



▶ AMHSI IMPACT EVALUATION

High School in Israel - The experience
of alumni, parents and their schools

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Executive Summary

In 1972, AMHSI opened the first program for high school students from the United States to complete part of their high school education in Israel. This research report is written as part of larger strategic evaluation currently conducted by AMHSI to understand the changes taking place in the American Jewish community and the manner in which AMHSI should respond in each of the following areas:

- Adapting the educational program while maintaining educational quality
- Motivation and mobilization of alumni
- Developing effective recruitment techniques

Each of these areas is examined from the perspectives of AMHSI alumni, their parents, and the schools which they attend.

The Research

1. An Internet based survey of all AMHSI alumni. Of the total alumni body of 16,117 (as of date of research), 7323 alumni with e-mail addresses were contacted, 1376 (19%) responded.
2. An Internet survey of parents who sent a child to AMHSI in the past eight years. 4,627 parents who sent a child to AMHSI in the past 8 years received the survey. 1,413 (31%) parents responded.
3. Telephone interviews with key contacts from 4 Public and 5 Day Schools that act as feeders for AMHSI.

The research took place over a two-month period in January and February 2009.

Main Findings

By all measures employed in this evaluation, parents, alumni and partner schools regard AMHSI as a successful program.

- High percentages of alumni and parents are willing to recommend the program to others.
- Alumni rate AMHSI as among the most meaningful programs in which they have participated and in many areas feel that the education experience in Israel continues to have an impact on their lives.
- On all accounts, large numbers of alumni want to maintain a connection with AMHSI, both in terms of contributing time and money and in terms of receiving educational services.

Recruitment

Within the market of high school programs in Israel, the AMHSI Core program continues to attract students who are not candidates for the programs offered by the major American religious or cultural (i.e. Young Judea) movements. High numbers of AMHSI alumni report that AMHSI was the only program venue that they were aware of, or considered in choosing to travel to Israel in high school.

A defining characteristic of AMHSI's Core program is that it continues to attract participants who on one hand have little or no formal Jewish education in high school yet want to build a connection to Israel. 20% of alumni report no Jewish education in high school, with an additional 35% participating in one-day-a-week programs. This is a much lower percentage of involvement than equivalent high school programs in Israel.

59% of non-Orthodox American Jews under 45 do not receive a Jewish education in high school. AMHSI is an address for this population.

The most effective recruitment practices for both alumni and parents are recommendations from alumni and presentations at schools and synagogues.

Parents are a first-priority target population for AMHSI's recruitment program. In terms of proactive targeting of parents, there are two clear groups who are likely to respond well to AMHSI initiated contact:

1. Parents enrolled in Israel incentive programs
2. Households where a child has participated in an Israel study program, but there is a sibling who has not yet been to Israel for high school study.

Educational program

The enthusiasm that AMHSI alumni and their parents express for AMHSI rests on the quality of the educational program. For an education program to receive high levels of enthusiastic support, it must impact the lives of alumni after they leave AMHSI.

- Almost all questions which focused on the experience of study in Israel showed very high impact rankings.
- In comparison to the 1997 alumni survey conducted by JESNA for AMHSI, in 2009 there was an overall improvement in the impact that alumni feel AMHSI has on their lives. 12 of 16 topic areas showed higher impact ratings when compared with 1997 and 2009 surveys.

AMHSI and the Jewish identity of alumni

When compared to the national American Jewish population, we learn that AMHSI alumni are far more active in the Jewish community in terms of volunteering and synagogue membership, have a strong Jewish identity, and feel more connected to other Jews and to Israel than American Jews their own age. This positive difference holds, even when the broader

Jewish population is filtered for only those who have also traveled to Israel before the age of 18 and are from similar Jewish backgrounds.

The difference between "Day School" and "Core program" alumni

The oldest and largest of the AMHSI offerings is the Core program, a two month study program on which students study in place of their regular High School curricula. Students in the Core program come to AMHSI independently, as opposed to with a day school or community group.

Part of the larger change taking place in American Jewish life since AMHSI was founded is the rise of non-Orthodox and Community day schools. Beginning in 1992, the Barrack Hebrew Academy of Philadelphia started to send their 11th grade class to AMHSI for a semester. Since 2003, AMHSI expanded the day school program to include additional schools, which bring a grade of students to AMHSI for a period of a few weeks to a full semester.

While the connection is still significant, day school alumni are less connected to AMHSI. In relative terms, day school alumni are less interested in contributing to AMHSI in the future and receiving on-going educational services.

The survey data indicates that the strategy for deepening the connection to alumni should take into account the different type of impact that AMHSI has had on day school alumni. Day school alumni take away different elements from their time in Israel than Core program alumni. For example, day school alumni are more likely to cite the continuing impact of AMHSI on their lives from the personal/social experience. Day school alumni are appreciative of the chance for independence in the college-style settings that AMHSI provides. They are also as appreciative as Core program alumni for the chance to study Jewish topics while in Israel. For these reasons, AMHSI should reach out to current day school

alumni by stressing the social/personal experience and opportunity they had to study about Israel while living in Israel.

Work with MASA

A major effort is currently being made by the Government of Israel and the Jewish Agency through the MASA organization to increase participation in organized long-term education programs (5 months or more) to Israel. AMHSI should work with MASA and other interested parties to encourage return trips to Israel by alumni. Given the strength of the AMHSI experience as reported by alumni, it is clear that AMHSI can work both during and after the High School program in Israel to encourage return trips and a continued deepening of alumni connection to Israel.

Collaboration can occur along the following lines.

- AMHSI alumni attend a wide range of Israel programs offered by other organizations, making AMHSI a key gateway to participation in long term travel programs. Given the strength of the AMHSI experience as reported by alumni, it is clear that a concerted marketing effort during the high school program and in the ensuing years would likely raise the numbers of alumni returning to Israel.
- The need for a coordinated marketing effort with MASA is seen in the fact that post 2000 alumni are far less likely than pre-2000 alumni to return to Israel on an organized trip in general, and on longer (more than one month) programs in particular.

Work with Schools

Overall, all schools contacted for this survey are without exception happy with their AMHSI relationship. They see clear benefits to their students and school and have full intention of continuing to work with AMHSI into the future.

The relationship with public schools primarily focuses on the strain felt by guidance counselors and teachers in the application, academic processes, and reintegration of students after the year in Israel. On all accounts the guidance counselors who were interviewed, felt that AMHSI is doing an excellent job in alleviating the strain resulting from their work with the program. However, given the impact of recent budget cuts and counselors' increasing work load, AMHSI should remain cognizant of this issue and if possible redouble its efforts to make the guidance counselors feel appreciated and to address their concerns in a timely matter. The only area of work with public schools that remains tentative is the need for teachers to receive necessary confirmation of the quality of the grades given by AMHSI. The guidance counselors felt great improvements have been made in this area, and urge AMHSI to continue this process.

In terms of AMHSI's marketing program, it is also important to note that the investment made in the past to bring guidance counselors to Israel to visit the AMHSI program seems to have paid off. The counselors expressed appreciation for the chance to see the program first-hand, and it appears to have fortified their commitment to helping students manage the process needed to leave their local school for a semester.

In comparison to the public schools, the relationship between AMHSI and the Jewish day schools is of a more complex and multi-dimensional nature. The result is greater work for AMHSI, but also greater opportunity.

A primary difference between the public and Jewish day schools is that the latter view AMHSI as an extension of their schools. This is the case for Jewish and secular studies and Israel education. The schools expect an academic curriculum that delivers on issues such as college preparation, Jewish pluralism, and contemporary

Zionist education. While at a general level, the schools are pleased with the AMHSI experience their students are having, they have specific requests for improvement which are detailed in the report.

In terms of opportunities, three areas stand out:

1. There are major challenges in the area of financing the Israel trip due to pending budget cuts. This potential negative could be turned into a positive in terms of strengthening the AMHSI - day school relationship. AMHSI will do well to reach out to the schools and join arms with them for common fundraising and resource development campaigns.
2. Parents are interested in family trips. The survey data also indicates that some parents are interested in distance-learning opportunities similar to the ones their children experience while in Israel. The area of parental engagement, if developed, will serve both AMHSI and the day schools well.
3. There is room for AMHSI to take a more active role in the area of post-trip follow-up. The process of what happens in school in the year following an Israel trip can begin while a student is in Israel. The follow-up process can also continue into the years following high school graduation through distance learning and offering additional Israel education opportunities through AMHSI. Follow-up programming will raise the profile of AMHSI at the schools and thus increase participation of younger students in future years. Follow-up programming might also serve both as a way to fortify the day school alumni's connection to AMHSI, which as we saw in the survey, is somewhat weaker than Core program alumni.

AMHSI EVALUATION

High School in Israel - The experience of alumni, parents and their schools

Background

The Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHSI) was founded in 1972 by Rabbi Morris and Lenore Kipper and the Jewish Federation of Greater Miami following a study whose results showed that Jewish identity is formed for life during the teen years and that a keen appreciation of Jewish history is the best way to build it.

In the summer of 1972, AMHSI pioneered the first program of its kind for Diaspora high school students to complete part of their high school education in Israel. As of summer 2009, AMHSI boasts close to 19,000 alumni.

Educational Goals

AMHSI seeks to create a strong American Jewish community composed of knowledgeable individuals committed to the continuity of the Jewish people. AMHSI aims to educate young people to be aware of the past, live the present, ensure the future, and assume leadership roles in the Jewish community. Its aim is to help students grow in all aspects: spiritually, socially, emotionally, and academically.

To achieve these goals the curriculum is designed to:

1. Challenge and enrich students on cognitive and emotional, physical and spiritual, individual and communal levels.

2. Add to students' general Jewish knowledge and to their religious and spiritual experiences in the land of Israel.
3. Provide a rich learning experience, one that fosters independent thinking and one that respects and advances the academic and ethical standards consistent with the highest Jewish ideals.

Curriculum

AMHSI has developed an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning, utilizing the historical, geographic, and human resources of Israel. The Core Curriculum centers on the study of Jewish history, primarily in the Land of Israel. The course of study spans chronologically from the Biblical period to the present.

Sessions

AMHSI's original and signature program continues to provide an intensive academic experience for 11th and 12th grade public and private school students from the United States. There are four eight-week sessions throughout the school year and one slightly shorter session during the summer. The four sessions during the school year focus on the needs of students to complete high school requirements.

AMHSI also conducts joint Israel Experience programs with many Jewish day schools for middle and high school students. These programs are three to twenty weeks long.

Research Questions

This research report is written as part of larger strategic evaluation currently conducted by AMHSI to understand the changes taking place in the American Jewish community and the manner in which AMHSI should respond in each of the following areas:

- Adapting the educational program while maintaining educational quality
- Motivation and mobilization of alumni
- Developing effective recruitment techniques

Each of these areas was examined from the perspectives of AMHSI alumni, their parents, and the schools which they attend. The following questions guide the research:

- What are the benefits of study at AMHSI from the perspectives of the alumni themselves, their parents, and their school guidance counselors or heads of school?
- What factors influence the decision to attend AMHSI?
- What is the nature of the connection of alumni to AMHSI in terms of their general good will towards AMHSI and their desire to maintain an active connection?
- What is the nature of AMHSI's working relationship with partner schools? What do the schools understand to be the benefits accruing from working with AMHSI and how do they evaluate the overall relationship?

In answering these questions, we will focus on two comparisons:

1. Comparison between recent and veteran alumni

When AMHSI was first established, the program was the first of its kind to offer opportunities for English speakers to study in Israel during high school. Since that time, additional programs have appeared on the scene.

While there is still no other program that operates two-month sessions throughout the year and is not affiliated with any organization or religious movement, there are nevertheless more alternative options. To what extent should AMHSI consider the changing environment as it plans for the future? The comparison between recent and veteran alumni provides a way to answer this question.

Are there differences between the answers of post-2000 graduates in comparison to alumni who graduated earlier? In particular, are there changes taking place in the motivations that led alumni to choose AMHSI, and to the aspects of the AMHSI experience which the alumni find most valuable? If so, what are the implications for AMHSI's marketing strategy and educational policies?

Where appropriate, comparisons are also made between the survey conducted for this report and between findings from a similar impact study conducted for AMHSI in 1997.¹

2. Are there differences in perspectives that Core program alumni have about AMHSI compared to alumni who attended the day school program?

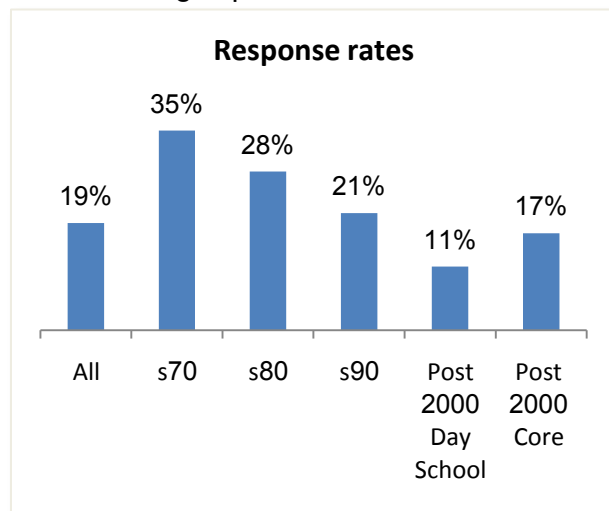
The oldest and largest of the AMHSI offerings is the Core program, a two-month program on which students study in place of their regular high school curricula. Students in the Core program come to AMHSI independently, as opposed to with a day school or community group.

Part of the larger change in American Jewish life that has taken place since AMHSI was founded is the rise of non-Orthodox and community day schools. Beginning in 1992, the Barrack Hebrew Academy of Philadelphia started to send their 11th-grade class to AMHSI for a semester. Since 2003, AMHSI expanded the day school program

¹ Leora W. Isaacs and Jennifer Swartz. 1997. "AMHSI

to include additional schools, which bring a grade of students to AMHSI for a period ranging from a few weeks to a full semester.

The Core program implements the original AMHSI model, to which adjustments have been made in order to accommodate the needs of day school students. Based on the perspectives of the day School and Core program alumni, and their ongoing connection to AMHSI, to what extent should AMHSI fashion a different educational and alumni development policy vis-à-vis these two groups?



	All respondents to survey	All AMHSI alumni
Female	64%	59%
Age: Under 25	30%	26%
Age: 25-44	60%	66%
Age: 45 +	10%	9%
Region: West	13%	8%
Region: Florida	24%	34%
Region: Northeast	27%	20%
Region: Other	36%	37%
Core program	81%	68%
Day School program	19%	32%

The Research Strategy

To address the research questions, a three-part strategy was employed.

