

The Master's Program in Jewish Education at the Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education

The Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) offers a master's program in Jewish education that prepares educators and educational leaders for roles in a variety of educational settings, including Jewish day schools, synagogues, camps, youth groups, and nonprofit organizations. Program participants engage in rigorous coursework and work side by side with experienced professionals in practicums in a Jewish educational setting that match their career interests. The master's program includes unique seminars and mentoring specific to Israel education and experiential Jewish education. The majority of the program participants to date have engaged in leadership positions in Jewish education.

COMPONENTS AND UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM

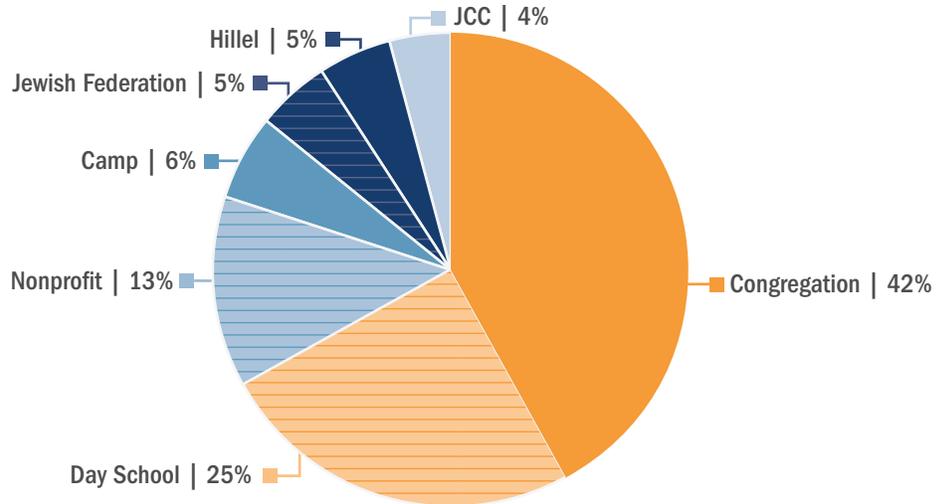
The Master's Program in Jewish Education at the Davidson Graduate School includes a comprehensive array of coursework, field experience, and mentoring. It strives to build a nondenominational community of colleagues who, as a cohort of learners, participate in professional seminars, field experiences, and social events. Participants gain work experience relevant to their professional interests through practicums, mentoring, and meetings with leading professionals in the field. To obtain a master's degree in Jewish education, participants complete a 45-credit curriculum (15 classes) as either part-time or full-time students. Geographically remote participants and working professionals can take the majority of their courses online. Individuals with interest in senior leadership positions in congregational and communal settings can choose the concentration in educational leadership. Those interested in teaching or leadership positions in Jewish day schools can choose the day school teaching concentration. They also may enroll simultaneously in a master's program in Jewish studies. The Davidson Graduate School offers two Israel travel programs to strengthen students' knowledge of Israel: the Visions and Voices of Israel 10-day seminar and the Keshet Hadash semester in Israel, which awards a certificate in Israel education. Through agreement with Columbia University, participants may enroll in courses at Teachers College at no additional cost. Summer sessions with visiting scholars also are available.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND WORKFORCE STATISTICS

The Jim Joseph Foundation's Education Initiative supported the Master's Program in Jewish Education during five academic years: 2010–11 through 2014–15. This section summarizes the characteristics of 189 participants enrolled in the master's program during this time period. Two thirds of the participants were female (67 percent). At enrollment, one half of the participants were younger than 30 years old (51 percent), and an additional one third (32 percent) were 31–40 years old. On average, the participants had six years of professional experience in the field of Jewish education. The vast majority of the participants were from the United States (98 percent), primarily from the Northeast (71 percent). Within their first two years after graduation, alumni

worked in congregational settings; Jewish day schools; camps; Hillels; Jewish community centers (JCCs); and other nonprofit organizations, including national foundations and associations (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. Distribution of Participants by Type of Organization



