have involved both traditional institutions dealing with professional training and development, e.g., institutions of high Jewish learning, and new programs or organizations created specifically for this purpose. And, as in other arenas that we have explored, the primary driver of change—and certainly the key element in making the new initiatives possible—has often been funders with a passionate interest in specific educational domains. Experiential education in particular has emerged as a focus of new professional training and development programs as part of the larger embrace of this domain by foundations in recent years.

Major Jewish academic institutions have been substantial beneficiaries of this interest. The universities connected to the major denominational movements that have long played a key role in educator training—Yeshiva University, the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and (to a lesser extent) the American Jewish University—have been able both to expand and invigorate their degree programs and to launch new professional development initiatives targeting a variety of areas. Brandeis University too has expanded its role, especially in training day school teachers through the DeLeT program (which also has a cohort at HUC-JIR in Los Angeles), as well as by housing the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education. The five community-based colleges of Jewish studies in Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Chicago that have also been part of the educator training scene for many decades, though facing difficult circumstances financially and in some instances being radically restructured into components of major general universities, have nonetheless all maintained, and in some cases instituted, new programs for training Jewish educators, including at the doctoral level. Even more interesting, perhaps, is the entrance of two prominent non-Jewish institutions of higher learning, New York University and Stanford University, into the field of Jewish educator preparation. Stanford’s doctoral

program is just getting fully underway with funding from the San Francisco-based Jim Joseph Foundation. But, NYU has already operated its Ph.D. and Masters programs for more than a decade, attracting and graduating several cohorts of students, a number of whom are already occupying prominent leadership positions. In all, fueled by new money for scholarships and to fund specialized programs in areas like experiential education, day school teaching, and educational leadership, Jewish education now can boast an array of solid academic options for those seeking to enter the field or to secure an advanced degree to advance their careers.

At the same time, options have also expanded for serious professional development in non-degree contexts. A significant focus of these new programs has been preparing educational leaders for specific domains: the Day School Leadership Training Institute (DSLTI) for prospective day school heads; the Leadership Institute for congregational school educators for synagogue-based educational directors in the New York metropolitan area; the Jewish Early Childhood Educational Leadership Institute (JECLEI) to prepare directors of early childhood programs; the Executive Leadership Institute run by the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) for camp heads. Many of these programs have been designed to be run by or draw on the resources of major Jewish academic institutions. All have been initiated and backed by major private and/or communal funders.

Opportunities for frontline educators have not generally received comparable philanthropic attention, perhaps because they tend to be more localized. However, there have been some notable exceptions, such as the FJC's Cornerstone program that works with especially promising returning camp counselors; the Jewish New Teacher Project (JNTP) that trains day school educators to serve as mentors for new teachers; and PELIE's (the Partnership for Effective Learning and Innovative Education, which operates in the area of complementary education) initiatives to upgrade the skills of complementary school educators in the use of technology. One area of professional development that has received a significant infusion of new attention and some new financial resources is induction of new teachers. Brandeis' Mandel Center has spearheaded the use of induction as a lever for promoting a school-wide focus on teaching and learning that often has ripples beyond the specific area of helping new teachers get off to a solid start in their careers (Feiman-Nemser 2013).

While it remains the case that much professional development for frontline educators is provided by the institutions that employ them or other local agencies, new opportunities have been created by organizations with specialized foci (e.g., Matan in the area of special needs and Teva in environmental education), by educator organizations like NATE (Reform), JEA (Conservative), and NewCAJE (trans-denominational), by organizations in Israel (the Lookstein Centre at Bar Ilan University, MOFET), and by a range of new entrants into the professional development world (e.g., the four regional Limmud organizations that have banded together to tie professional networking and training for selected cohorts of educators to their annual conferences). For these non-local programs in particular, the use of webinars and other types of online learning is gradually becoming more common—though Jewish education cannot claim to be particularly advanced in its overall use of technology for professional development.