1. An internet-based survey of all AMHSI alumni;
2. An internet survey of parents who sent a child to AMHSI over the past eight years;
3. Telephone interviews with key contacts at public and day schools that act as feeders for AMHSI.

The research took place over a two-month period in January and February 2009.

Survey of alumni

An Internet survey was e-mailed to 7323 alumni for whom AMHSI has e-mail addresses. The alumni with e-mail addresses represent 45% of the total body of 16,117 AMHSI alumni. 1376 responded to the survey (19%).² Alumni from the '70s that received an invitation had the highest response rate (35%) and post-2000 day school alumni the lowest (11%).

Respondents' distributions of age, gender, and area of residence closely resemble those of the larger alumni body from which they were drawn. Day school alumni were less likely to answer the survey than Core program alumni, a fact for which we adjusted where needed in the analysis.

An important note: Despite the demographic similarities between respondents and the larger AMHSI alumni body, we must assume that those who answered the survey are more likely to represent alumni with a positive connection to AMHSI.

² Of those who responded to the survey 1,239 completed a short (10 minute) version of the survey. 687 opted to continue and complete a longer version that took the respondent an additional 5 minutes.

Respondents to the survey are alumni:

- Who maintain a connection with the AMHSI alumni department; hence, the alumni department has up-to-date contact information for them.
- Who open e-mail from AMHSI; thus they read the survey invitation and were then willing to answer the survey.

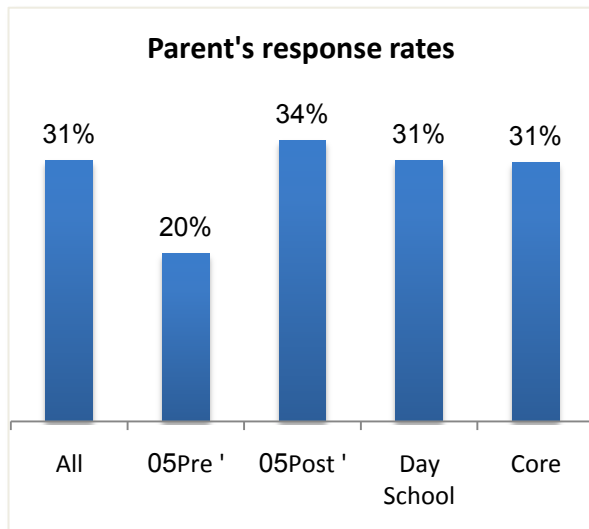
In this regard, there is no way to ascertain the exact difference between the respondents and the larger alumni body.

Interviews with partner schools

In-depth telephone interviews were conducted with key contacts from 5 Jewish day schools and 4 public schools all of which have students who participate in different programs at AMHSI.

Survey of parents

An internet survey was emailed to 4,627 parents who sent a child to AMHSI in the past 8 years. 1,413 (31%) parents responded, with 1,214 (26%) completing the entire survey. For those whose children attended AMHSI since 2005, the response rate was 34%.



As many as 68% of the parents who responded were mothers, consistent with the general tendency for mothers to be more engaged in child-rearing and in Jewish life in general. The overall regional distribution for the parents was similar to the post-2000 alumni, indicating that the parents and the students who responded to the survey represent similar populations.

I. Who responded to the survey?

Recent graduates are strongly represented

36% of the respondents attended AMHSI in the past 8 years. 48% of respondents graduated AMHSI after 1997. 32% are alumni from the 1990s, with 32% finishing AMHSI prior to 1989.

Four-fifths attended the Core AMHSI program

Among the respondents to the survey, 81% participated in the Core program and 19% attended a day school program.

Demographic profile of an AMHSI alumni

Age: 60% of the respondents are between 25 and 44 years of age, 18% are under 20, and 10% older than 45.

Gender: 64% of respondents are female.

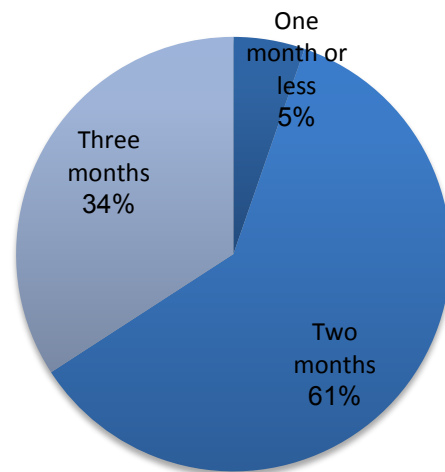
Educational attainment: 35% have completed college, 39% have post-graduate degrees. 31% are currently in high school, college, or graduate

school.

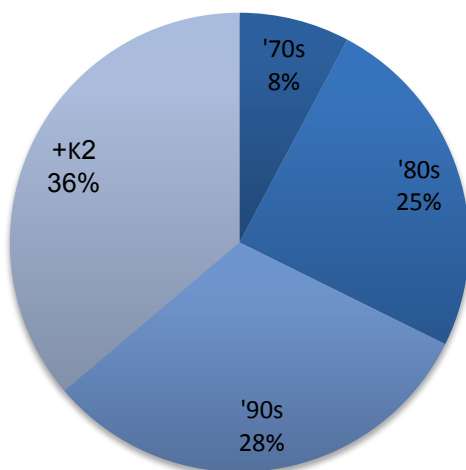
Employment: 58% are currently employed.

Area of residence: 27% of respondents are from the Northeast, 24% from Florida and 13% live on the West Coast. After 2000, the percentage of Floridian alumni drops to 12%, reflecting the expansion of AMHSI beyond its original geographical location.

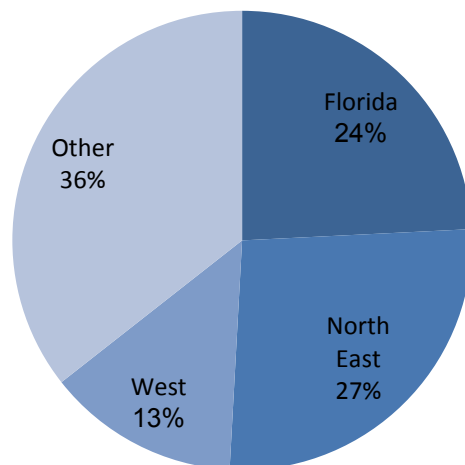
Length of Program



36% of respondents graduated after year 2000



27% reside in Northeast, 24% in Florida



II. Key findings for AMHSI's work with alumni and parents

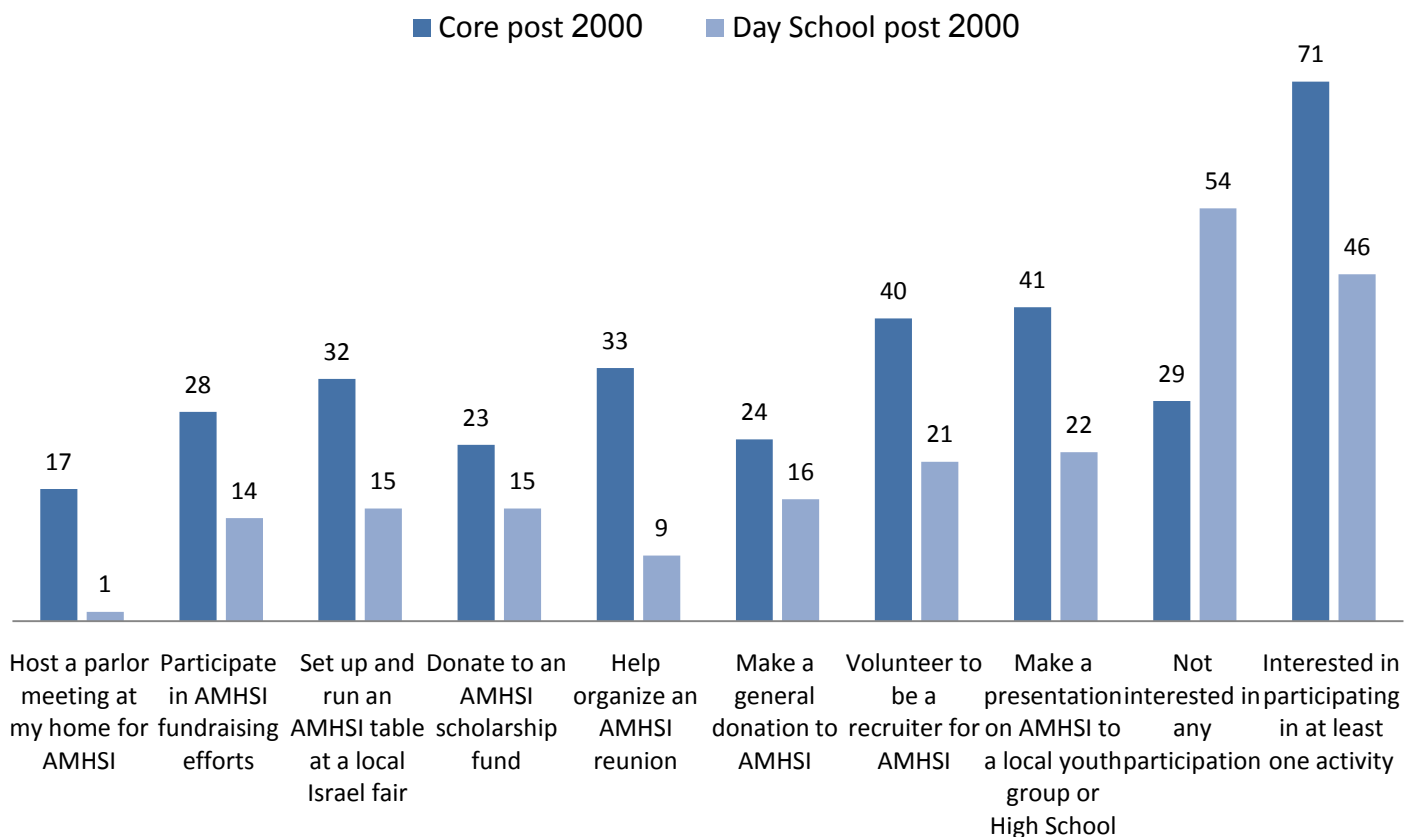
The strategic development of AMHSI can work along several dimensions, including: 1) Alumni development, 2) recruitment strategy vis-à-vis different populations, 3) factors that impact a decision to attend, and 4) elements of the education program that potential participants find most interesting and attractive. This section examines the first three areas, drawing on the alumni and parent surveys. The following section focuses on the alumni experience in order to draw lessons for the current educational program.

Implications for alumni development

How do alumni wish to contribute to AMHSI in the future, and what are they doing in terms of their current contribution? What types of services do alumni wish to receive from AMHSI?

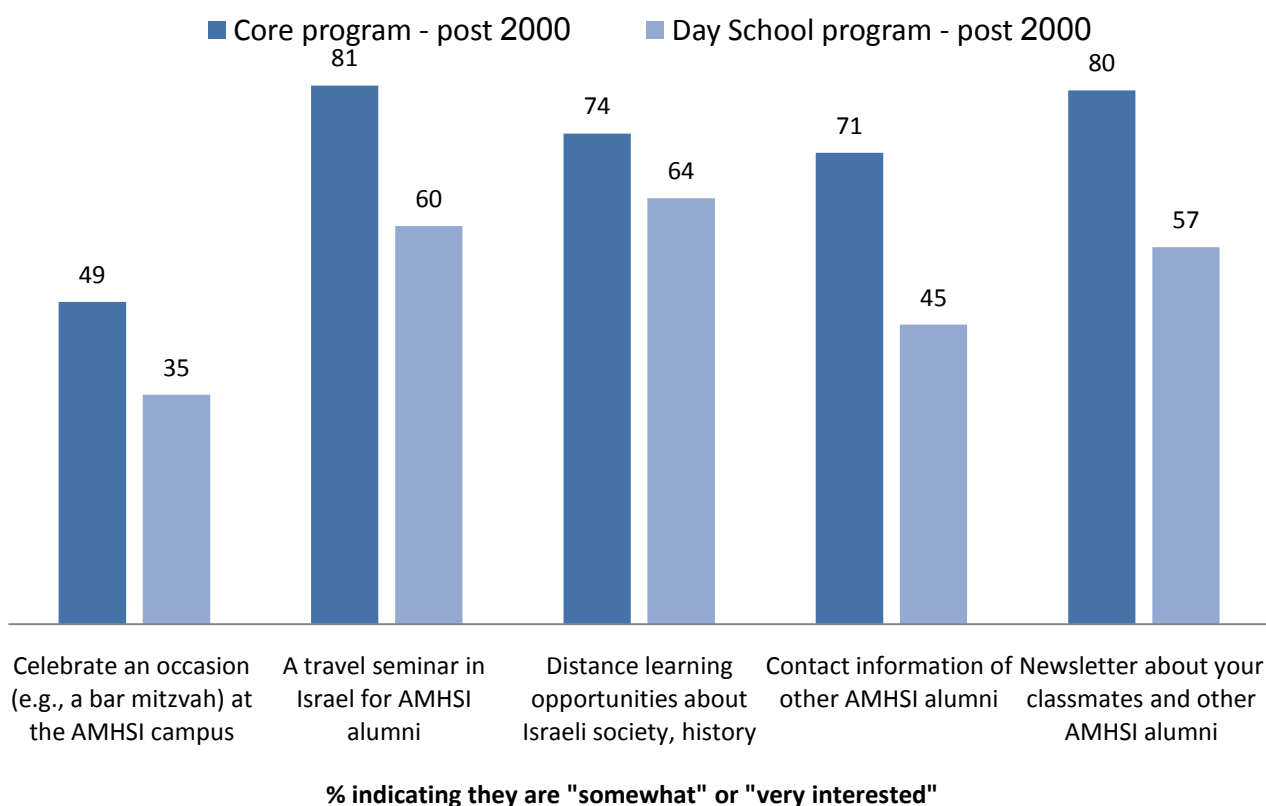
We learn that on all accounts, large numbers of alumni want to maintain a connection with AMHSI, both in terms of contributing time and money, and in terms of receiving educational services. Given the enthusiasm that alumni expressed about their AMHSI experience (see discussion below) these findings are not surprising.

Core alumni are far more likely than day school alumni to want to contribute to AMHSI in the future



% who indicated interest in participating in activity
 *Answered by the 687 respondents who opted to answer the extended survey.

Large percentages of alumni are interested in receiving services from AMHS



Alumni have a strong feeling of connection to AMHSI and willingness to contribute, although there is less interest among day school alumni

Questions were posed to alumni about their willingness to contribute to AMHSI. The numbers indicate that a large number of alumni have a serious interest in maintaining a connection to AMHSI.³

- 60% of respondents want to contribute to AMHSI in one way or another, and 35% have in fact made a contribution.