The availability of financial assistance and the reputation of JTS highly influenced participants' decision to enroll in the master's program. Only one fourth (26 percent) of the participants would have enrolled in other master's programs if they had not been accepted to Davidson's program. About one fifth would have stayed in their current job and would not have sought continued education, and nearly one in 10 participants (9 percent) would exit the field of Jewish education (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2. Alternative Plans of Master's Participants

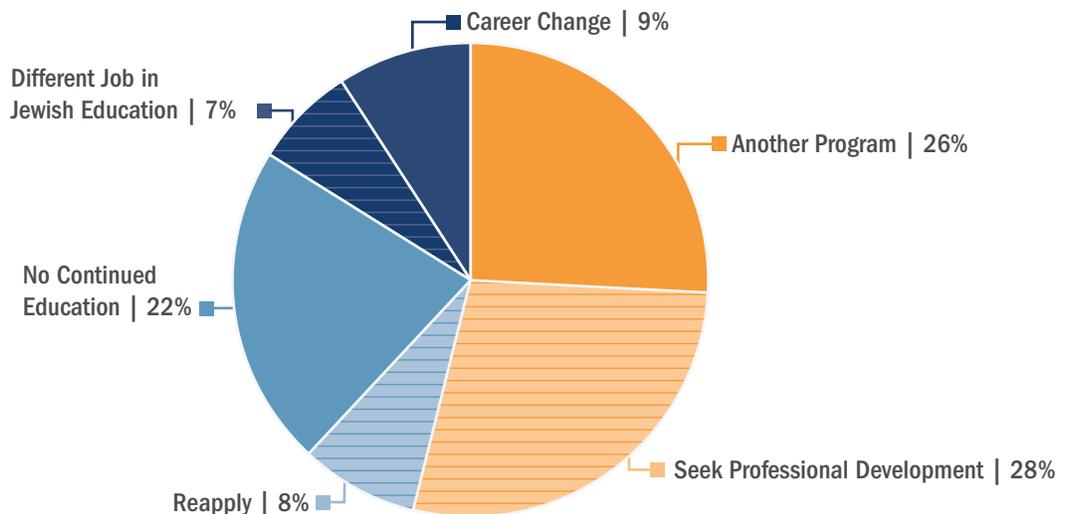
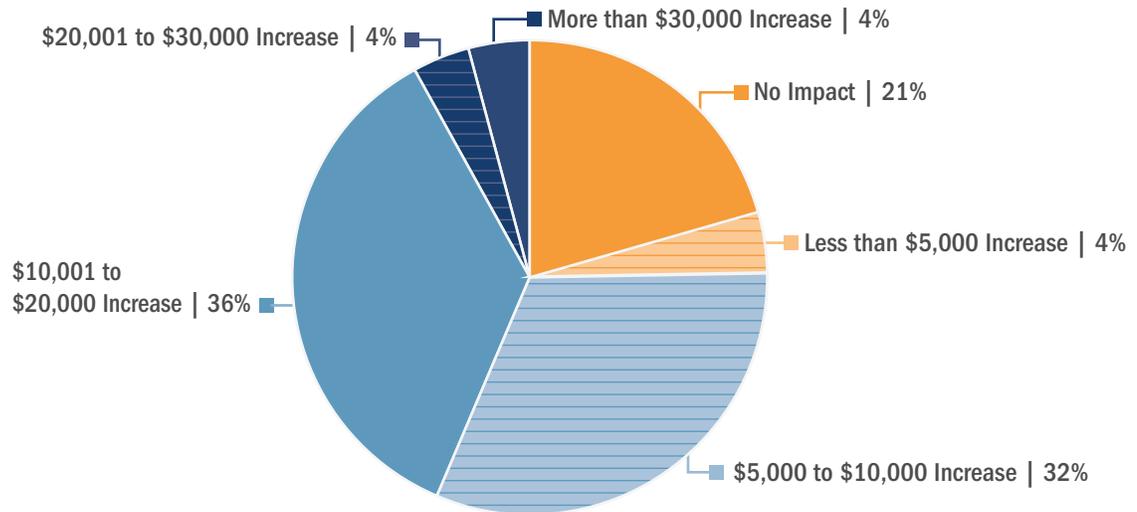


Exhibit 3. Impact of Degree on Salary



Most of the participants expected that their master’s degree would lead to an increase in their annual salary relative to their salary at the time of enrollment (Exhibit 3).