One of the most recent trends in the field is the growing use of networks and communities of practice at all levels as vehicles for supporting educators' professional growth. The past decade has presented something of a mixed picture in terms of what might be termed "peer-to-peer" professional learning and development. The largest and best known grass-roots Jewish educator organization—the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE)—went bankrupt and ceased operations. However, it has been succeeded by NewCAJE, which embodies a similar ethos and appears to be off to a good start in rebuilding a framework for peer-based professional development, though it remains much smaller than CAJE at its peak. Although the effort mounted over several years to create a networking and professional development organization for youth educators foundered after some early success, new networks and communities of practice for groups like alumni of the DeLeT programs and Jewish educators interested in technology or family education (Shevet) seem to be gaining some traction. Communities of educators are also gathering and sharing ideas and resources online through Nings¹⁵ like the Jewish Education Change Network (www.jedchange.net), numerous Facebook groups, and several twitter hashtags (#Jedchat, #Jed21). These are clearly not traditional professional development. But, in the twenty-first century, they may well be highly efficient and cost effective ways for educators to find information they need, get practical advice, discover new ideas and resources, and receive some of the social reinforcement and sense of camaraderie that have always been corollary benefits of more traditional programs. How these largely grassroots efforts will fare over time remains to be seen. But they are an increasingly prominent part of the expanding landscape of professional training and development taking shape today.

The Expanding Role of Foundations and Funders

How virtually all of the developments noted above will fare in the future may depend more on the decisions that foundations and other major Jewish education funders make about what to support and how to do so than on any other single factor. As noted above, the emergence of foundations as major drivers of the Jewish educational agenda in North America is perhaps the single most impactful development of the past decade. Foundations bring more than additional financial resources to Jewish education's table. They bring a different, and often refreshing, way of doing business. As one recent overview of the field asserted: "Foundations can be countercultural. They are not obliged to seek consensus and they are free to take unpopular positions. Their business orientation and entrepreneurial spirit allow them to move faster than the traditional communal system. They have the resources to experiment and 'to stretch the risk-benefit ratio'" (Sales et al. 2006).

Many of Jewish education's greatest "success stories" over this period—Birthright Israel, PJ Library, the growth in Jewish camping, the elevation of day school

¹⁵A Ning is an outline platform for people and organizations to create custom social networks.

education, the development of a vigorous group of educational entrepreneurs—are largely, if not almost entirely, due to the energy and resources that non-institutional funders put into launching, advocating for, and sustaining these endeavors. A relatively small, but potent, group of foundations have been highly visible at the national level: Avi Chai, the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Steinhardt Foundation, the Grinspoon Foundation, The Covenant Foundation, the Schusterman Family Foundation, the Wexner Foundation, the Samuel Bronfman Foundation, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, and the Righteous Persons Foundation. (See Chap. 10 in this volume for a description of these Foundations.) These national (and often global) funders have been able to shape agendas for the entire field and to help bring individual organizations and programs, both established (like Hillel and BBYO) and new (like Kehillat and Mechon Hadar and Moishe House), to prominence through their grant-making and the influence of their principals and their professional staffs. This influence is magnified when funders partner among themselves, as has happened often in recent years through both formal frameworks like PEJE and PELIE and more ad hoc arrangements.

Alongside these well-known names, there are numerous other funders who are less recognizable, but who have played key roles either in specific communities, domains, or institutions. The initial impetus for the burgeoning attention to Jewish summer camps came not from a national foundation, but from two individuals, Rob and Elissa Bildner, who were passionate about the cause and were able over a number of years to recruit others to join them. Similarly, the heightening focus on program evaluation in Jewish education over the past two decades was kicked off by a single funder, Mandell (Bill) Berman, who believed in the importance of research and evaluation and established a center for this purpose well before it became the norm for other funders and for the field. Arnee Winshall and her husband, Walter, have been the prime movers behind Hebrew at the Center, an effort to professionalize Hebrew language teaching, an area generally bypassed by the major foundations. These examples could be multiplied many times over, especially at the local communal and individual institutional level where a few major donors are often the key to solvency and vitality.