³ These questions were only given to the 56% of respondents who chose to continue answering questions beyond the initial short survey which all took.

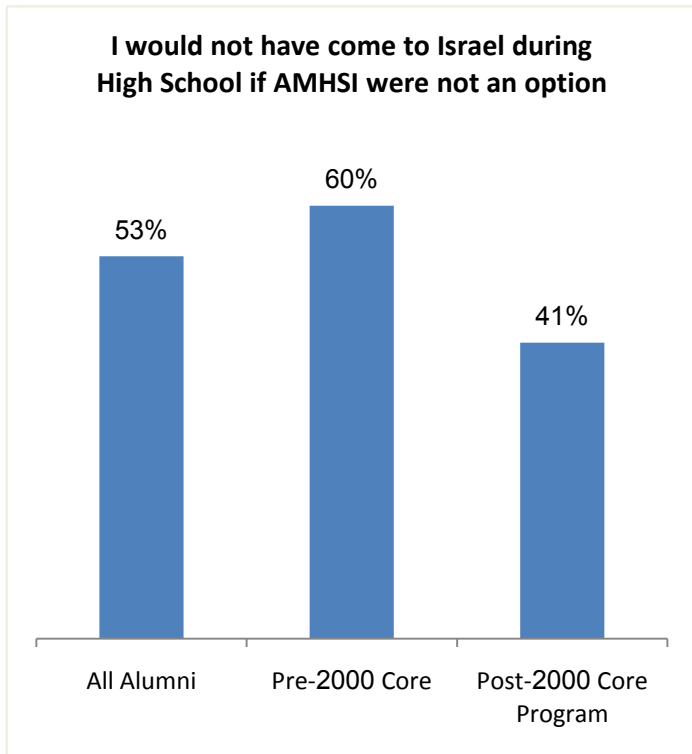
- The largest proportion of alumni is interested in recruiting students and presenting AMHSI to prospective students.
- 24% are willing to donate, and 19% have in fact already done so. Almost 30% of the older (pre-2000) alumni have actually donated to AMHSI, while very few of the younger alumni have done so.
- The willingness of veteran alumni to contribute does not deteriorate with time, although the nature of the contribution changes. Younger respondents are more likely to volunteer for recruiting potential students and to express an interest in multiple tasks, while older are more focused on donating.
- Younger alumni also have greater interest in helping to organize an alumni reunion. They are also more willing to attend a reunion,

with 67% stating that they are sure they will attend if it is held in the United States.

Of special significance for AMHSI's future is the fact that Core program alumni are much more interested than day school alumni to make a contribution to AMHSI in all areas. The gaps are especially significant for recruitment, hosting parlor meetings, and reunions. Still, to date, day school alumni have in fact contributed almost as much as core participants in practice. The only area where a significant difference exists between Core program and day school alumni in terms of their actual current contribution is in the area of making presentations on AMHSI to youth groups or high schools.

Large percentages of alumni are very interested in receiving educational services from AMHSI

As the chart on the previous page shows, alumni are interested in receiving services from AMHSI. In particular, 39% expressed strong interest in an Israel travel seminar organized by AMHSI and 30% are very interested in a distance learning



program about Israel-related topics. This type of alumni-oriented programming is not currently offered by AMHSI and seems like a powerful way both to diversify the organization's business model and develop and deepen connections with alumni.

Implications for marketing the AMHSI Core program

AMHSI has two major marketing venues. The day school program primarily markets AMHSI to schools, which in turn market the high school study experience to their students and families. In contrast, the Core program markets directly to individual students and their families.

AMHSI's work with schools is dealt with in a separate section later in this report. In this section we analyze the survey data to understand the implications for AMHSI's effort to market the Core program.

AMHSI remains a unique offering for those seeking a non-denominational option for high school study or those not engaged in intensive high school Jewish education

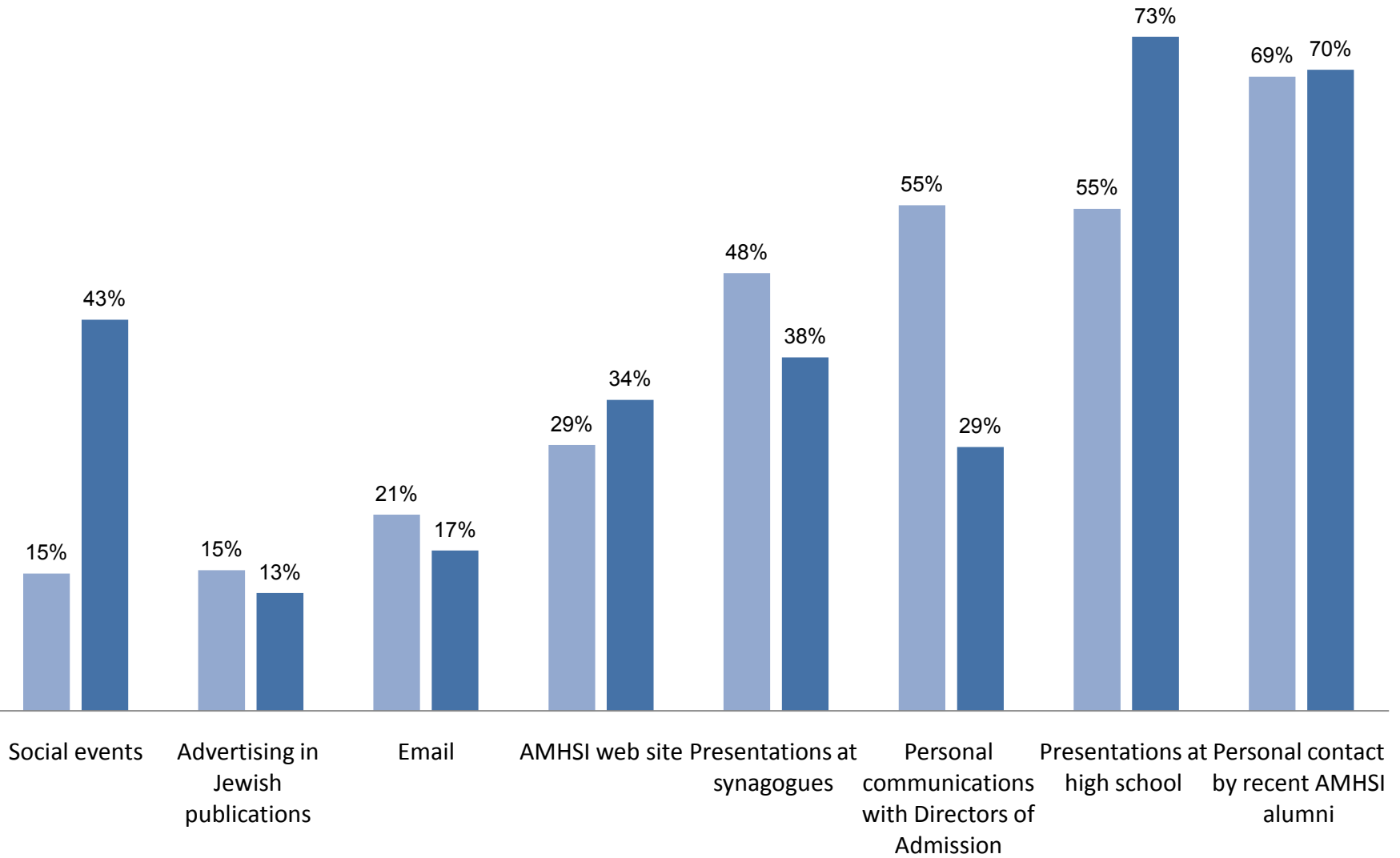
Within the market of high school programs to Israel, the AMHSI Core program continues to attract students who are not candidates for the programs offered by the major American religious or cultural (i.e. Young Judea) movements. High numbers of AMHSI alumni report that AMHSI was the only program venue that they considered or were aware of when choosing to travel to Israel during high school.

The 1997 research found 77% of alumni did not consider any other Israel Experience Programs when they chose to attend AMHSI. In 2009, 76% made the same statement.

Complementing the idea that AMHSI provides a "non-denominational" alternative, we also learned that 20% of alumni report no

Personal contact with recent alumni, high school and synagogue presentations are viewed by both alumni and parents as effective recruitment methods.

■ Post 2000 Alumni ■ Parents



Jewish high school education, with an additional 35% participating in one-day-a-week programs. These numbers are constant for pre-2000 and post-2000 Core program alumni. In other words, AMHSI is important for those who would not otherwise look for an intensive formal Jewish education in high school, within a denominational framework or not.

Post-2000 alumni have greater awareness of alternatives

An important finding for AMHSI's marketing effort is the fact that in comparison to veteran alumni, the number of post-2000 Core program alumni stating they did not consider another program drops by 9% to 67%. This drop might indicate the impact of increasing options for Israel travel and awareness of those options on the part of high school students and their families. If this trend accelerates in the future, it will have important implications for AMHSI's ability to market the Core program.

In contrast, day school participants go with the recommendation of their schools, which limits considerations of alternatives. The survey

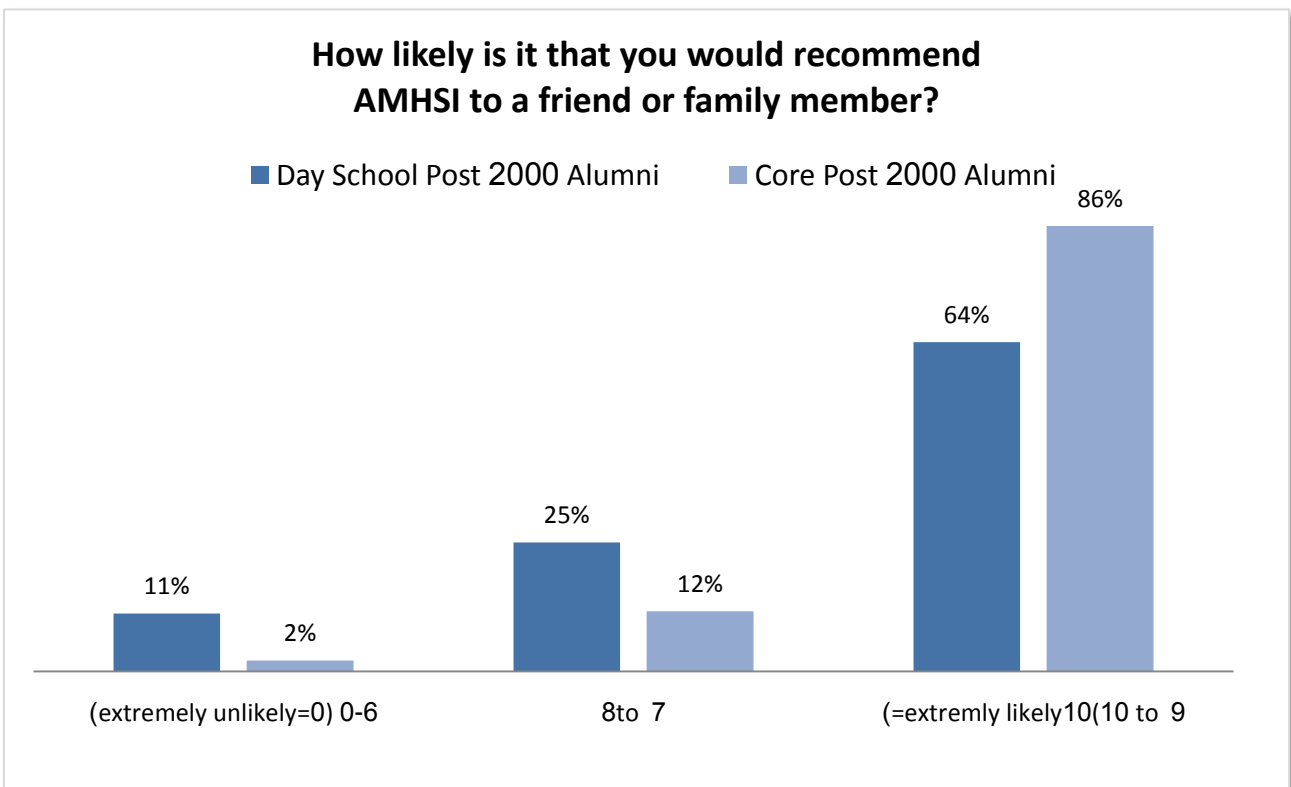
confirms this assumption, showing that among post-2000 day school alumni, 84% did not consider another program. 93% of day school participants' parents felt the same way, compared to 75% of Core program parents.

The same post-2000 effect is seen, when alumni were asked: "Were AMHSI not available at the time, do you think you would have come to Israel with another program while you were in high school?"

53% of all alumni indicate that they would not have come to Israel without AMHSI. Among post-2000 alumni, only 43% of the alumni and 44% of the parents answered that they/their children would not have come to Israel without AMHSI. On this question, there was no difference between Core and day school alumni.

Implications for recruiting practices

Based on the perspectives of alumni, parents and their connection to AMHSI, what do we learn from the survey about recruitment related issues?



Most effective recruitment practices for both alumni and parents are recommendations and presentations.

The chart on the previous page shows that from the perspectives of both alumni and parents, the most effective methods in AMHSI's efforts to attract more students is personal contact with recent AMHSI alumni and presentations at high schools and synagogues.

Alumni are more likely than parents to cite social events as an effective recruitment method, while parents are far more likely to regard contact with an AMHSI Director of Admissions as important.

Among the least effective methods listed by parents and alumni are email and advertising in Jewish publications.⁴

Alumni and parents are enthusiastic in their willingness to recommend AMHSI.

As the findings in the chart on this page and the next show, recommendations of alumni are a critical factor in the decision to attend. Alumni and parents in turn are highly likely to recommend AMHSI to others.

On a scale of 0 (extremely unlikely) to 10 (extremely likely), 80% of alumni and 75% of parents answered 9 or 10 – that they are extremely likely to recommend AMHSI. Only 6% reported never recommending AMHSI at all. 91% have recommended the program multiple times.

⁴ The wording of the question did not specify the difference between use of email for mass-mailing promotions and friends' using email to recommend the program. Based on the answer to the recommendation question, we are assuming that survey takers understood "email" as referring to mass mailings.

Day school alumni are somewhat less likely to categorize themselves as extremely likely to recommend AMHSI

As we have seen in the above, when post-2000 day school alumni are compared to post-2000 Core program alumni we see that while the former are very positive about AMHSI, they are less so than the Core program alumni. In this case, day school alumni are 22% less likely to place themselves in the "extremely likely to recommend" category, and 12% had never recommended the program (compared to 3% of the Core alumni). Among the post-2000 alumni, the Core program participants are 18% more likely to answer that there is a high probability that they will recommend AMHSI than are the day school alumni.

