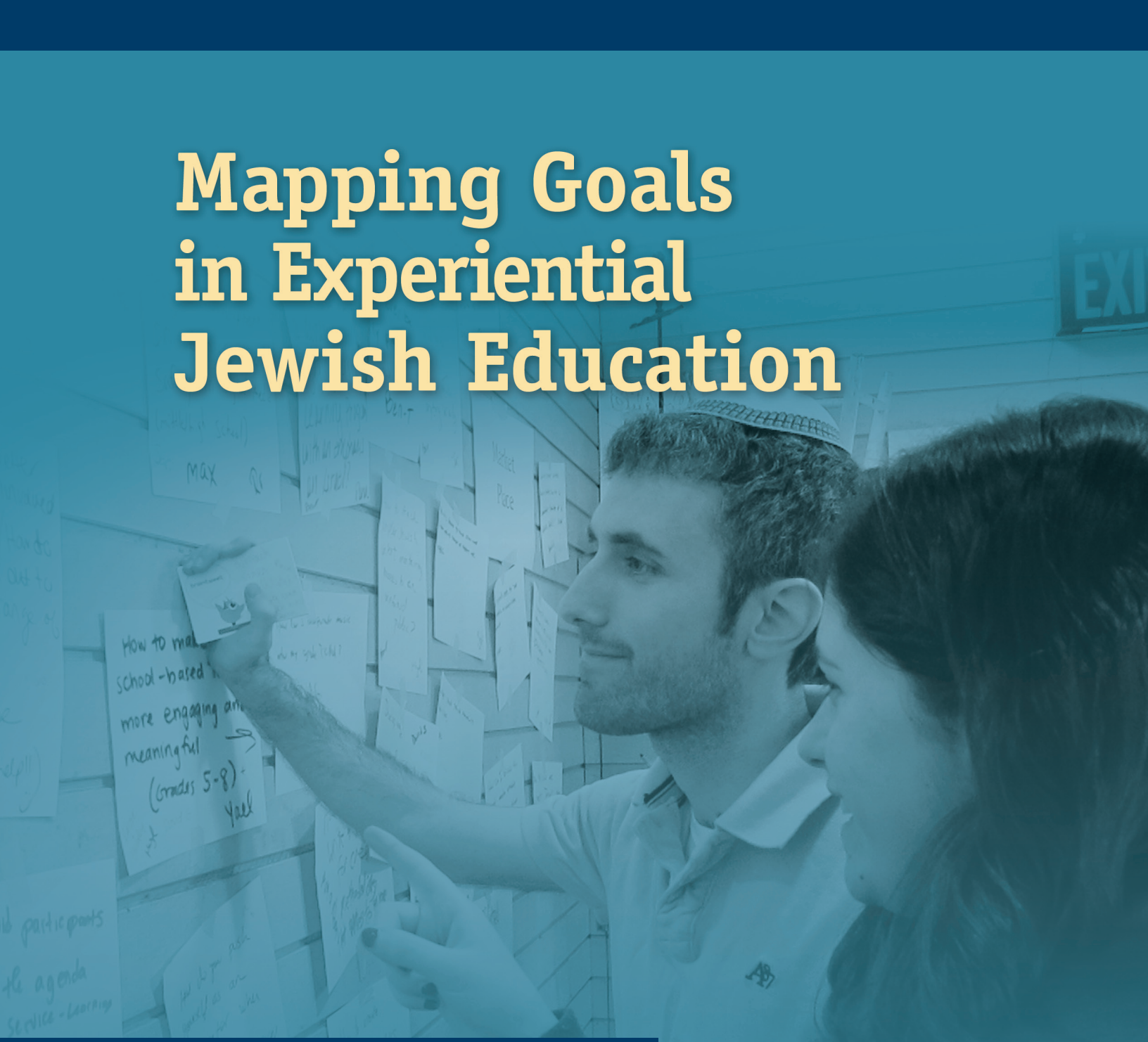
Mapping Goals in Experiential Jewish Education



Prepared by Beth Cousens, PhD for the Department of Experiential Jewish Education at Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future

Yeshiva University
CENTER FOR THE JEWISH FUTURE

WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM
JIM JOSEPH FOUNDATION
Shimon ben Joseph

Yeshiva University is indebted to the Jim Joseph Foundation for their generosity and ongoing guidance. This study, along with a host of other educational initiatives, could not have been accomplished without their support.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY'S CENTER FOR THE JEWISH FUTURE

Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future holds a bold vision for the future of North American Jewish Life: inspired and passionate leadership; strong, vibrant communities; and a Judaism that is relevant, meaningful, and ennobling. From the classroom to community centers and schools to synagogues, the CJF convenes the University's rich intellectual resources and its long tradition of service to the world beyond our campuses. The CJF promotes and nurtures the enduring Jewish value of Tikkun Olam and demonstrates unwavering confidence in a dynamic, inspired and inspiring Jewish future.

YU CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN EXPERIENTIAL JEWISH EDUCATION

The Certificate Program in Experiential Jewish Education is an immersive training program for outstanding in-service Jewish educators. It aims to strengthen, professionalize and transform the field of Experiential Jewish Education and its impact on Jewish identity, life and community.