The combination of financial pressures on many institutions, eroding business models (e.g., for many synagogues), and flat or declining communal funding has magnified the impact of foundation and individual philanthropists. The growth of philanthropic support and activism has, on the whole, been a great boon for Jewish education. Nonetheless, this does not mean that it has been without issues or critique. Some observers within, as well as outside, the funding sector worry that its influence can be too great and that too much of the money has been spent without serious analysis of its impact. It has been noted that foundations are often quick to jump on the latest “hot” idea in Jewish education before considering the other pieces that might need to be in place for big new investments to pay off. As the senior executive of a major foundation noted: “Until now, the foundation world focused most of its attention on informal and experiential education. Only recently have foundations started to seriously address the issue of what we are actually teaching people in those programs and how to train the educators who do that important

work” (Cardin 2012). Many funders continue to operate with a short-term funding horizon and to make grants for a limited number of years. Both well-established and start-up organizations frequently complain that in today’s funding climate, the expectation that institutions can replace these grants with sustainable funding, even for programs that are operating successfully, is often unrealistic. Frequently, organizations find themselves chasing the next grant for something “new” rather than being able to invest in developing and refining initiatives that have made promising starts, but whose full potential simply cannot be assessed in 2, 3, or 4 years.

In choosing where to invest, funders are undoubtedly handicapped by the overall paucity of research in the field (though some have suggested that the problem is not lack of knowledge, but the lack of sharing of what is being learned among funders and institutions). However, funders, with some notable exceptions, have not been quick to fund basic research that might help guide the work of practitioners *and* make their own investments more solidly grounded and, hopefully, more effective. Only recently have two major foundations, Avi Chai and Jim Joseph, joined forces to create CASJE, the Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education (www.casje.com), an endeavor to develop systematic agendas for research in various educational areas and to connect researchers and practitioners so as to maximize the use of the resulting research. Even this effort, however, cannot promise that the proposed research will actually be funded, nor that it will ultimately affect the field.

Funders are human, and they are moved by values, emotions, social factors, and the fashions of the moment. Many funders are interested primarily in one or two educational arenas, and, as a result, their giving may reinforce, rather than help counter siloization in the field. Many education funders also share in the current inclination to favor programs with immediate and visible outcomes over investments in infrastructure and processes that may yield more difficult to pin down returns. While a number of funders have made efforts to be strategic in their grant-making, funding in the field as a whole is still a scattershot of diverse and mostly uncoordinated gifts and grants reflecting idiosyncratic priorities and funding models. Given the quasi-anarchic state of the field, it is difficult to imagine why the funding sector should be any different. In some respects, it may be better organized than most of the substantive domains. The question for the future, however, is whether the substantial investments being made and the enormous impact that funders are having on the field are achieving all that they could. What we can suggest is that changes would be needed at both ends of the pipeline—among the funders and among the institutions and programs being supported—in order for the full potential of the multi-millions of dollars now being injected into the system by philanthropists to be realized.

Issues and Challenges

How one assesses Jewish education’s progress or lack thereof over the past decade depends on what criteria one employs. If the measure is overall participation, the picture is at best a mixed one—flat or declining numbers in some important areas

(e.g., non-Orthodox day schools and complementary programs), modest gains in others (camp). By other criteria, however, e.g., the sheer number and variety of new initiatives launched, or the rapid growth of several major initiatives (e.g., Birthright Israel, PJ Library, Moishe House) that have attracted wide participation, including from among the previously non-engaged, the decade has been one of real progress. For what is perhaps the most important criterion of all—the impact of Jewish education on individuals and the community—we have little data upon which to rely. Outcome evaluation in Jewish education remains rare and rudimentary.

What does seem clear is that American Jewish education faces a number of issues in the coming years that will largely determine its overall robustness and resiliency in a rapidly changing and often challenging environment. We would identify four such issues, diverse in nature, that are likely to affect significantly Jewish education's reach and impact in the years ahead:

1. *Access and affordability*

The issue that has probably attracted the greatest public attention is the cost (or, to be more precise, the price) of Jewish education. Nearly every month another article appears somewhere in the Jewish media about how the rising price of day school education is squeezing families and causing some to opt out of day school altogether. The perceived “crisis of affordability” in the day school arena has precipitated a range of efforts either to reduce the cost of education (e.g., by adding online learning, opening new schools—some full day, some intensive complementary programs—that operate more inexpensively, or consolidating back office activities) or to raise more money through endowment campaigns, community appeals, or other means to lower the price that families have to pay.

