



Partnership for Excellence
in Jewish Education

Research Studies on the Impact of Day School Education

Answering the question, “What is the impact of a day school education?” requires a review of several studies conducted since the early 1990s. Below is a brief summary of the landmark studies completed and in process on the impact of day schooling, as well as some related information gathered by PEJE staff about day school graduates.

1. “Jewish Involvement of the Baby Boom Generation,” by Mordechai Rimor and Elihu Katz (Louis Guttman Israel Institute), a study funded by the AVI CHAI Foundation and published in November 1993. This study shows a positive relationship between the number of years of Jewish schooling and several Jewish outcome variables.
2. “The Power of Jewish Education,” by Seymour Martin Lipset is an analysis of the 1990 NJPS. This study was funded by the Mandel Institute for the Advanced Study and Development of Jewish Education in Jerusalem and published in the spring of 1994. In his analysis of the 1990 NJPS, Lipset argues, “The longer and more intensive the Jewish training, the more likely people are to be committed to and practice Judaism.” (p.57).
3. “When They Are Grown Up They Will Not Depart: Jewish Education and the Jewish Behavior of American Adults,” by Sylvia Barack Fishman and Alice Goldstein (Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies of Brandeis University and JESNA). Published in 1993, this study includes information that correlates marriage behavior with the intensity of Jewish education, finding that 80% of adults with 6 or more years of day school training are in-married.
4. “Idea and Constraint in Jewish Education,” by Walter I. Ackerman (in Jewish Education Worldwide: Cross-Cultural Perspectives, ed by Harold Himmelfarb and Sergio Della Pergola, 1989). The more people are exposed to Jewish education, the more they will be Jewishly identified. “Jewish schooling does not have a statistically significant impact on adult religiosity until there are approximately 3000 hours of attendance.”
5. “The Impact of Varieties of Jewish Education Upon Jewish Identity: An Inter-Generational Perspective,” by Steven M. Cohen (Contemporary Jewry, vol 16, 1995). Provides supporting evidence that “most instruments of Jewish education raise subsequent levels of Jewish involvement.”
6. “The Jewishness Quotient of Jewish Day School Graduates: Studying the Effect of Jewish Education on Adult Jewish Behavior,” by Alvin I. Schiff and Mareleyn

Schneider (Azrieli Graduate Institute). Three reports were funded by Irving Stone of Cleveland and published in 1994. Its major points are the following:

- Extensive Jewish day school education is the most important contributor to the formation of strong Jewish identities, so that Jewish agencies should provide for continuing Jewish education, and in particular, encourage and make possible the establishment of Jewish day high schools. (Report #2, page 8).
- There is a general consensus that Jewish schooling correlates with reductions in intermarriage and more Jewishly active lives.
- Students who attended Jewish high schools have, on average, established Jewish homes, are more observant, are involved more actively in the community, have visited Israel, and were not intermarried as contrasted with those who did not attend Jewish high schools.
- Graduation from a Jewish high school greatly increased Jewish behaviors on several dimensions, including “objection to intermarriage of progeny.”
- The intermarriage rate decreases within the non-Orthodox community as a result of a Jewish high school education.

7. “The Jewish High School Experience: Its Implications for the Evolution of Jewish Identity in Young Adults,” by Charles Shahar (The Jewish Education Council of Montreal), funded by the Federation CJA and released in 1998. This study looks at the role of Jewish high school education on various measures of Jewish identity and behaviors. The study compared Jewish graduates of Jewish day high schools with Jewish graduates of non-Jewish high schools. Findings:

- Graduates of Jewish high schools were significantly more likely to attend synagogue services and observe Jewish rituals.
- Graduates of Jewish high schools were significantly more inclined to donate to Jewish causes and volunteer for Jewish organizations.
- Graduates of Jewish high schools were significantly less likely to intermarry.
- Graduates of Jewish high schools were more inclined to consider making aliyah to Israel.

While there is no evidence of a causal relationship between Jewish high schooling and greater levels of identification and affiliation later, “the evidence of a relationship between such factors is overwhelming.” (p. 6).