Parents and Siblings

Parents are a first-priority target population for AMHSI's recruitment program. There are two clear groups of parents who are likely to initiate the idea of high-school Israel study for their children.

1. Parents enrolled in Israel incentive programs

A relatively large number (26%) of parents have enrolled in an Israel incentive savings program. These parents state that their children were enrolled in an Israel incentive saving program, such as Passport to Israel and Gift of Israel. Locating parents enrolled in these programs are a likely target population for AMHSI recruitment efforts.

2. Households where a sibling has not yet been to Israel for high school study

26% of parents who have other children intending to send them to AMHSI when they are of age. 22% state that their other children have already participated on AMHSI. This leaves 52% of parents who are not sure of or intent on sending their other children on AMHSI. AMHSI should target these parents. In particular, the 18% who are "not sure" are very likely to comprise a group who stand to be convinced if AMHSI reaches out and addresses their concerns.

Another group of interest are the 34% of parents who will not send their other children to AMHSI, of whom 17% intend to send their other children on a different Israel program. The survey does not provide necessary information to understand the reasons for this decision, but a pro-active recruitment campaign aimed at this group might reap rewards.

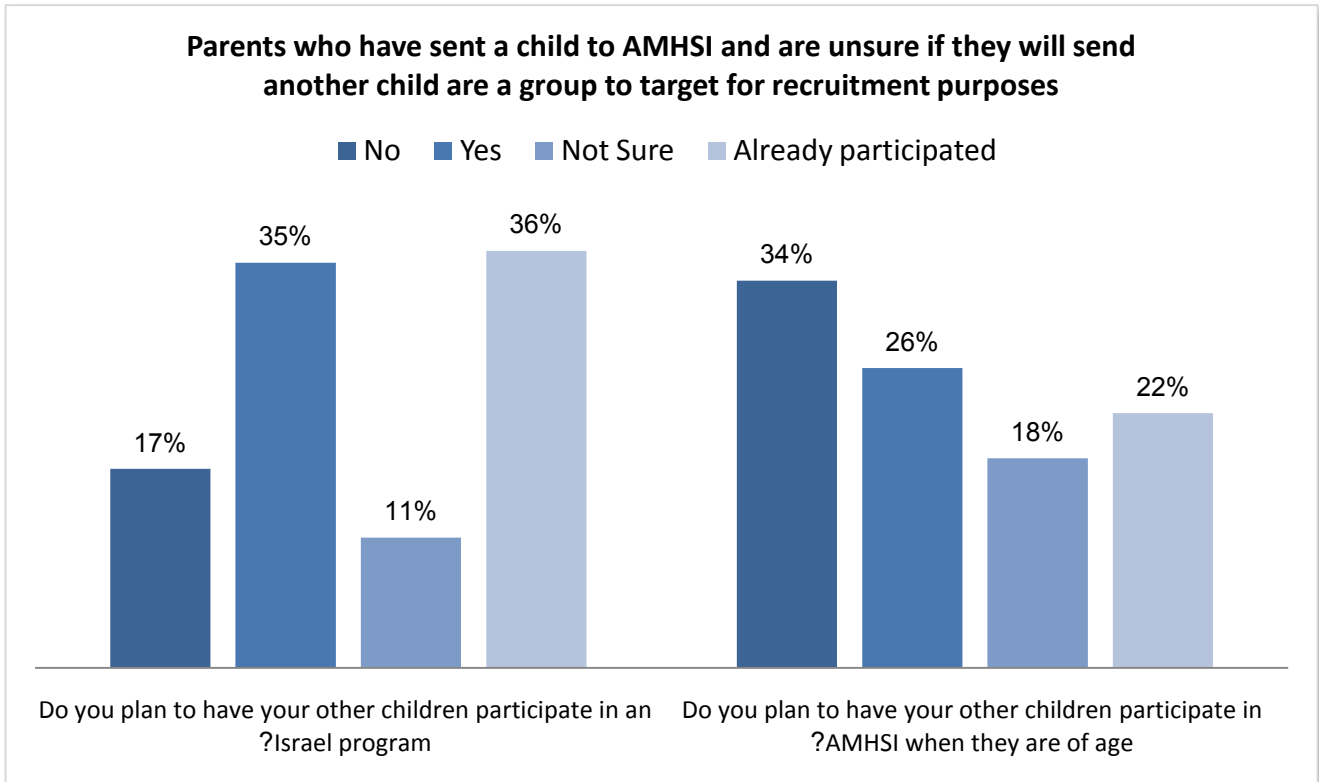
Factors which most influence the choice to attend AMHSI

When parents and alumni make the decision to attend, what are the factors that influence a positive outcome?

Program length, timing, parental opinion and alumni recommendations are seen by all as the most important factors

When asked which factors influenced the decision to attend AMHSI, parents and alumni (limited to post-2000 alumni) agree on the importance of program length, timing, parental opinion, and alumni recommendations (see chart on next page).

- 74% of alumni and 65% of parents felt program length is important.
- 72% of alumni and 61% of parents felt that timing is important
- 67% of alumni and 69% of parents felt that parents' opinions are important.
- 46% of alumni and 51% of parents felt that



the recommendation of an alumnus played an important role.

Parents are more likely to view costs and the opinions of teachers, rabbis, and youth group advisors as important.

On a number of issues, there is a substantial difference between parents and alumni.

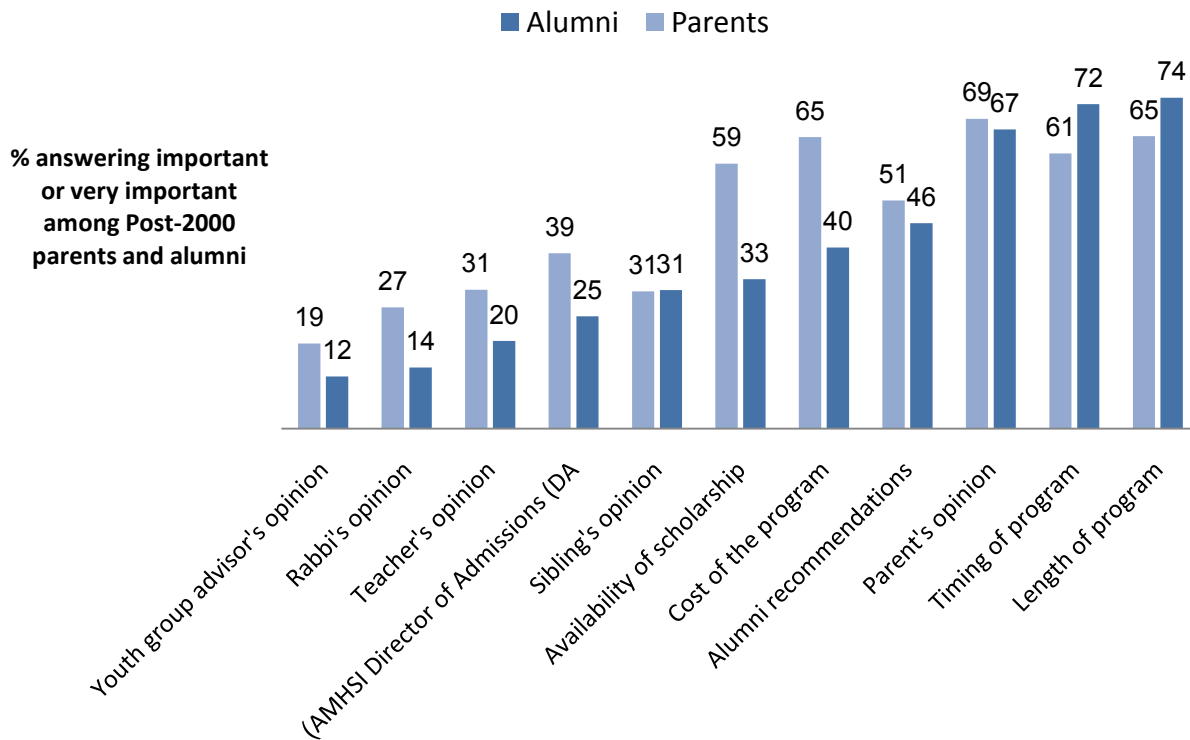
- Issues of cost and scholarship are important to parents and less so for students.
- With the exception of alumni recommendations, the opinions of others are less important factors in the decision to attend AMHSI, but parents are nevertheless more likely than students to consider those opinions in the decision they make.

Scholarships make a difference in the decision to attend

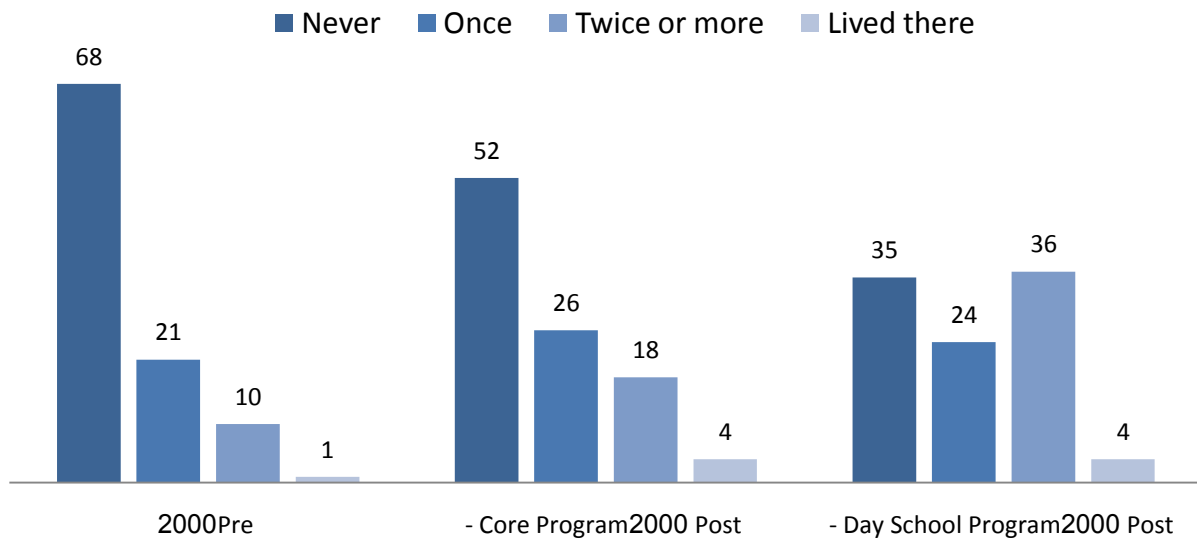
When asked about actual scholarship received and its impact on the decision to attend, the difference between alumni and parents disappears. Of those who received a scholarship, large percentages felt it was an important factor in their decision to attend.

- 35% of all alumni stated that they received scholarship funding. Of these, 64% indicated that receiving a scholarship made a difference in the decision to participate.
- 44% of parents stated that their child received a scholarship to subsidize the costs of attending AMHSI. Among these parents, 63% stated that the scholarship made a difference in the decision to attend.

Timing, length, cost, parental opinion and alumni recommendations are critical factors in decision to attend AMHSI



Before attending AMHSI, how many times had you visited Israel



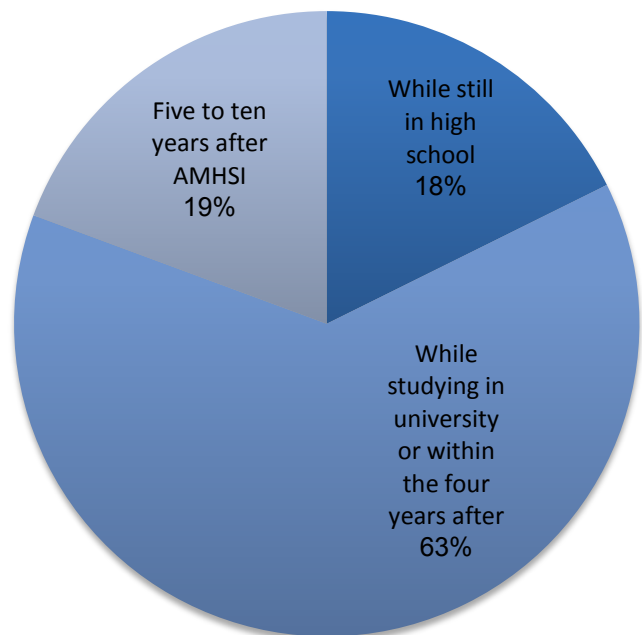
Building on the alumni's strong connection to Israel

A goal of AMHSI is to strengthen students' connection to Israel during the high school study program and contribute to the larger effort of bringing Diaspora Jews to Israel.

The above comparison to the national Jewish population showed that AMHSI alumni have a very strong emotional connection to Israel. We have also learned from the survey that many alumni attribute their strong connection to Israel to their AMHSI experience.

Before attending AMHSI, 60% of all alumni had never visited to Israel. However, there are substantial differences between pre- and post-2000 alumni. The above chart shows that 68% of pre-2000 alumni had never visited Israel prior to AMHSI. For Post-2000 Core program alumni, 52% had not visited, with only 35% of day school program alumni had not paid a visit to Israel before coming on AMHSI.

After attending AMHSI, how many times have you visited Israel?



AMHSI should work with MASA and other interested parties to encourage return trips to Israel by alumni.

Given the strength of the AMHSI experience as reported by alumni, it is clear that AMHSI can work both during and after the high school program in Israel to encourage return trips and a continued deepening of alumni connection to Israel. This work can be done along the following lines.