Though cost and price have received less attention in other domains, many of these, including complementary education, early childhood education, Israel travel, and summer camp have been impacted as well. Even efforts to deal with the challenges—like the free or low-cost complementary programs offered by Chabad and, especially, the free trips to Israel that are a critical element of Birthright's mass appeal—have had ripple effects that are not entirely beneficial from a broader systemic perspective.

In truth, we have almost no good studies of the economics of Jewish education.¹⁶ And, the situation is undoubtedly more complex than persistent cries about high prices would indicate. “Affordability” is both an absolute and a relative concept. The perceived importance and value of Jewish education affect what people are willing to pay, in some instances more than their incomes. How to organize the funding of educational programs (like day schools or summer camps) that need a sizable investment to be implemented at a level of quality commensurate with participants' desires and expectations is a multivariate equation. Some day schools have found that far from lowering tuitions for all, setting a high tuition level for

¹⁶CASJE has recently convened a panel to review existing research and develop a research agenda in the areas of the economics and sustainability of Jewish education. This is a much needed step for the field.

those able to pay (and offering a quality product to entice them to do so) is the key to generating sufficient revenue to make the school affordable via generous scholarships to those who genuinely need the assistance. Who should pay what portion of the cost of Jewish education—consumers, private donors, community-wide Jewish funds, even the government—for whom and in what settings (day schools, Israel trips, and summer camps only, or synagogue complementary programs as well?), is a question without a consensus answer today.

Clearly, the Jewish community as a whole has an important stake in encouraging and facilitating educational participation. But, how best to do this—what mix of targeted customer incentives, across the board price reductions, new tuition models (e.g., “fair share” approaches), investments in program quality and marketing, and attentiveness to other factors like geography and scheduling—and from whence the money will derive for any of these, remain unanswered and perhaps unanswerable queries on anything more than an experimental, case by case basis. Some observers have argued that entirely new business models are needed:

Raising ever more money for scholarships to keep up with spiraling tuition costs is not the answer—the dollars necessary to reach the scale of participation to which we must aspire are simply not there.... In order to take Jewish camp and other Jewish educational institutions to scale, we need to look for new business models that expand the range of opportunities to meet the range of financial wherewithal among the members of our community. This is not just smart business; it is a moral imperative for our Jewish future. (Bar-Tura 2010)

But what these new business models are is not evident. What we can be relatively sure of is that these financial issues will not recede over the next years, and the lack of good economic data and research, as much as the shortage of funding itself, will make this a contentious and confusing arena of activity for the foreseeable future.

2. *Bridging silos*

We noted above the extent to which Jewish education remains a siloed field in which institutions, funders, and entire domains operate along largely separate tracks, with little effort at cross-field coordination and synergizing. As described by Jack Wertheimer (Wertheimer 2005, p. 5) in a seminal report published by The Avi Chai Foundation:

The field of Jewish education is currently based on a loose, barely connected network of autonomous educating institutions. Each operates as a silo—a term employed by the information technology industry to characterize the uni-dimensional manner in which institutions and fields of knowledge operate in isolation, as vertically organized operations, divorced from constructive, horizontal interaction with others. The current challenge in the field of Jewish education is to link the silos, to build cooperation across institutional lines and thereby enable learners to benefit from mutually reinforcing educational experiences and to help families negotiate their way through the rich array of educational options created over the past decade and longer.

The siloization of Jewish education persists on all levels. Even within individual synagogues, and despite more than 20 years of calls for them to integrate learning across various programs and sub-groups, the norm remains one of separation—between religious school and youth program, between adult learning

and children's activities, between worship and study. Across institutional boundaries, the situation is worse. Even within the same movement, synagogues, day schools, and camps often have little to do with one another, and the participants in them experience no connection between the learning that occurs in each setting.

This siloization inhibits both the creation of synergies across programs (which can increase their impact) and smooth "handoffs" of learners from one setting to another. As a result, the ideal of a "lifelong Jewish learning journey" becomes more of an obstacle course to negotiate than a clear pathway through multiple reinforcing experiences. From the learner's (and family's) perspective, Jewish education often appears to be a hodge-podge of disconnected programs and institutional sponsors, many of which are not even visible. Instead of adopting a coordinated "customer-centric" approach that would actively help learners and families find the right educational opportunities at the right times, Jewish educational institutions generally behave as competitors trying to grab and hold onto "their" consumers. Wayne Firestone (2013, p. 118), from his vantage point in working with college students who both come to campus from and eventually return to a still siloed community, bemoans the short-sightedness of many institutions and asks: "Where is the thread, the overarching strategy that would enable an individual to understand that each positive experience with a Jewish initiative is just one part of a greater, holistic Jewish journey?"