PROGRAM SATISFACTION

The majority (82 percent) of the participants reported that the master’s program met or exceeded their expectations. The participants noted individual attention from faculty members, positive effects on professional networking, and the experiential education courses as strengths of the program. The relative smaller number of less satisfied participants were interested in more options for course selection. The Keshet Hadash program offered a comprehensive set of learning opportunities, including Hebrew study at Ulpan Milah; academic courses on topics in Israel studies, such as Israel in Contemporary Jewish Education and The State of Israel: Origins, Early History, and Contemporary Voices; courses in education at a local Israeli college (David Yellin College); participation in making films about life in Israel in collaboration with Maaleh school; field trips and encounters with experts and Israeli Hillel members; and tutoring support on Israel education in theory and practice. Participants of the Keshet Hadash program unanimously felt that the program substantially deepened their knowledge of multiple facets of Israel, including history, culture, society, politics, religious life, and conversational Hebrew.

The Visions and Voices seminar is offered to first-year Davidson students. Some of these students stay in Israel for the Keshet Hadash program. During their 10-day trip, students travel throughout Israel and explore three main themes in Israel education: (1) the place of Israel in Diaspora Jewish identity, (2) educational visions within Israel, and (3) teaching Israel in the Diaspora. All participants’ reported increased motivation to pursue Israel education work within the Jewish community.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The Jim Joseph Foundation’s Education Initiative seeks to increase the number of exceptional educators, administrators, and specialized support staff through investments in programs that

attract, retain, and develop talent in Jewish education. The initiative is based on the assumption that given the right opportunities and support for career development, educators, administrators, and specialized support staff can deliver the best possible Jewish education for every child, adolescent, and young adult. To ensure their success, the initiative invested in professional development and degree programs at three institutions: Yeshiva University, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, and JTS.

To characterize how the programs supported by the Education Initiative influenced the work of individuals as Jewish educators and educational leaders, AIR researchers developed the Professional Growth Matrix (Exhibit 4), which is divided into four quadrants. Each quadrant embodies a profile of professional growth. The y-axis represents the ability to plan, manage, and implement processes and programs in Jewish education settings. The x-axis represents knowledge of effective, developmentally appropriate, Jewish educational practices. The currently available data represent the program's short-term effects. Long-term program effects may be greater as participants assume higher level positions that enable the application of their knowledge and skills.

The effects of the program on each participant depend on many factors, including prior Jewish knowledge and attitudes toward Jewish education, the type of organization and professional role in which the participant works, and autonomy to implement new practices and influence programming at the organizational level.