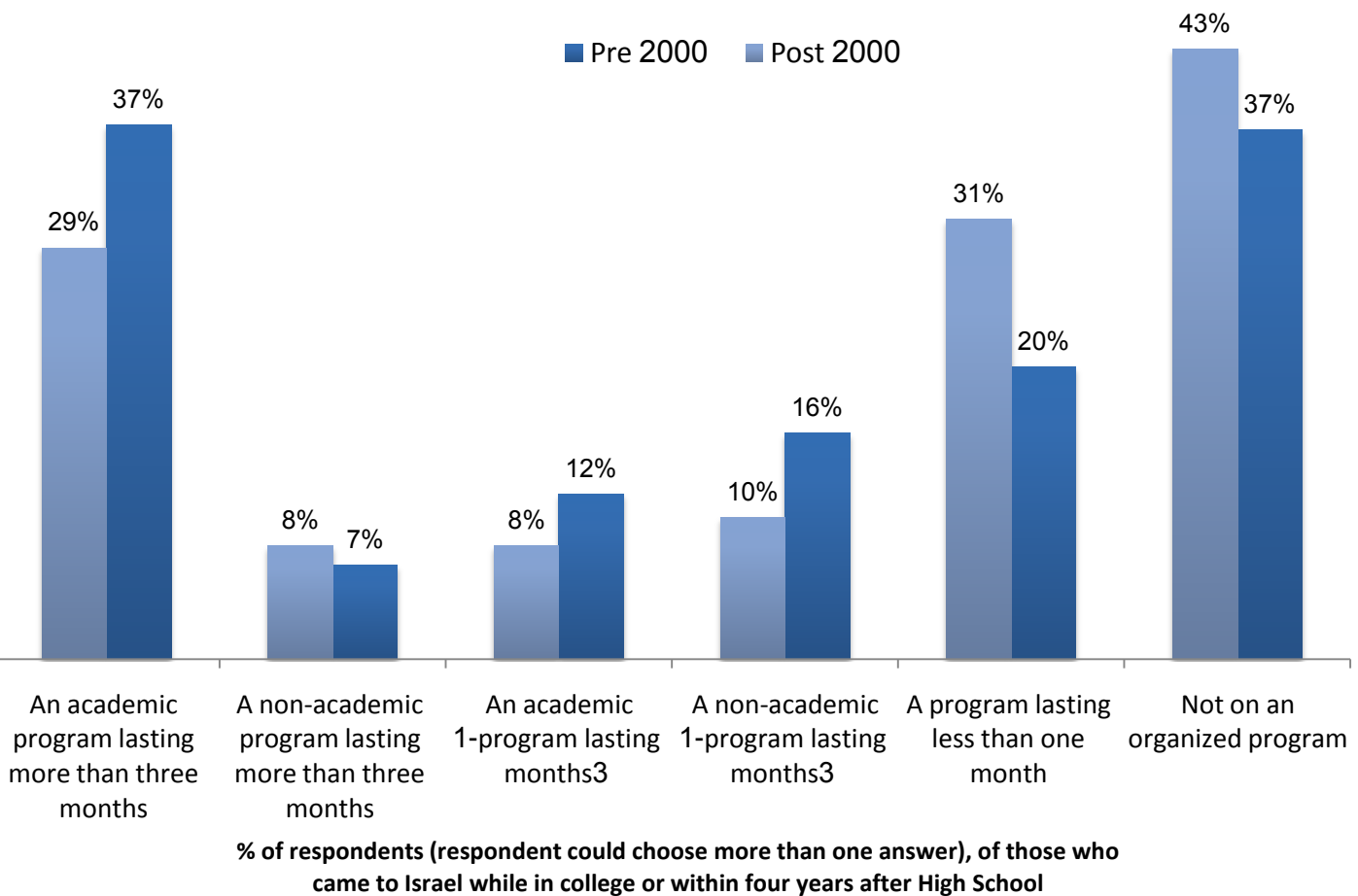
General benefit of continuing Israel programs with AMHSI

On page 12, we learned that many alumni want

AMHSI to continue to serve as a source of Israel-related educational services, including travel seminars, distance learning, and even for the AMHSI campus to serve as a venue for family celebrations in Israel.

Despite their strong emotional connection to Israel, 48% of alumni have not returned to Israel since AMHSI. Based on the survey data, targeting this group in particular and AMHSI alumni in general with return Israel travel options would certainly meet with a warm reception, serving as a means for alumni development and as an additional revenue stream for AMHSI.

Post 2000 alumni who return to Israel within four years after AMHSI are more likely than pre-2000 alumni to return by themselves or a program lasting less than one month, and less likely to participate longer programs.



AMHSI is a key gateway to participation in long-term travel programs and should work with MASA and other interested parties to promote participation.

AMHSI is not the only party who stands to benefit from return Israel travel of AMHSI alumni. Of the 52% who have returned to Israel, 58% do so while they are in college or within four years after graduating high school. As shown in the chart below, AMHSI alumni attend a wide range of Israel programs offered by other organizations. A concerted marketing effort during the high school program and in the ensuing years would likely raise the numbers of alumni returning to Israel through participating in organized programs and increase the amount of time they stay in Israel.

The need for such a marketing effort is seen in the chart below, which shows that post-2000 alumni are far less likely than pre-2000 alumni to return to Israel on an organized trip in general, and on longer (more than one month) programs in particular. Given the major effort made by the Israeli government and Jewish Agency through the MASA organization to increase longer-length trips, there seems to be great room for active collaboration between AMHSI and these parties in two directions:

I. Encourage participation in high school programs

The survey data shows the impact of the AMHSI program on alumni's emotional connection to Israel. Given that AMHSI participants attend while still in high school, the Israel travel experience is likely to translate into college-age travel, providing a tremendous benefit to the alumni themselves and to the fields of Israel travel and Israel-Diaspora relations.

Given the importance of scholarships for the decision to attend (see page 17), it is clear that

resources provided by Federations or organizations such as MASA, when invested in a high-school-age participant, will produce a greater likelihood of continued Jewish involvement for the students as they grow.

2. Encourage return travel and Israel activism by AMHSI alumni

High school Israel programs provide fertile ground for recruiting participants for college Israel programs or college activists on behalf of Israel on American campuses. Encouraging such participation after AMHSI should begin during the program and continue afterwards in coordination with organizations such as MASA or the Israel on Campus Coalition.

Evidence of the enthusiasm that alumni have for their AMHSI experience, were the over 1000 open text responses received to the question: "In your own words, how would you describe the impact of AMSHI on your life, be it for better or worse?" The vast majority of the responses were positive. Typical examples, include:

"Although I attended HSI a LONG time ago, it was the single most important Jewish experience that I had. It shaped my Jewish identity and I always refer back to my experiences when thinking of myself as a Jew. "

"AMHSI has impacted my life so much. I grew tight bonds with other Jewish teenagers from all over the US, I became more into Judaism, and I became more involved in my Jewish life."

"Alexander Muss was the best experience of my life. I made the best friends ever on this trip, had the best teachers, and it was honestly the best two months of my life. I miss the experience everyday and treasure every minute of it. It was amazing and made me become a better Jew and a better person. I loved this trip! "

"After 20 years, it is still one of the major landmarks in my life I will always be grateful for having. It was an outstandingly, wonderful, life changing academic, social, spiritual and cultural experiences which still is fresh as ever in my memory!"

III. AMHSI's educational program: Accomplishments and challenges

Drawing on the comparison between the perspectives of post 2000 and veteran alumni and Core program and Day School alumni, in this section we evaluate areas of the educational program in which AMHSI has most succeeded and those in which the data point to challenges that the program needs to address.

The analysis begins by looking at the nature of the connection that alumni have with AMHSI and the nature of their attachment to Jewish community and Israel. Topics include:

- The general appreciation that alumni express for AMHSI;
- Alumni evaluation of the impact of the AMHSI education program on their lives today; and,
- A comparison of the levels of participation in Jewish life and feelings of connection to Israel between AMHSI alumni and other American Jews who visited Israel in their high school years.

We will then explore the implications of the alumni connection to AMHSI for the purpose of strategic development of the program. In

particular, how do answers to the surveys suggest:

- (1) Adjustments to the current educational program, in order to best facilitate the alumni connection to AMHSI, Israel, and Jewish life in the United States?
- (2) Ways to improve Israel education services offered by AMHSI to alumni, the marketing and recruitment of potential students, and on-going work with AMHSI's partner schools?

High levels of appreciation for the AMHSI experience

How do alumni rate their original connection to AMHSI vis-à-vis other Jewish and general educational experiences?

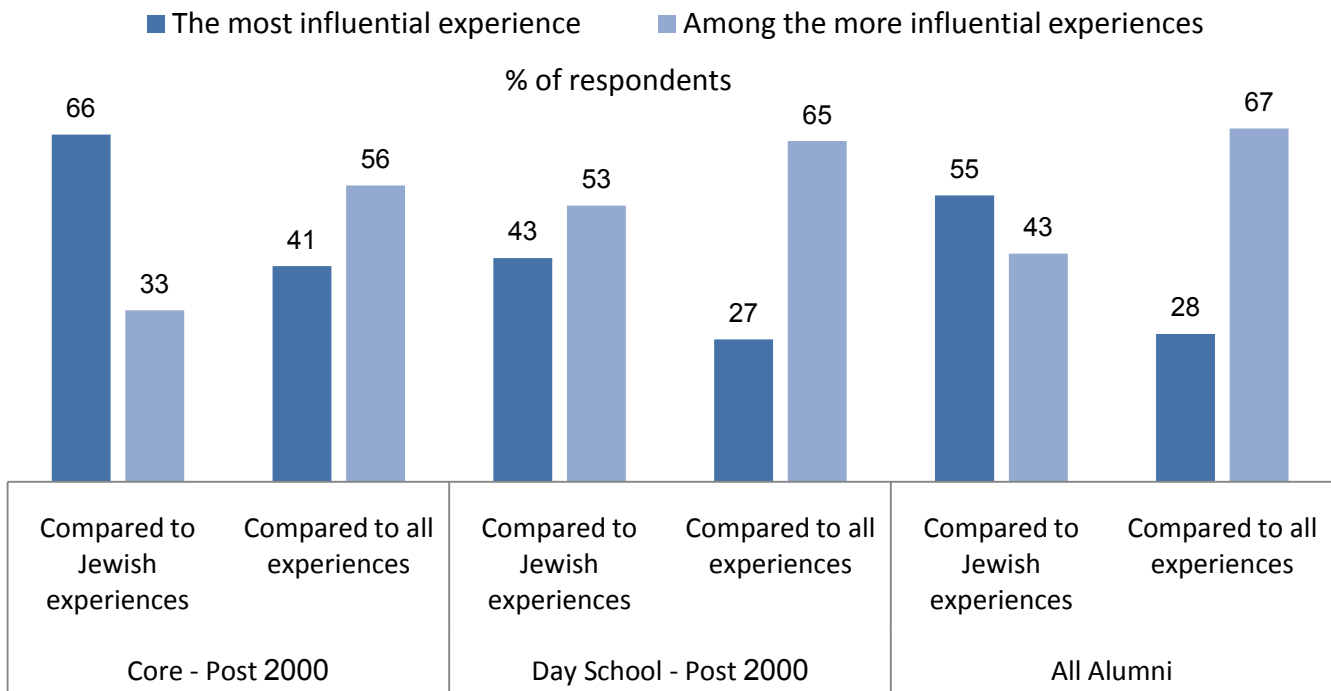
Alumni regard AMHSI as among their most influential educational experiences

Large numbers of alumni give a very high rating to their AMHSI experience. 55% see AMHSI as their most effective Jewish educational experience and 28% as the most effective of any type of educational experience in which they have participated. The findings are consistent with the 1997 JESNA survey.

A comparison between veteran and recent alumni and between day school and Core program alumni show:

- Core program alumni are more likely to rate AMHSI as their most influential educational experience; however, day school alumni still provide AMHSI with high ratings.
- Veteran alumni continue to rate AMHSI very high relative to all their Jewish educational

Core program alumni are more likely to rate AMHSI as their most influential educational experience; however, Day School alumni still provide AMHSI with high ratings.



experiences, and almost all still rate AMHSI as one of their three most influential educational experiences.

Ways in which the educational program contributes to alumni appreciation for AMHSI, and areas which stand improvement.

The enthusiasm that we have seen from AMHSI alumni and their parents rests on the quality of the educational program. For an education program to receive such high levels of enthusiastic support from alumni, it must impact their lives beyond the immediate experience that a student has during the program itself. For this purpose, we now examine the AMHSI educational program in terms of its impact on alumni after they leave the program.

According to alumni, which elements of the AMHSI program have had an impact on their lives, and which elements have not? The answer to this question will enable AMHSI to focus its alumni development program on the areas that alumni see as the most powerful part of their AMHSI experience. It can then spend its efforts improving the existing educational program in areas where alumni are less likely to see the relevance of AMHSI for their lives.

The survey explored four potential areas in which the AMHSI program might have an ongoing impact on alumni.

1. Israel

The experience of learning about Israel while studying in Israel lies at the heart of the AMHSI program and is the key to the program's success. "The Israel experience" and all that it entails is AMHSI's unique added value and the reason why parents will invest in the Israel trip, as well as why alumni will continue to seek out a connection to the program.

For "the Israel experience" to succeed, the time spent at AMHSI should not only contribute to the development of students' Jewish identity in a substantial way, but also contribute to a unique academic experience and platform for personal development and Jewish studies that cannot be replaced by programs offered in the student's home community.

2. Academics

AMHSI offers a high school education that replaces the curricula of the student's home high school for one semester. To what extent does the AMHSI methodology of teaching high school subjects remain with the student after the program?

3. Judaism

To what extent does the Jewish component of the AMHSI Israel experience remain with alumni today?

4. Personal/Social

Living in a dormitory away from parents, intensive 24/7 interactions with friends and AMHSI staff, and the need to act as a mature individual are an integral part of the AMHSI Israel experience. To what extent does the personal and social aspect of the program impact on the lives of alumni and remain with them?

The charts below provide an overview of the manner in which alumni assess the impact of the academic, Israel, Jewish and personal/social dimensions on their lives today. The first chart focuses on the general AMHSI experience (i.e., educational methodology, organizational support, and social environment) for students during their time at AMHSI. The second chart focuses on areas of content.

We learn that:

1. The Israel experience at AMHSI continues to impact the lives of a large percentages of

alumni. Almost all questions which focused on the Israel component of the broader AMHSI Israel experience show very high impact rankings.

2. Alumni feel the academic program at AMHSI had an impact on them in general, but are less clear when particular topics are examined.
3. In terms of their personal/social experience, alumni report a high level of impact when particular topics are examined, but are less likely to rank the general-level questions as having an impact on them.
4. The majority of Jewish studies topics receive a high impact rating.

Two general findings stand out and are significant in terms of evaluating AMHSI's program and thinking about strategic development into the future:

1. In comparison to the 1997 JESNA survey, in the 2009 survey, there has been an overall improvement in how alumni see AMHSI to have impacted their lives in almost all topical areas covered by the survey.
2. In comparison to Core program alumni, day school alumni consistently show themselves to have had a different AMHSI experience in the area of social and personal experience, of which they are more appreciative. They are also less appreciative of the methods of instruction employed at AMHSI.