Happily, this ethos is beginning to break down somewhat. Communities are starting to engage "concierges" to work with families and connect them to institutions and programs. Some are adopting customer relations management systems or apps like Salesforce.com, GrapeVine (developed by an entrepreneurial organization called Measuring Success especially for the Jewish community), and Ramah365 to identify and proactively offer appropriate learning and engagement opportunities to individuals and families. Camps are seeking out new roles in year-round education (e.g., the Ramah Service Corps), and day schools are considering how they could serve constituencies other than their enrolled students (e.g., Brooklyn-based Hannah Senesh Day School's array of programs for community members and high school students). More synagogues are working to connect the various aspects of their educational programming and to encourage their members to seek out learning opportunities in other settings. In a few communities, synagogues and JCCs are cooperating to develop programs and reach populations that neither likely could alone (e.g., the Kehillah Partnership in Bergen County and the Jewish Journey Project in New York City). Several other communities have actively embraced an ecosystem approach to redesign complementary education opportunities for children or teens using the resources of many institutions and entrepreneurial providers.

Still, this type of active cooperation among institutions is the exception rather than the rule. Most institutions are still "making shabbos for themselves." This is not only inefficient and leads to less impactful education; it presents a picture of Jewish life that many Jews on the street find off-putting and unattractive. Encouraging Jews to identify with the institutions they are part of—"my" synagogue, "my" camp—is healthy and helps build commitment and enthusiasm.

But, fewer Jews today are likely to be institutional loyalists simply because the institution encourages them to be so, and even less so if the institution tries to hold on to them tightly and monopolize their affection. Institutions that are open to the wider Jewish community, that hold their members loosely and connect them to other worthwhile experiences, are more likely to earn their continuing loyalty. And, even when they have not, they will have fulfilled a vital role in helping these Jews along their Jewish journeys.

This ethos of weaving connections both among the institutions themselves—who have much to share, to learn, and to complement in coming together more closely—and for their constituents, will be vital if Jewish education is to thrive in the twenty-first century.

3. *Who sets the agenda and collective impact*

Of course, the very same forces that have led to today's siloed system make the transition to a new behavioral and organizational model difficult. Jewish education largely remains what Susan Shevitz (1991) called an "organized anarchy." Normal institutional differences of perspective are compounded by ideological distinctions, making even the idea of shared goals seem chimerical (though we would argue that at broad levels, it is not; at the least, the proposition has not really been tested).

No one in Jewish education has the authority or power to set broad agendas for the field. So, to the extent that dealing with complex problems—like increasing access and affordability, better engaging the unengaged, or creating smoother pathways for learners—requires coordinated action, this will not be easy to attain. The lack of hierarchies and lines of accountability beyond the institutional level affects more than just "big issues," however. Setting agendas at every level and in every setting is a multi-player "game." The respective roles of volunteer leaders, educational professionals, clergy, learners and families, and financial supporters are rarely clear (even if they look so on paper).

Because there are so many different stakeholders involved, it would be doubly desirable if one could assume that each stakeholder was both consistently engaged and well-equipped in terms of knowledge and experience to play a constructive role. This is rarely the case. As in an organized anarchy, participation in decision-making tends to be sporadic and informed by a mixture of sincere (but not necessarily well-informed) intentions, personal experience (sometimes outdated), and political forces. Real power may lie at various points in the system—a dominant professional, a cadre of lay leaders, or (increasingly) a funder. Rarely do the consumers of Jewish education have a major voice in its design or implementation, perhaps one reason that growing numbers are making their choices when, where, how, and whether to participate with their feet.