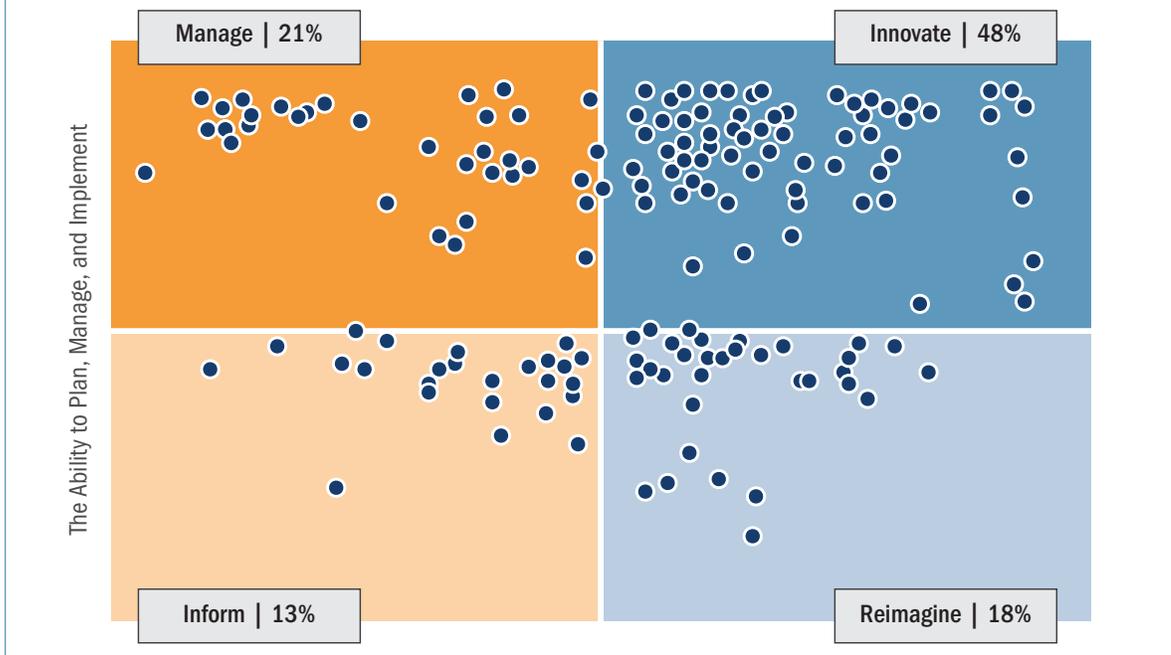
AIR used quantitative and qualitative data sources (participant surveys, alumni surveys, participant interviews, and employer interviews) to analyze the extent to which the master's program supported the professional growth of Jewish educators. Professional growth was estimated according to criteria in two categories: (1) ability to plan, manage, and implement programs and (2) knowledge of high-quality Jewish educational practices. The criteria listed under each category receive equal weight. The resulting score for each category is the sum of all criteria and an error component.

These data were coded using a systematic review form based on the following criteria:

Ability to Plan, Manage, and Implement Programs

- **Process Knowledge.** The participant deepened and broadened planning, coordinating, budgeting, supervising, staffing, and other management skills.
- **Relationship Skills.** The participant gained practical skills for managing interactions with colleagues, building a committed staff, and establishing connections within the organization and with individuals in other organizations.
- **Instructional Improvement.** The participant applied the new knowledge and skills from the program to refine or create a program or curriculum in Jewish education.
- **Organizational Improvement.** The participant applied the new knowledge and skills from the program to refine or create processes or policies that promote the capacity and efficiency of the organization.
- **Professional Network.** Through the program, the participant became part of a supportive professional network.
- **Professional Commitment and Self-Esteem.** Through the program, the participant developed stronger confidence in his or her own abilities, a commitment to a career in Jewish education, and motivation to apply the new knowledge and skills to support high-quality Jewish education.

Exhibit 4. Davidson Graduate School Professional Growth Matrix



Note. $N = 189$ participants across two cohorts; percentages of participants follow each quadrant label.

Knowledge of High-Quality Jewish Educational Practices

- **Knowledge of Educational Practices.** The participant acquired knowledge of general educational models, research-based practices, and the alignment of pedagogy with learners' needs and developmental stages.
- **Jewish Learning.** Through the program, the participant acquired knowledge of effective pedagogy of Jewish studies and how to infuse Jewish values into staff learning; program development; and the implementation of programs for children, adolescents, and young adults.
- **Community Relations.** Through the program, the participant acquired knowledge of practices to assess the needs of the local community and align the organization's programs with these needs.
- **Job Description.** The participant gained a greater understanding of the responsibilities involved in one's professional role as well as the roles of others in the organization.
- **Translation of Theory to Practice.** The participant gained the ability to identify models of educational practice that are relevant to one's organization and adapt these models to fit the local context of the organization.
- **Needs Assessment.** The participants gained greater ability to collect and interpret data about the needs of one's organization, program, or classroom and identify areas for improvement.