Overall improvement from 1997 survey

The survey results complement the findings of interviews with schools (reported on below). The contact person at all of the schools felt that AMHSI has worked hard in recent years to improve its program. The comparison of 1997 and 2009 surveys confirm these observations. 12 of 16 topic areas showed higher impact ratings when answers for 1997 and 2009 surveys are compared. Most notable are questions that asked about:

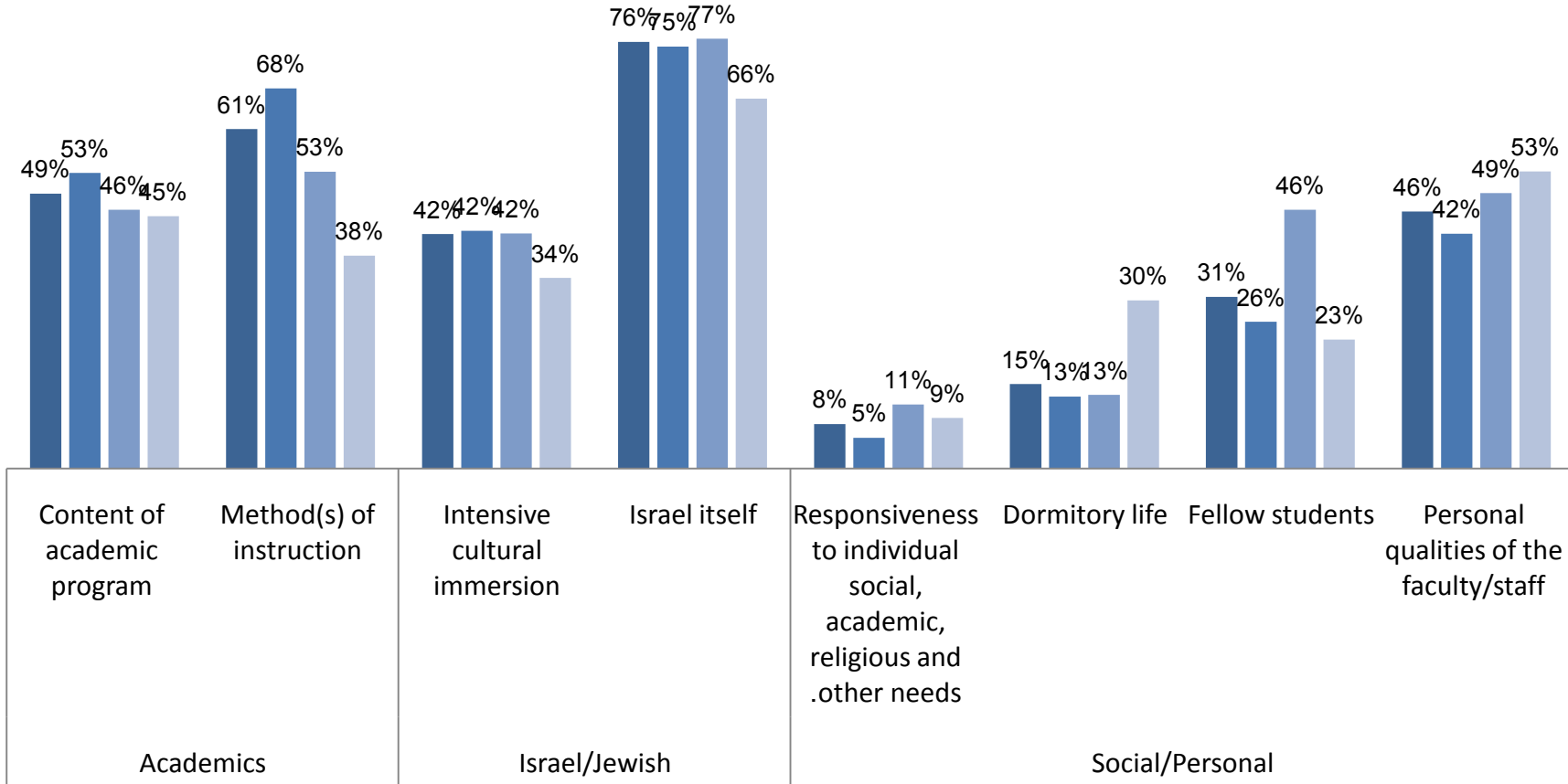
- Historical perspective: + 22% improvement over the 1997 survey.
- Knowledge of Land of Israel: +20%
- Connection with Israel: +15%
- Personal growth: + 13%
- Jewish identity: +11%

Another notable finding is that fewer alumni in 2009 felt that AMHSI contributed to their choice of academic/professional career and/or choice of undergraduate school.

Given alumni enthusiasm for their AMHSI experience in other areas, it is not obvious that impact in the area of choices about university and career should be low. These are areas in which active work during the AMHSI program, specifically regarding students' returning to Israel on MASA professional development programs or participating in Israel activism on campus, would likely have a large impact on future decisions made by alumni. This discussion is continued in the section on "building on the strong connection to Israel," below on page 18.

Elements of the AMHSI program that consistently receive highest impact ratings are Israel and academics

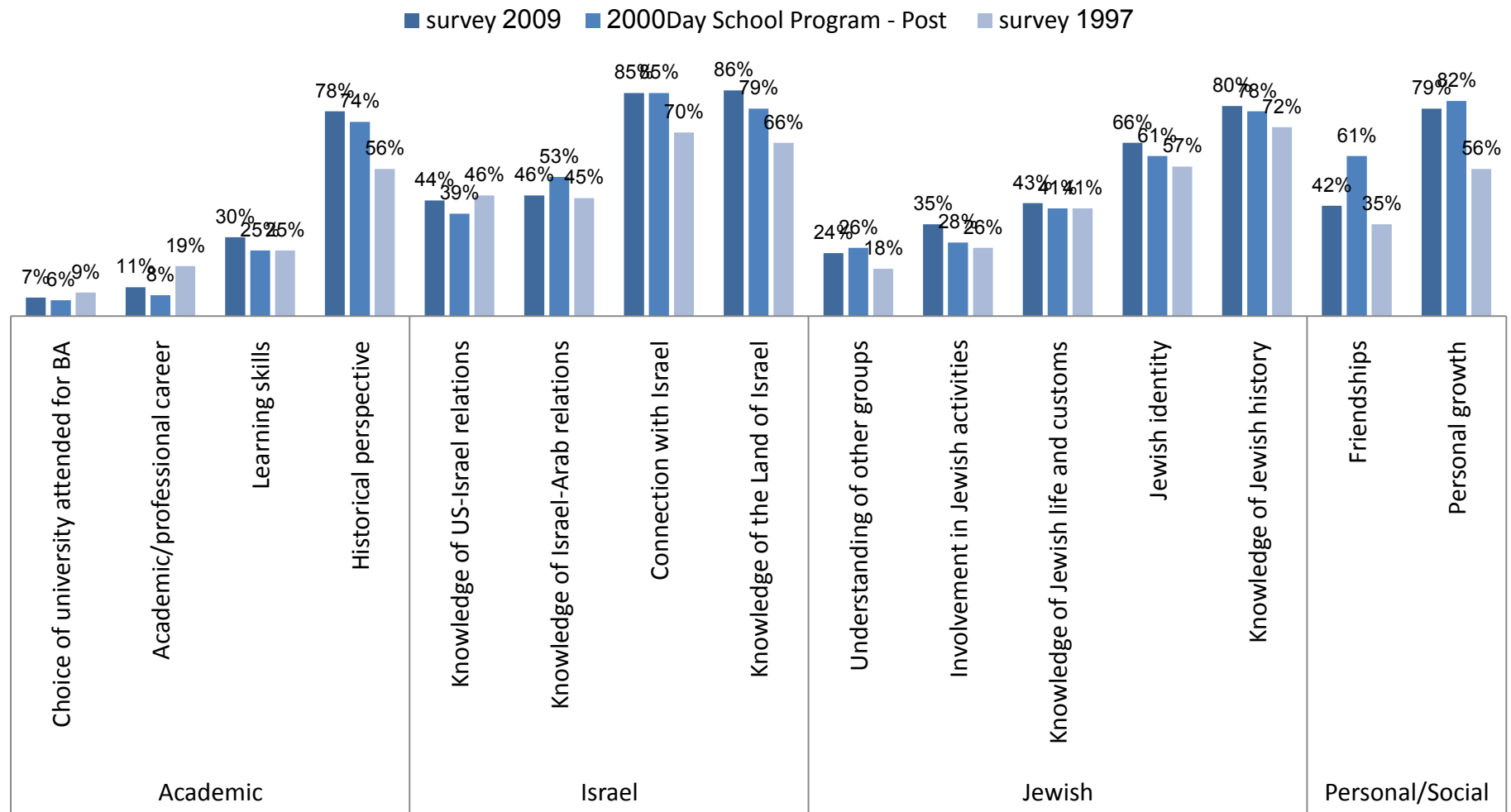
■ All
 ■ Core program - Pre 2000
 ■ Core program - post 2000
 ■ Day School program - post 2000



% selecting element as one of three elements of the program that had the "most impact on you."

* Day school data are for alumni who participated in academic Day School programs.

More than 40% of respondents tagged this area as "high impact".
Personal /Social: 2 of 2 areas. Jewish: 3 of 5 areas. Israel: 4 of 4 areas. Academic: 1 of 4 areas.
Most areas show improvement since 1997 survey. Day School alumni are different.



% answering "a lot of influence" to the question: How would you rate the extent of influence of AMHSI on your life in each of the following areas?

*** Day school data are for alumni who participated in academic Day School programs.**

Day school and Core program alumni are different from one another

There appear to be differences between the academic and non-academic day school programs. Both non-academic and academic day school alumni are more likely to cite the continuing impact of AMHSI on their lives in areas that touched on developing independence and making friendships. Academic alumni were less likely than core program and non-academic day school students to cite "their fellow students" as having an impact. The academic day school alumni are also less likely to cite impact from the method of instruction and experience of Israel itself than other alumni.

The following are some notable findings:

- Friendships: day school alumni were 19% more likely to cite the impact of the friendships they made on AMHSI.
- Dormitory life: + 17%

In comparison to Core program alumni, day school alumni consistently cite less of an impact on their lives of their time at AMHSI in these three areas.

- Fellow students: day school alumni were 23% less likely to cite impact.
- Method of instruction: -15%
- Experience of Israel itself: -11%

These findings complement comments made during interviews with the day schools (see detailed summary later in report). The contact people with whom we spoke at the day schools praised the overall AMHSI experience and the chance students have to experience living independently (away from their families) before college. However, they were critical about what they felt were the lack of innovative teaching methods.

As we will see below, day school alumni are somewhat less attached to AMSHI and less likely

to want to contribute to the program. These findings about the different way that day school alumni relate to their AMHSI experience provide insight into the difference between the day school and the Core program participants, showing ways in which changes to the AMHSI educational program might produce a much stronger connection with day school alumni in the future. AMHSI should reach out to current day school alumni by stressing the social/personal experience and opportunity to study about Israel while in Israel. At the same time, changes are needed in the academic and Jewish studies program for day school students. This discussion is continued in the section of reports on the school interviews at the end of this report.

AMHSI alumni are more involved in Jewish community and feel a stronger connection to other Jews and Israel than do other American Jews their ages.

An additional area by which to measure the success of the AMHSI program is the quality of the Jewish lives lead by alumni. When compared to the national American Jewish population, AMHSI alumni are far more active in the Jewish community in terms of volunteering and synagogue membership, have a strong Jewish identity, and feel more connected to other Jews and to Israel than do other American Jews their ages. This positive difference holds even when the broader Jewish population is filtered for only those who have also traveled to Israel before the age of 18 and are from similar Jewish backgrounds. The chart on the following page offers a comparison of AMHSI alumni who are under 45 years of age to the same age group in the broader American Jewish population.

The difference might have to do with the type of student who is drawn to AMHSI and/or the impact of the program itself on alumni. Far more extensive research on AMHSI students and the family life that preceded AMHSI would be needed to determine the extent to which the program itself impacts Jewish attitudes and lifestyles. Nevertheless, it is clear that AMHSI alumni are a cut above average American Jews in terms of involvement in Jewish community and connection to Israel.

The involvement of AMHSI alumni in the Jewish community is especially significant in light of a recent study of Birthright Israel alumni that found that 44% had not attended any Jewish communal event since returning from their Israel trip, and only 17% participated in more than two

events.⁵ In comparison, the majority of AMHSI alumni between 20 and 34 years of age (the equivalent age group to Birthright alumni) are engaged in the life of their Jewish communities, 66% state that they have volunteered for a Jewish organization in the last year, and 66% have participated in prayer services in the past year on occasions other than the high holidays.

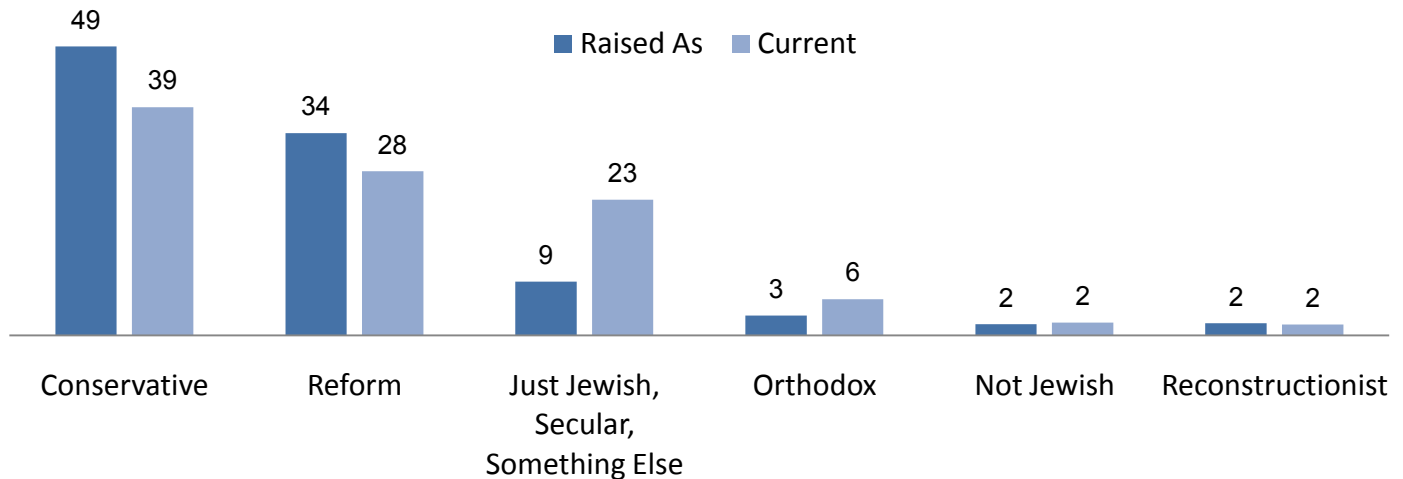
How different are Core program and day school alumni from one another?

A comparison between post-2000 Core and day school program alumni (see chart on next page), the general AMHSI alumni population, and the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) under-45 age group shows that:

- Like all the AMHSI alumni, post-2000 Core program and day school students are more involved in Jewish community and have a stronger connection to Israel than do other American Jews.
- Of significance for planning the AMHSI Core program is that the comparison between post-2000 alumni and all AMHSI alumni shows that post-2000 Core program alumni are much less likely than day school alumni to state that "most of their friends are Jewish." We should note that Core program alumni are still more likely than the general Jewish population to have more Jewish friends; nevertheless, AMHSI needs to consider that incoming Core program students are less likely to value seeking out exclusively Jewish friendships.