8. “Re-examining Intermarriage: Trends, Textures and Strategies,” by Bruce A. Phillips, published by the Wilstein Institute and AJC. (Our copy had no publication date but is post 1995) This study examined factors associated with a reduction in mixed marriage and found that controlling for generation affected the results. “By not controlling for generation, researchers have over-estimated the impact of day school and under-estimated the impact of supplementary Jewish

schooling on reducing mixed marriage.” (p.16). His survey focused on intermarriage rates of adult Jews with two Jewish parents. Phillips found that:

- “Low intensity Jewish education which continues into the teen years reduces mixed marriage more effectively than a higher intensity Jewish education which stops at age 13.” (p.17)
 - “Non-formal Jewish education, formal Jewish education, high school dating, as well as the Jewishness of the family of origin, are all independently associated with reduced rates of mixed marriage.” (p. 30).
 - “The lowest rates of mixed marriage are found among respondents with the most intensive and longest continuing formal Jewish education who also participated in non-formal Jewish educational experiences.” (p. 32).
9. “Four Up: The High School Years, 1995-1999,” by Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, a project of the Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism and funded by the AVI CHAI Foundation, published in 2000. To learn about the impact of the high school years, a cohort of teens affiliated with Conservative movement were interviewed at the time they celebrated a bar or bat mitzvah, and then by these researchers four years later. Findings and conclusions:
- High percentages (90%, 75% respectively) continue to attend synagogue on High Holidays and have some connection with organize Jewish activity, and half have had an Israel experience.
 - The inputs (items relating to Jewish identity) work cumulatively, that is they show the power of multiple points of entry to sustained Jewish identity.
 - The myth of the bar/bat mitzvah as an exit from Jewish life has been debunked; the strong personal Jewish identities recorded after the bar/bat mitzvah have largely been maintained.

This longitudinal study does not attempt to find, nor does it identify, the vehicle with the most power in maintaining Jewish identity, but concludes that the accumulated programming of the Conservative movement has succeeded in maintaining strong ties to Jewish life among those adolescents affiliated with the Conservative movement at age 13. The researchers conclude that “the more, the more” syndrome is operating, that is, “multiple Jewish connections work best.”

10. College Matriculation Data of graduates of Jewish high schools collected by PEJE (2005, 2004, 2003, 2002, 2001). See the PEJE website:
http://www.peje.org/knowledge/Research_Clearinghouse/Research_Clearinghouse.php

11. “Kadimah School: The Pursuit of Scholastic Excellence and Religious Commitment” by Dr. Stanley Dickson and Karen L. Zakalik, a study of 201 graduates from 1964-1992 of the trans-denominational Buffalo day school. Findings reveal information about impact of day school education on graduates in terms of academic success, commitment to Judaism, and Jewish identity within American culture.
12. “The Impact of Childhood Jewish Education on Adults’ Jewish Identity: Schooling, Israel Travel, Camping and Youth Groups,” by Steven M. Cohen and Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, April 2004, United Jewish Communities Report Series on the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01. This study examines the long-range impact of Jewish educational experiences undergone years ago upon today’s Jewish adults.
13. “Jewish Preschools as Gateways to Jewish Life,” by Pearl Beck, Ukeles Associates Inc., November 2002, Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership. Available at www.caje.org, this research studied three communities to understand the impact of early childhood Jewish education. It includes useful information about why parents choose early childhood Jewish education and the factors contributing to their decision to continue full-time Jewish education in day school.
14. “Jewish Day School Growth in Toronto: Freeing Policy and Research from the Constraints of Conventional Sociological Wisdom,” by Alex Pomson, to be published in the Canadian Journal of Education 27(3). This article reviews the patterns of day school attendance in Toronto and offers suggestions for reassessing the paradigm for day school growth.
15. “Parents Under the Influence: Thinking Differently About the Relationship Between Parents and Their Children’s Schools,” by Alex Pomson, unpublished report. This essay reflects on the role of parents in the Downtown Jewish Day School of Toronto and the impact on the parents of their intense involvement in their children’s education.
16. “The Impact of Day School: A Comparative Analysis of Jewish College Students,” conducted by the Center for Modern Jewish Studies (CMJS) at Brandeis University, compares college age Jewish students on campuses throughout the United States who have attended Jewish day schools with students who have attended non-Jewish independent and public schools. This study considers the impact of day school in a variety of areas including Jewish identity, connections to Jewish communal life, as well as social and academic integration into college.