This uncertainty and diversity in who the decision-makers are makes coherent action in service to a clear vision more difficult, within and across institutions, and certainly at the communal and national level. Even where there is broad agreement on certain goals—e.g., having more young people continue their Jewish education through the teen years—formulating and implementing actions to move toward their

realization is frequently a lengthy and poorly organized process. Formal planning, especially planning intended to be “strategic” and far-reaching, does not have a strong track record of success at any level in Jewish education (Woocher 2011). But, the kind of ad hoc processes that are more common (and more realistic) generally do not benefit from the kind of experimentalist, learning-as-we-go, evolving-to-improve discipline that would make them surer roads to effective education.

The philanthropic and non-profit worlds have in recent years begun vigorous discussions around the concept of “collective impact,” developed by organizational consultants John Kania and Mark Kramer (2011). Collective impact is an approach to coordinating the activity of multiple institutions in service of a common agenda that is particularly suited to complex problems where no single approach or institution by itself holds the solution. Effectively educating a substantial portion of today’s highly diverse, mobile, demanding, sophisticated, and technologically adept Jewish population is exactly such a problem. Continuing simply to try to expand and multiply programs and grow specific domains (like day school and camp) without attending to the need to identify broadly shared goals and measures to assess progress, coordinate activities, share innovations and learnings, and build capacities is a recipe for wasting energy and resources—and ultimately for having less than the desired impact.

In many instances, funders have been the catalysts for collective impact initiatives that aim to address broad social problems. For Jewish education, as noted earlier, funders have also become a dominant agenda-setting force. In many instances this is a boon, because they bring a broad and informed perspective and can match resources to objectives. But funders too have their idiosyncratic preferences, favored domains and institutions and particular agendas and policy and programmatic prescriptions. Though some may be considering it, no major foundation has yet stepped forward to champion and fund a collective impact initiative in Jewish education—particularly one that crosses domain lines. And, though program evaluations (which most funders insist on) may tell us what results a specific investment has produced, they do not necessarily yield a coherent picture of how the whole is evolving and what strategies would be needed to produce system-wide progress toward a measured set of shared objectives.

Lacking a coherent agenda, Jewish education today seems to be a system in which the whole is less than the sum of its parts. That Jewish education influences individual expressions of Jewish identity has often been documented. But, whether it is influencing the major trends in American Jewish life is more difficult to discern. Many great things are happening (as well as many less than great), but Jewish education is still more being shaped by the whirling forces of the environment, Jewish and general, in which it operates than shaping these to affect Jewish life in clear and substantive ways.

4. *A twentieth century education for the twenty-first century?*

Jewish education’s questionable overall impact on the shape of contemporary Jewish life may reflect a deeper underlying question: Is it focused on the right goals and using the right approaches to try to reach these?

This is a complicated question which we will not try to treat fully here. However, the transitions and innovations in Jewish education over the past decade that have figured prominently in our discussion can be seen as dimensions of a larger transformational process in which a paradigm for Jewish education that evolved during the early and middle decades of the twentieth century is gradually yielding to a new paradigm for twenty-first century Jewish learning whose outlines can be glimpsed today, but which is not yet fully established (Woocher 2012).

Part of the paradigm shift has to do with technique—how Jewish education is done. Here, the hallmarks of the shift are visible: more emphasis on experiential learning, more use of technology and the arts, greater opportunities for learners to choose and to be active producers, not just consumers, of knowledge. But, there is a deeper level to the paradigm shift as well. As we have noted, many Jews today are asking how their Jewishness can play a positive role in enhancing and enriching their lives and are looking to Jewish education to help answer this question. This is not a question with a single answer. Indeed, the very individuality of the question heightens the challenge for Jewish education, which must provide answers that will inspire different people at different times in their lives. (This, of course, intensifies the need for multiple educational options.)

Playing on the field of “meaning,” and not simply of “identity” or “continuity” where twentieth century Jewish education focused most of its energies, calls for a different kind of Jewish education that is more learner-centered and life-relevant. Imparting the knowledge and skills to be an active Jew remains important. But, especially in an era where nearly unlimited information is readily accessible at the click of a mouse, helping Jews apply this knowledge in meaningful and fulfilling ways to their lives within and beyond Jewish institutions takes on primary importance. The challenge, as framed by Phil Warmflash (2013), head of Philadelphia’s Jewish Learning Venture, is: “How do you give learners and their parents enough so that they’ll feel good about their Judaism and will want to continue to explore it? It’s not about a body of knowledge; it’s about being able to make meaning from it. . . . It requires a balance of content and experience.”