⁵ Chertok, C., Sasson, T. & Saxe, L. 2009. "Tourists, Travelers, and Citizens: Jewish Engagement of Young Adults in Four Centers of North American Jewish Life"

As with American Jewry in general, AMHSI alumni are less likely to identify with the religious movement in which they were raised and more likely to think of themselves as "Just Jewish."



- Yet, despite the drop in Jewish particularism among Core program students in terms of friendship, they are still "as Jewish" on all other indicators and even report a stronger emotional attachment to Israel than the day school alumni. Thus, while we see that core program alumni are less particularist in terms of Jewish friendships Israel seems to be playing a more important role in their lives.
- Day school alumni are far more involved in Jewish community than other AMHSI alumni. They are also more likely to pursue Jewish studies in university.

Alumni are more likely to identify as "Just Jewish" in comparison to the way they were raised.

While AMHSI alumni are far more inclined than the average American Jew to become involved with Jewish community and Israel, they are nevertheless similar to other American Jews to be less connected to denominational identities than their parents. The chart below shows that AMHSI alumni are less likely to identify with the religious movement in which they were raised

and more likely to think of themselves as "Just Jewish." However, the largest segment of AMHSI alumni continue to think of themselves as Conservative (39%).

Large percentages of AMHSI alumni have little or no formal Jewish education in high school

A defining characteristic of AMHSI's Core program is that it succeeds in attracting participants who have little or no formal Jewish education in high school, yet who want to build a connection to Israel. 20% of alumni report no Jewish high school education, with an additional 35% participating in one-day-a-week programs. These numbers are consistent for Core program alumni who attended AMHSI before and after 2000.

59% of non-Orthodox American Jews under 45 do not receive a Jewish education in high school. AMHSI is an address for this population. The quotations on the next page provide a rich sense of the impact that AMHSI has had on alumni who come to the program with little-to-no Jewish education.

Comparison of AMHSI alumni to the National Jewish population (NJPS 2000/I)	Comparisons				Focus on post 2000 alumni ****	
	NJPS all Jews under 45 years of age	NJPS Equivalent *	AMHSI Equivalent **	Difference between NJPS and AMHSI equivalents	Post 2000 Core	Post 2000 Day School
Volunteered for a synagogue, Federation or other Jewish organization during past year	25%	30%	73%	43%	77%	84%
Emotional attachment to Israel ("strongly agree"/"very attached")	28%	47%	73%	26%	80%	78%
Most friends are Jewish	31%	38%	61%	22%	48%	85%
Member of a synagogue	46%	46%	62%	16%	73%	82%
Being Jewish is an important part of his/her life ("strongly agree"/"very important")	46%	60%	75%	15%	75%	82%
Special responsibility to take care of Jews in need ("strongly agree")	27%	40%	51%	10%	47%	54%
Strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people ("strongly agree")	49%	67%	76%	9%	73%	86%
Jewish studies at university	34%	45%	54%	9%	50%	61%
Spouse is Jewish***	70%	74%	82%	7%	Not applicable	
Being Jewish has very little to do with how sees himself/herself ("strongly disagree")	32%	49%	53%	4%	46%	53%
Attended synagogue during past year (not including High Holidays)	56%	70%	72%	2%	69%	79%
Looks to Judaism for guidance when faced with an important life decision ("strongly agree/somewhat agree")	53%	61%	54%	-7%	51%	53%

***NJPS equivalent.** Filtered to compare Jews with similar profile to AMHSI participants. These are Jews, under 45 years of age who have been to Israel at least once before age 18 and are not raised Orthodox or non-Jewish.

****AMHSI equivalent.** Filtered to enable comparison to NJPS equivalent group. Alumni under 45, not raised Orthodox or non-Jewish.

*** "Jewish" = anyone who doesn't define him or herself as "non-Jewish" in NJPS.

****Red font = significantly below AMHSI average. Blue font = significantly above AMHSI average

The following are representative of statements written by alumni who came to the program with little to no Jewish education.

"AMHSI was by far the most influential amazing program of my life. Prior to AMHSI, I had a weak Jewish identity and knew nothing the history of my people. By the time the program was over, I was a changed person. The friends I made influenced me to go to college, which was something I wasn't sure I wanted to do. Those friends are still my best friends today. In college, I focused a lot of my studies on Israel and majored in political science with a minor in Judaic studies and I became involved in many pro-Israel political movements. I went back to study at Hebrew University during my junior year and after college went back to become a madricha on AMHSI for three 2 month programs and then I lived on a kibbutz learning Hebrew for 3 months after that.....My Jewish identity became very strong and I married a Jewish man, and we are raising our children with strong Jewish identities."

"AMHSI changed my life in every respect. When I began the program, I did not understand what it meant to be Jewish. I was unaware of Jewish traditions, history or culture; neither Judaism nor Israel was a part of who I was. However, that quickly changed during my two months in Israel. AMHSI gave me real direction in life. I developed an identity because AMHSI opened my eyes to what it meant to be a Jew and a friend of Israel. Now, ten years later, I am Jewish and I am proud. As a matter of fact, after AMHSI, I went on to major in Judaic studies in college and teach Jewish history and tradition at summer camps. Although I am now becoming a lawyer and no longer teach, I remain a practicing Jew and continue to visit and study in Israel. AMHSI gave me the opportunity to find and develop my identity."

IV. Recommendations regarding AMHSI's relationship with alumni

By all measures employed in this evaluation, parents, alumni and partner schools regard AMHSI as a successful program.

- High percentages of alumni and parents are willing to recommend the program to others.
- Alumni rate AMHSI as among the most meaningful programs in which they have participated, and in many areas they feel that the education experience in Israel continues to have an impact on their lives.

AMHSI's challenge in the years ahead is to keep abreast of the changes taking place within American Jewry, making the necessary adjustments to its educational program, alumni development, marketing, and recruitment strategies. The alumni and parent surveys and interviews with partner schools provide important insights into the challenges that AMHSI faces and possible pathways the program might take to respond.

Two important trends are:

1. The development of the AMHSI day school program, which since 2000 has become an ever-larger proportion of the total AMHSI program. This program is itself a response to the development of day schools for non-Orthodox Jews, who represent AMHSI's core constituency. We learn from the alumni survey that the day school and Core program alumni are distinct groups, each with unique needs that require different marketing, educational, and alumni development strategies.
2. Day school alumni attended AMHSI because their school chose the program; however, the Core program students needed to actively make the choice. While the majority of Core program students still state that they only considered AMHSI when

choosing to come to Israel, more are indicating that they are aware of and have considered other choices. It is likely that this trend is due to greater exposure to Israel and Israel travel alternatives by way of the Internet and the fact that post-2000 alumni are more likely to have traveled to Israel prior to AMHSI. If this trend accelerates, it will pose a major challenge to AMHSI's recruiting efforts for the Core program in the future.

Importance of the Core program/day school distinction

Given these two macro trends, it is clear that any recommendations to AMHSI for the strategic development of the program must acknowledge the day school/Core program distinction. The following are practical reasons for this distinction:

1. The day school and Core programs have different marketing and recruitment challenges.

For the day school program, AMHSI needs to work with the schools who are sending their students, while AMHSI markets directly to the Core program students and their families.

2. The day school and Core program alumni both have strong relationships to Israel, but different relationships to Jewish education

In comparison to the national American Jewish population, AMHSI's alumni are highly involved in Jewish community and have a very strong connection to Israel. However, day school students bring to the program a much higher set of expectations regarding their Jewish education. They also seem to both need and appreciate the chance for college-style independence that AMHSI provides. In contrast, approximately half of the Core program students come to AMHSI with no or little high school Jewish education.

3. While the connection is still significant, day school alumni are less connected to AMHSI

In relative terms, day school alumni are less interested in contributing to AMHSI in the future and in receiving ongoing educational services. In addition, the survey data indicates that the strategy for deepening the connection with alumni should take into account the different type of impact that AMHSI has had on day school alumni.

While some of the recommendations below apply equally to both the day school and Core program alumni, these strong differences between the two groups must be considered in all cases.

Marketing and recruitment

The AMHSI Core program attracts students who are not obvious candidates for the programs offered by the major American religious or cultural (i.e. Young Judea) movements. High numbers of AMHSI alumni report that AMHSI was the only program venue that they were aware of or considered in choosing to travel to Israel during high school. An additional related characteristic of AMHSI's Core program is its ability to attract participants who, on the one hand, have little or no formal Jewish education in High School, yet who want to develop their personal connection to Israel.

However, despite AMHSI's success in drawing a population that is not interested in other Israel study alternatives, the data shows a trend towards greater awareness of other programs and greater familiarity with Israel (before AMHSI) on the part of students. This trend is likely to contribute to challenges in recruitment for the AMHSI core program.

The alumni and parent surveys point to a number of areas on which the marketing and recruitment for the Core program should focus.

Both alumni and parents feel that program length, timing, parental opinion, and alumni recommendations are the most important factors in deciding to attend AMHSI. In addition, parents view costs and the availability of scholarships as critical factors in the decision to attend. Recruitment methods that focus on personal contact by recent AMHSI alumni and presentations at high schools were cited by high numbers of recent alumni as particularly important marketing venues. Parents also find personal contact with AMHSI's Directors of Admission and presentations at synagogues to be important marketing venues.

Many alumni are willing to contribute to the recruitment and marketing effort and provide a major resource for AMHSI in this area.

AMHSI should make a particular effort to communicate with parents who are members of Israel incentive/savings programs and households in which a sibling has not yet been to Israel.

Educational program

The high levels of alumni appreciation of AMHSI are rooted in the educational experience they experienced as students on the program.

- 55% see AMHSI as their most effective Jewish educational experience and 28% as the most effective educational experience of any type in which they have ever participated.
- Over 40% of alumni felt that AMHSI continues to impact their lives (in 15 of 24 areas of the educational program covered by the survey).

12 of 15 areas covered by the 1997 JESNA survey showed significant improvement in 2009. The area in which changes are not occurring is the impact of AMHSI on the academic and professional careers and choice of undergraduate college. In this area, AMHSI needs to make changes to the current program.

In particular, AMHSI can partner with organizations like MASA or those that specialize in Israel activism on campus to provide programs, with the goal of enabling students to see the many options and resources that the Jewish world places at the feet of young Jews. This type of investment during the program, and perhaps as post-program follow-up, will likely change the impact of AMHSI on its alumni's lives in this area.

Alumni development

We learn that, by all accounts, a large number of alumni want to maintain a connection with AMHSI, both in terms of contributing time and money and in terms of receiving educational services.

The alumni survey provides insights into a number of areas in which AMHSI should invest its alumni development efforts.

Approach to day school alumni

The areas in which the largest percentages of alumni feel (or don't feel) that AMHSI impacts their lives provides clues for the language and approach that the AMHSI Alumni Development Department should use. This is particularly so for the day school alumni: although they are currently a minority of the alumni body, they represent a distinct group which is less inclined than Core program alumni to want to contribute or receive educational services from AMHSI in the future.

Based on the areas in which day school alumni feel most impacted by their AMHSI experience, the program should reach out to current day school alumni by stressing the social/personal experiences they had as well as the opportunity they had to study about Israel, while in Israel. At the same time, changes should be made in the academic and Jewish studies program for day school students. This discussion is continued in

the recommendations section for AMHSI's relationship with partner schools.

The benefits of nurturing alumni connection to Israel

AMHSI will benefit in a number of ways by actively working during and after the high school program in Israel to encourage return trips and a continued deepening of alumni connection to Israel. This work can be done along the following lines:

- Significant percentages of alumni want AMHSI to continue to serve as a source of Israel-related educational services, including travel seminars, distance learning, and even for the AMHSI campus to serve as a venue for family celebrations in Israel. These services will bring additional revenue streams into the AMHSI operation while serving as a means to develop a core of alumni leaders and increase willingness to contribute to recruiting and fundraising efforts.
- Related to the above recommendation is the fact that 48% of alumni have not returned to Israel since AMHSI, despite the alumni's strong emotional connection to Israel. Targeting this group in particular with distance learning and return-to-Israel travel options would certainly meet with a warm reception, as seen in the survey data.

Increasing awareness of Israel learning options after AMHSI

AMHSI and similar high school study programs are gateways for return Israel travel by alumni. Large percentages of alumni return to Israel or are strong potential candidates for return Israel travel.

Aside from observing the number of alumni who do not return to Israel at all, we learned from the survey that post-2000 alumni are less likely

than veteran alumni to return to Israel on a long-term program and more likely to come back on a less-than-one-month program or on their own. As suggested above, during the AMHSI summer, collaborations should be formed with MASA and other Israel programs to increase awareness of Israel travel options in general and career development opportunities in particular. This work might include linking MASA scholarships for participation in AMHSI to partnering with programs that students can join during their time in Israel and then continue to maintain a connection after AMHSI and while in college.

Given the importance that parents attach to costs and scholarships, it is also important to note that scholarships, either from Federation, MASA or other organizations, will serve to increase the numbers participating on high school in Israel programs. Besides the direct contribution to the student's Jewish identity and connection to Israel, the scholarships will also increase the pool of potential candidates for return Israel travel and Jewish leaders on college campuses.

V. AMHSI's partnership with schools

At the heart of AMHSI's work is the relationship it has built with high schools that send students to study in Israel. This section of the report describes the nature of AMHSI's relationship with its partner schools. Due to the different relationship that AMHSI has with the Jewish day schools and public schools, the findings will be presented separately.

Public Schools

Students from public schools attend the AMHSI two-month high school in Israel program ("the Core program") and summer programs. The number of students participating on AMHSI varies from school to school. Some schools have a consistently small number of participants (0–3), while others can have 12–15 participants. The highest number from a given school is approximately 20, but that was during the pre-*intifada* years. The *intifada* negatively affected the number of students participating in AMHSI, and while numbers are now either stable or on the rise, they have not reached the pre-*intifada* years.

The decision to support student participation in AMHSI happens at the level of the district superintendent or principal—it is a top-down process. If a particular teacher has a problem with the program, they do not have the authority to prevent a student from participating.

For the school, the decision to participate is a costly one, in terms of work hours required to facilitate a student's participation. The guidance counselors interviewed are aware that other public schools will not participate in a foreign study program such as AMHSI due to the tremendous amount of work for the guidance counselor and teachers.

Perceived benefits

The schools participate for two primary reasons: the educational benefit to the student and the use of foreign study programs to attract quality students. In the case of AMHSI, the guidance counselors felt that some Jewish students, if denied the opportunity to study elsewhere, would opt for a different school.