Each dot on the graph in Exhibit 4 represents one participant. In this graph, each participant is classified into one of four quadrants based on the estimated program effects on the participant. The quadrants are labeled based on their location on the x-axis and y-axis, as follows:

- **Innovate.** High levels of change in relevant educational knowledge and management skills that enable high impact on the school, congregation, or other educational setting.
- **Manage.** A high level of change in management skills that enables one to execute program with high efficiency plus a lower level of change in one's ability to form a new vision for educational programs, practices, or policies.
- **Reimagine.** A high level of relevant educational knowledge that enables one to develop educational materials and become a source of wisdom for others. Participants in this quadrant have a lower level of change in managing or implementing at the organizational level.
- **Inform.** A low level of change in relevant knowledge and management skills. This quadrant typically represents new entrants to the field who work in positions that limit their ability to change current practice or professionals who have jobs that require a different set of knowledge and skills than those learned in the program.

CASE STUDIES REPRESENTING THE FOUR QUADRANTS OF THE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH MATRIX

Innovate

Rabbi Michael Newman (pseudonym) worked in Jewish day schools in a less senior position prior to earning this master's degree. Currently, Rabbi Newman develops curricula for and teaches courses in Mishnah, Talmud, Tanakh, Tefillah, and Jewish thought; assists in the organization and leadership of weekly schoolwide tefillot designed to maximize student participation and engagement among all grades; coordinates and oversees seasonal and holiday programs; organizes annual student trips to Israel; and integrates eighth-grade study of Tanakh and comparative Judaism into social studies and language arts classes. The master's degree provided the necessary qualifications to obtain his current position. As a result of master's program studies, Rabbi Newman is regularly using cutting edge practices in curriculum development, classroom management and instruction, Hebrew instruction, and Israel education. The master's program provided him with the educational knowledge and professional confidence to propose new instructional technique for teaching text studies as well as Jewish values, guide other teachers, and serve as an educational leader.

Reimagine

Ruth Kaplan (pseudonym) is a Jewish family educator and teacher trainer of educators in congregations and JCCs and joined the master's program to acquire greater theoretical depth and Jewish scholarship to inform work. Ms. Kaplan uses the experiential education practices and Jewish studies knowledge from the program to provide and model engaging activities for families, young children, and youth. After attending the master's program, Ms. Kaplan became intentional in linking experiential activities to Jewish values, evidence-based educational practices, and an understanding of child development. Ms. Kaplan also gained an ability to describe to other professionals the rationale for given educational practices.

Manage

Aaron Berkovich (pseudonym) is the assistant director of Reshet Ramah and works to strengthen alumni engagement at each Ramah camp. He creates innovative and exciting educational opportunities for teens and young adults, including Israel education, camping, Jewish personhood and identity education, and hands-on Jewish learning. Mr. Berkovich completed the Keshet Hadash semester in Israel, which inspired thinking about creative programs to connect American and Israeli teens and learning about Israel in experiential ways. The master's degree helped him build professional connections in the field of Jewish education and increase professional self-esteem. Mr. Berkovich builds on the practical knowledge gained from the master's degree to work with multiple teams, coordinate social media efforts, and plan engaging experiences for participants.

Inform

Rachel Jacobson (pseudonym) is a community educator at a congregation, works with a team of professional educators on communitywide programming, and teaches Hebrew to students from elementary through high school. Ms. Jacobson's passions are experiential education, Israel education, Jewish text study, and Jewish history. Before enrolling at JTS, she served as an intern in two Jewish museums. During her graduate studies, Ms. Jacobson worked as a teacher assistant at JTS. She chose the experiential education track and earned a certificate in Israel education by completing the Keshet Hadash semester in Israel. Ms. Jacobson was hired because of the congregation's awareness of the skills, content knowledge, and networking that a master's degree from JTS provides. The career workshop offered by JTS helped her prepare for job interviews. Ms. Jacobson's mentor during the master's program helped build her professional self-esteem and see the wide range of professional opportunities open in the field of Jewish education. The most valuable skills Ms. Jacobson has obtained are pedagogical and curriculum development skills, which are used to write lesson plans and curricular units in a professional manner. Ms. Jacobson also acquired skills in nonprofit management, including budgeting and fundraising, which she hopes to use in the future as the owner of a business that provides afterschool Jewish education classes.