Jewish education today is in the midst of the transition from the old paradigm to the new. Part of the power of the innovations that have mushroomed on the educational landscape in recent years resides in their more whole-hearted embrace of the new paradigm while many established institutions still struggle with the transition. For synagogue schools and many day schools, traditional measures of success have focused largely on behaviors that take place within the realm of Jewish ritual and Jewish institutional life—prayer and so-called “synagogue skills,” facility in traditional text study, observance of Shabbat, holidays, and other ritual mitzvot. To be sure, the education these institutions provide also seeks to instill values for living a good life, but the actual application of these values to the day to day lives of students now and in the future received less attention (partly a function of limited time). The quintessential expression of twentieth century Jewish education has been the Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebration. B’nai Mitzvah became the pre-eminent act of Jewish identification, a public statement of “membership in the tribe.” However, it also took much of Jewish

education hostage, as the educational process focused on preparing the child for that day and the skills s/he would need to display. It was the day after that presented this kind of Jewish education with a problem—one evident in the high drop-out rate once the Bar/Bat Mitzvah was concluded.

This kind of Jewish education no longer works, but giving it up has proven very difficult, not only for many synagogues, but for many educators (who often know that it does not work) and for parents (who do not know anything different). Shifting to a new paradigm that is less about symbolic acts of identification and more about daily life, in which, for example, the question is not how can we use the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to strengthen Jewish identity, but how can we use it to help Jewish youth make the difficult passage from childhood to young adulthood, will be challenging. Given the variegated nature of the Jewish educational ecosystem, the shift will not proceed apace in all of its regions—some may reject or avoid it entirely. But that this shift must continue to unfold seems incontestable if Jewish education is to remain relevant and effective for young Jews today.

From Expansion to Reconfiguration?

There is a long and honorable history of dire and dour assessments of the state of American Jewish education (including many *American Jewish Year Book* chapters). One recent review of a set of scholarly assessments of the “state of the field” in various domains put the case for concern as follows:

Despite the very real positive developments discussed in numerous chapters, this section repeatedly reflects a widely shared perception that much of the Jewish educational landscape remains moribund—particularly in the context of the primary sites of pre-adult Jewish education, congregational and day schools. Too often, parents remain uninterested in sending their children to Jewish schools; teachers remain significantly under-qualified to teach Jewish subjects; congregational schooling continues to be generally perceived in a negative light; and many young Jewish people continue to reach adulthood without substantive engaging exposure to Judaism.... In some cases, the real concern is lingering perceptions that may no longer accord with present realities, given the development of so many new projects and programs; nonetheless, their persistence speaks to some real and ongoing problems. (Krakowski 2011, p. 313)

We would argue that this assessment, with both its acknowledgement of real changes and its recognition of the ways in which Jewish education still falls short of what its proponents seek, captures the challenges of an ecosystem in transition. Over the past decade that ecosystem has expanded to encompass new actors and new resources, and many of its components have worked hard to adapt to the changing climate in which they function. Nonetheless, the ecosystem has changed more at its edges than at its core, which leads to the question of whether the scope and pace of adaptation have been sufficient to ensure its continued robustness, especially for its most important inhabitants: learners.

There are times in an ecosystem’s development when expansion and adaptation may not be sufficient. This may well be such a time for Jewish education. If this

is the case, then what is needed for Jewish education to thrive going forward is a reconfiguration, a reorganization of its components and of the relationships among them to address more effectively some of the longstanding weaknesses of the system and some of the emerging challenges cited above. In his work on ecosystems for innovation in business and other organizational settings, Adner (2012, pp. 177–78) proposes five “levers” for ecosystem reconfiguration:

1. Separation—decoupling elements that are currently bundled;
2. Combination—bundling elements that are currently decoupled;
3. Relocation—shifting existing elements to new positions in the ecosystem;
4. Addition—introducing elements that are currently absent;
5. Subtraction—eliminating existing elements.