The guidance counselors feel that AMHSI runs an educationally sound program that is enriching and builds self-confidence and knowledge about Jewish culture and the world. Many of the students have not been exposed to other people and cultures, and the program fulfills this function. The instructors are very knowledgeable and have high expectations, and students meet the challenge. Students return with a stronger sense of their Jewish identity. While the change is not necessarily transformational, teachers and counselors note a greater depth to student's sense of identity and pride in being Jewish. The students also broaden their social base by meeting students from other geographic areas in the United States.

In terms of Jewish involvement in the home community, the guidance counselors did not feel that a great change occurs. The students who go on AMHSI are usually very involved, and this involvement continues after their return. Some students do look at colleges differently as a result of the AMHSI students, choosing a campus with a significant Jewish population and/or Israel study opportunities.

The relationship with AMHSI

In general, the guidance counselors feel that AMHSI appreciates their work and is "super accommodating" and amenable to helping the schools overcome the challenges of sending a student to Israel. AMHSI is perceived as very efficient and responsive to feedback. The guidance counselors also say that AMHSI

teachers and staff do an excellent job in terms of teaching and supporting students during their time in Israel.

AMHSI runs the recruiting and marketing of its program, interfacing directly with parents and students. The only official role a school plays in the process is to allow an AMHSI representative the access to interested students. Some of the guidance counselors have traveled to Israel with AMHSI, which they felt greatly helped them understand and appreciate the program.

Students apply directly to AMHSI and then work with the school to coordinate their absence for what is usually an 8-week period. To enable this process, students are assigned guidance counselors by their high school. The guidance counselor assists the student with the application form and coordinates with AMHSI regarding academic schedule and credits.

Assisting students in applying to foreign study programs is part of the guidance counselors' job description. The guidance counselors are prohibited from marketing AMHSI or encouraging students to participate. Upon request, those counselors who are familiar with the program provide students with information that assists them in the decision-making process.

At all the schools, students are encouraged to participate in the program at the end of their junior year. While they are in Israel, students are required to officially withdraw from school and reenter at the start of senior year. Students (with assistance from their guidance counselors) are required to coordinate their academic requirements with teachers prior to leaving for AMHSI. Teachers vary in terms of their enthusiasm for the program. Those who have their course materials prepared need to do relatively little work to share the materials with AMHSI. For those who are less prepared, compiling requirements and materials for an entire semester is a large amount of work, with

corresponding consequences for teachers' supporting the program.

Finances are not coordinated through the schools. Scholarships are given through the Federations and various other funds, but the main burden of payment falls directly on the family.

AMHSI has full control of the academic program while a student is in Israel. Teachers at AMHSI are usually in direct contact with teachers from their students' American school by e-mail.

AMHSI also works intensively with parents to provide updates and respond to their concerns. The counselors noted that the AMHSI head of school (Chaim Fischgrund) has been especially effective in addressing parents' concerns about security.

AMHSI provides a course grade that the schools accept. Students will contact their guidance counselors if there is a problem. At one school,⁶ after 1 Sept 2009, grades will only be automatically recognized as a credit but not count towards a student's GPA. The student will need to bring his or her AMHSI transcript to the school and the school will attach that transcript to the school's transcript. AMHSI should reach out to parents in order to understand if this change will impact the decision to participate.

Some students experience difficulty adjusting back to school in the United States. Counselors and teachers work with the students on the return process. A major reason to encourage the trip to Israel at the end of the academic year is to enable a student the buffer of summer vacation to readjust before starting the school year.

⁶ Mercer High School

Challenges

The following are issues raised in the interviews that AMHSI should consider.

1. There are many budget-related cutbacks occurring in the public schools that are increasing teachers' workload. This factor further adds to the already-existing strain of preparing a student for study abroad.
2. In the past, there was a feeling among teachers that AMHSI automatically gives good grades. Teachers raised questions about the integrity of AMHSI's academic standards, in terms of coverage of necessary material and whether the grade received was a serious reflection of work done. In all cases, guidance counselors felt that the situation has improved. AMHSI teachers now send back materials for the public school teachers to review, and AMHSI is working to ensure that a certain standard is maintained and that the grades are more in line with what is happening in the school. AMHSI should continue to ask for feedback from teachers and guidance counselors in this area, as it is critical for maintaining the confidence and enthusiasm of the schools.
3. Security is a strong concern for parents, although AMHSI does a lot to alleviate this issue and the guidance counselors did not have specific suggestions for making additional improvements.

Jewish day schools

Of the five Jewish day schools covered by the research, four started to send students to AMHSI in 2001. One of the schools, Barrack Academy (formerly Akiba), has been working with AMHSI since 1992.

The five Jewish day schools all view their program in Israel as integral to the culture of the school and symbolizing their commitment to Israel education. The schools send their students as a group to AMHSI in either 10th, 11th, or at the end of 12th grade. With the exception of one school,⁷ the Israel program is voluntary, with at least half the grade participating.

At four of the schools the cost of the trip is over and above the annual tuition. One of the schools⁸ runs their Israel program for students who have already graduated, so parents do not have to cover both regular tuition and program costs at the same time.

One school⁹ is conducting research, starting three years ago, with the goal of tracking and evaluating the long-term impact of the program for students who participate in the Israel program.

Benefits

AMHSI and its partner day schools share a common goal of strengthening Jewish identity and students' connection to Israel. All the interviewees report that AMHSI is a transformative experience for students, one that instills excitement both in terms of students' personal growth and their connection to Israel. Students foster a deep connection and fall in love with Israel.

⁷ The American Hebrew Academy (AHA) requires all students in grade 11 to participate.

⁸ Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School

⁹ Milken Community High School

The Israel trip contributes to the school's ability to attract Jewish students from families who care about Israel and share the schools' approach to Jewish education. The trip also contributes to the overall ethos of the school. Younger students are eager to go on the trip, and it has become a rite of passage central to the experience of studying at the day school. The time at AMHSI also helps students acquire the independence, maturity, and skills they will need for campus life.

Most of the schools want the trip to impact school life, and therefore schedule the trip for no later than junior year. The returning group has a positive influence on the younger grades, contributing in a substantial way to all things having to do with Israel in their senior year.

The AMHSI program allows each student to find a place from which they can develop their personal connection to Israel. The students are exposed to a variety of experiences, texts, people, and activities that encourage the confronting of issues pertinent to their lives. While the schools want greater improvements in this area (see below), on a general level, they feel the experience is a positive one for their students.

The schools are always looking for ways in which to involve parents. There are parent programs that the schools run or would like to run, and some of the schools dream of opportunities for parents to come on a family program during the students' time in Israel or at a later time.

The Relationship with AMHSI

The interviewees report that their students are happy with the experience of learning at the AMHSI campus. They emphasized the impression that the Israeli staff are excellent and that there is a real feeling of partnership with AMHSI.

AMHSI develops and implements the academic program, including core Jewish, Israel, and secular studies components of the curriculum. AMHSI is in contact with the staff at the home schools when necessary. Students return, prepared to continue with the regular academic schedule.

AMHSI also takes care of all disciplinary and managerial aspects of the program and provides the schools with constant reports. Each school sends members of its own staff for short periods to check on the students and to accompany the groups on their flights to or from Israel. The interviewees specified that their key contacts at AMHSI are excellent at managing the logistics, curriculum, and anything else that they are required to do. They also do a good job of reassuring parents on other issues such as security and are responsive to requests.

Challenges dealt with successfully

The return to school after AMHSI is a major challenge. This is true for all the schools, both for the students who participate and for those who remained in the home school.

The schools implement a number of programs to deal with the transition period, and they feel that they are successful. The time limitations of the interviews did not allow exploration of the ways in which AMHSI is involved in the return process. However, the interviewees did not mention AMHSI as relevant to the post-trip period, viewing the return process as their domain.

It may be worthwhile for AMHSI to increase its added value to the schools by proactively reaching out and discussing ways in which the reintegration process can begin while the students are still at AMHSI. The interviewees also did not mention AMHSI as part of the Israel education process that takes place once the students return to school. Here, too, there

might be room for AMHSI to build and strengthen its relationship with the schools and day school alumni.

Ongoing Challenges

The following are issues raised in the interviews that AMHSI should consider in its future work with the Jewish day schools.

1. Pluralism

The participating Jewish day schools are pluralistic in terms of religious and Jewish cultural ideology. The interviewees felt that AMHSI has been slow to understand the needs of a pluralist community and adapt their program accordingly. The process of adapting the AMSHI program to their needs is occurring, but work remains. Major issues for which pluralistic schools have devised solutions, and want the same from AMHSI, include *tefilah*, which for some schools is compulsory; catering to the needs of the more observant students; and decision-making processes where students actively choose how they participate in the Jewish facets of the educational program.

2. Secular studies

The Jewish day schools do feel that the secular studies program is sufficient in terms of basic content, but more work needs to be done to enable students to grapple with the increasing pressures they face for their college requirements.

3. Contemporary Zionism

On the one hand, the AMHSI Israeli education model is successful and the schools are happy with it. On the other hand, there is a general feeling that the program is resting on its laurels and not responding to the needs of the contemporary student and the changing nature of Israeli society and the Jewish world in a dynamic way.

AMHSI still works within the classic Zionist educational program created in the early days of the program. While the program is very charismatic and inspirational, the impression is that AMHSI is resistant to evolving the program to meet the needs of current students. Desired changes include exploring areas such as the environment and technology, the use of contemporary texts and up-to-date textbooks, and exposing the students in a more systematic and dialogic fashion to the current diverse approaches to Zionism and the place of Israel within the Jewish People. This finding reinforces a similar finding in the feedback from day school alumni reported on page 27 above.

4. Changing nature of American society

The schools also feel that AMHSI should respond and shape its curriculum to grapple with the changing nature of American society. American students are facing different challenges to their Jewish identities and their choices to live Jewish lives. In particular, the place of Israel in American Jewish life should be tackled at the level of the student experience after the return from Israel. In line with the previous item, there is a feeling that AMHSI is still exposing students to ideas and an understanding of Israel that are in line with a previous generation's experience and not that of current American Jewish youth.

5. Finances

Finances are a big problem. AMHSI helps when it can by assisting the schools with different fundraising programs or helping them identify various sources for scholarships and subsidies. Due to financial pressures, the schools are starting to cut their Israel program budget and they are not sure what the long-term results will be. An initiative from AMHSI in this area would be welcomed by the schools.

VI. Recommendations regarding AMHSI's relationship with schools

Overall, all schools, without exception, are happy with their AMHSI relationship. They see clear benefits to their students and schools and have full intention of continuing to work with AMHSI into the future.

Public Schools

The relationship with public schools primarily focuses on the strain felt by guidance counselors and teachers in the application, academic processes, and reintegration of students after the year in Israel. On all accounts, the guidance counselors who were interviewed felt that AMHSI is doing an excellent job in alleviating the resulting strain from their work with the program. However, given the impact of recent budget cuts and the counselors' increasing work load, AMHSI should remain cognizant of this issue and if possible redouble its efforts to make the guidance counselors feel appreciated and to address their concerns in a timely matter. The only area of work with public schools that remains tentative is the need for teachers to receive necessary confirmation of the quality of the grades given by AMHSI. The guidance counselors felt great improvements have been made in this area and urge AMHSI to continue this process.

In terms of AMHSI's marketing program, it is also important to note that the investment made in the past, to bring guidance counselors to Israel to visit the AMHSI program, seems to have paid off. The counselors expressed appreciation for the chance to see the program first-hand, and it appears to have fortified their commitment to helping students manage the process needed to leave their local school for a semester.

Day schools

In comparison to the public schools, the relationship between AMHSI and the Jewish day schools is of a more complex and multi-dimensional nature. The result is greater work for AMHSI but also greater opportunity.

A primary difference between the public and Jewish day schools is that the latter view AMHSI as an extension of their school. This is the case for Jewish and secular studies and for Israel education. The schools expect an academic curriculum that delivers on issues such as college preparation, Jewish pluralism, and contemporary Zionist education. While at a general level, the schools are pleased with the AMHSI experience their students are having, in all of the above-stated areas they have specific requests for improvement, as detailed below.

In terms of opportunity, three areas stand out.

1. There are major challenges in the area of financing the Israel trip due to pending budget cuts. This potential negative could be turned into a positive in terms of strengthening the AMHSI–day school relationship. AMHSI will do well to reach out to the schools and join arms with them for common fundraising and resource development campaigns.
2. Parents are interested in family trips. The survey data also indicates that some parents are interested in distance learning opportunities similar to the ones their children experience while in Israel. The area of parental engagement, if developed, will serve both AMHSI and the day schools well.
3. There is room for AMHSI to take a more active role in the area of post-trip follow-up. The process of what happens in school in the year following an Israel trip can begin while a student is in Israel. The follow-up process can also continue into the years

following high school graduation through distance learning and the offering of additional Israel education opportunities through AMHSI. Follow-up programming will raise the profile of AMHSI at the schools and hence increase participation of younger students in future years. Follow-up programming might also serve both as a way to fortify the day school alumni's connection to AMHSI, which as we saw in the survey, is somewhat weaker than Core program alumni.

Appendix: Schools interviewed for AMHSI evaluation

Public Schools

1. Name of School - Hopkins High School, Minnesota
 - Person Interviewed - Jean Davidson, Guidance Counselor
2. Name of School - Churchill High School, Maryland
 - Person Interviewed - Julie Kraus, Guidance Counselor
3. Name of School - Highland Park High School, Illinois
 - Person Interviewed - Sandie Gilbert, Guidance Counselor
4. Name of School - Mercer Highland High School, Washington
 - Person Interviewed - Deborah Kraft, Guidance Counselor

Day Schools

1. Milken Community High School, Los Angeles, California
 - Person Interviewed - Metuka Benjamin, Director of Education
 - Grade that participates - 10th Grade
 - Year Started with AMHSI - 2007
2. American Hebrew Academy, Greensboro, North Carolina
 - Person Interviewed - Glenn Drew, Executive Director
 - Grade that participates - 11th Grade
 - Year Started with AMHSI - 2002
3. Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, Rockville, Maryland
 - Person Interviewed - Aileen Goldstein, Senior Associate, Israel Engagement Initiatives
 - Grade that participates - 12th Grade
 - Year Started with AMHSI - 2003
4. Barrack Hebrew Academy, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
 - Person Interviewed - Phil Field, Previous Head of School
 - Grade that participates - 11th Grade
 - Year Started with AMHSI - 1992
5. Gann Academy, Boston, Massachusetts
 - Person Interviewed - Marc Baker, Head of School
 - Grade that participates - 11th Grade
 - Year Started with AMHSI - 2007