Some reconfiguration of this type is already taking place, especially as new elements are being added to Jewish education’s ecosystem and new relationships are developing between (and among) these elements and existing components. But what is happening today falls short of the kind of *systemic* change for which a growing number of observers are calling. More far-reaching reconfiguration would require tackling a number of challenging questions about how other levers for change could be deployed. We might ask, for example:

- Could (and should) complementary education for children be separated from preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, freeing the former from the obligation of spending inordinate amounts of time on Hebrew decoding and training for performance at a religious service?
- Could day schools serve more than their enrolled students and families—e.g., offering Hebrew language instruction for interested complementary school students, offering after-school, summer, and vacation activities, providing tutoring and adult learning?
- Could groups of synagogues and other educational providers join together to create “magnet programs” with specific foci (Hebrew and Israel, learning through the arts, outdoor experiences, service learning) to afford youth and families more learning options?
- Could synagogues, day schools, camps, JCCs, Israel programs, entrepreneurial providers, and other organizations (including some not under Jewish sponsorship) create “packages” of planfully connected experiences that are available year-round and span multiple years, thereby providing learners with well-marked pathways along which to construct ongoing educational journeys?
- Could synagogues shift from being primarily program providers to being “platforms” and relationship managers, guiding families and children to appropriate educational experiences provided by others—including new entrants into the system?
- Could entrepreneurial program and resource providers create shared “back offices” (perhaps with support from philanthropists) to improve marketing and relieve some of the administrative burdens that small organizations face?
- Could individuals and families go to a single source (online and/or in person) that is familiar with their needs and interests to get information about and ready access to many different programs sponsored by different organizations?

- Could educators be employed by communities (or movements) and work as parts of teams in multiple settings, thereby providing for more full-time and decently compensated positions?
- Could communities engage educational entrepreneurs on a community-wide basis and make their programs and resources available to local residents regardless of whether they are institutional members or not?
- Could funders set up consortia to support initiatives at various stages of development so that promising programs are not left as “orphans”?

All of these ideas—and undoubtedly many others that could be proposed—would reconfigure the current ecosystem in ways that would strengthen both its diversity (critical in an era of consumer-driven choice) and efficiency in the use of resources. Some are already being pursued on a small scale. Nonetheless, we do well to recognize that the barriers to their widespread implementation are formidable: they challenge both the immediate economic interests of key ecosystem inhabitants and accustomed mindsets and ways of doing business. They will require that resources be secured and deployed in fundamentally different ways than they are today. But, without an imaginative, courageous, and risk-embracing effort to “change the game” in substantial ways, Jewish education likely cannot escape the constraints that currently limit its reach and impact.

There is certainly room for skepticism as to whether those with the greatest power in today’s ecosystem are up to the challenge, or even really interested in meeting the challenge. Yet, the number of voices calling for radical change is growing. They agree with Phil Warmflash (2013) when he argues: “We can’t rebuild the box. We have to break the box and then build. We have to reframe how we are doing Jewish education.” Imagining precisely what a reconfigured ecosystem would look like is impossible—there are too many variables and too many possible combinations of these. The ecosystem will need to evolve organically; it cannot be designed *ex cathedra*. But, many of the principles that will need to govern its interactions are known: less siloization, less turfism, more room for entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship, more collaboration, higher standards of performance, greater mutual accountability for results, more emphasis on personal relationships, more attentiveness to the needs of learners (rather than those of institutions), more respect for empowered “consumers.”

It is this last guiding principle—an appreciation that in today’s world power increasingly resides with those who choose where, when, how, what, and why they and their children will learn Jewishly—that constitutes the “ace in the hole” for those desiring to break the box and rebuild. In the end, it is those who are Jewish education’s intended beneficiaries who are most likely to precipitate the ecosystem reconfiguration that is needed. They are already voting with their feet (and, in some cases, their wallets), as the wave of innovation that is a major part of Jewish education’s story over the past decade or so demonstrates.

Have we reached a “tipping point” in the transition from a twentieth century Jewish educational ecosystem to one that can thrive in the twenty-first century? It is difficult to say. Clearly, progress has been made, but knotty problems remain. More important, we can be confident that whatever adaptations and reconfigurations are

occurring today, more and different ones will be needed in the future. Ecosystems are always in evolution, and the threats and opportunities of one moment will yield to new ones. For the moment, we can take satisfaction in the fact that American Jewish education is, if not entirely well, certainly alive with new ideas and energy. And that bodes well, whatever the future may bring.

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