THE JIM JOSEPH FOUNDATION EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Jim Joseph Foundation is committed to engaging, educating and inspiring young Jewish minds.

The Jim Joseph Foundation Education Initiative provides a total of $45 million in grants to Hebrew Union College, the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva University to increase the number and enhance the quality of Jewish educators working with Jewish youth and young adults. Funding of up to $15 million, per institution, supports the development of certificate and degree programs and training and mentoring new and practicing education professionals.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beth Cousens, PhD, works as a consultant with Jewish educational organizations on strategic research and evaluation, helping organizational leaders to identify goals and achieve impact. She lives in San Francisco with her husband.

Copyright © 2013
Yeshiva University Center For The Jewish Future
Department Of Experiential Jewish Education
All Rights Reserved

Table of Contents

EXPERIENTIAL JEWISH EDUCATION AND INTENTIONALITY 2

INTRODUCTION TO THIS PROJECT 3

ARTICULATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS 5

USING GOALS IN THE ORGANIZATION 7

GOALS THAT GUIDE EXPERIENTIAL JEWISH EDUCATION 11

CONCLUSIONS 16

APPENDIX 17

Experiential Jewish Education and Intentionality

Over the past decades, experiential Jewish education has emerged as a central task of Jewish education and a key strategy in engaging adolescents and emerging adults in Jewish life. Yet, despite significant academic and organizational focus on the field, the field remains underdeveloped. Core theoretical foundations have yet to be established and widely accepted by practitioners and scholars. Practitioners have different ideas about effective experiential Jewish education (EJE) and they engage in their practices differently. Moreover, when they look at a moment of effective EJE, each stakeholder does not see the same principles and strengths in that moment. Many look at one moment and see different processes happening.

Within this map of difference, some continue to see experiential Jewish education as being without an intentional educational process. Marc Fein of NCSY Upstate New York explains "When it comes to teen work … people … think that intentionality does not exist; that rigor does not exist." As a practitioner, Fein does see experiential Jewish education as highly intentional, rigorous, and goal-oriented.

Ami Hersh of Ramah Day Camp in Nyack agrees. "Everything we do, how we work with campers and staff, how we try to run the organization, is experiential Jewish education. We believe there's a lot of content to what we're doing.... You can be experiential with content and meaning and intentionality. It's not just waiting for the teachable moments to happen; you can be intentional with what you're doing."

For some practitioners, experiential Jewish education is carefully designed, with set goals, activities to reach those goals, expected outcomes, and indicators that demonstrate whether outcomes have been achieved.

Others concentrate on different elements of the experiential process: Rather than working with an extensive set of educational goals, the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco for example, works within a framework of "making the Jewish experience relevant for a 21st century audience," according to Fraidy Aber. The museum's programmatic guidance comes not from goals but from this framework.

EJE organizations, then, work from different frameworks and use goals in different ways. This differentiation raises four related sets of research questions for the field of EJE.

1: Goal Setting

- What does it mean for practitioners to be intentional?
- How intentional should practitioners be?
  What are the outcomes of various levels of intentionality?
- To what extent do practitioners, now, set goals for their work?
- How do practitioners use these goals as they engage in their practice?
- To what extent is that process of goal-setting helpful?

2: Evaluation of Goals

- How do practitioners know they are meeting their goals? What indicators do they use?
- How do practitioners assess their indicators? What is the means by which goals are evaluated?

3: Content of Goals

There is a third set of questions related to the content of the goals for students:

- Assuming that goals are helpful, what should students be learning when participating in experiential Jewish education programs?
- Having undergone experiential Jewish education, what should the impact on students be? Assuming that education is to help students grow, who should students become through experiential Jewish education? What kinds of behaviors, feelings, or cognitive knowledge should they adopt or acquire?
- What goals yield the most productive experiential Jewish education?

4: Training of Practitioners Related to Goals

Finally, there is a set of questions about practitioners and training:

- Consequently, how should practitioners be trained?
- More specifically, how should this goal system influence the subject matter knowledge that practitioners develop and the pedagogy that they learn?

Intentionality may be important for the effectiveness of experiential Jewish education, and goal-setting may be the most productive way to be intentional in this work; goal-setting may reveal what students should learn and experience, which may reveal what practitioners should learn and be capable of.

Introduction to This Project

This series of questions requires long-term research and theory development. To enter this conversation and work, the Department of Experiential Jewish Education at Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future created a research project focusing on aspects of the first area outlined above, specifically on the extent to which practitioners set goals for their work and how those goals are set. The project also touched on aspects of the second area, on how practitioners know if they are meeting their goals, offering a description of the indicators that they use. Finally, the project looked extensively at the third area above, at the content of the goals that some practitioners set.

To explore these questions, the Department turned to twenty-two expert practitioners across the field of experiential Jewish education.[1] We chose to define EJE broadly, allowing organizations to help us understand the widest picture of EJE goals as possible. We deliberately included a range of organizations: camps of all denominations, various types of Israel programs, Jewish community centers across the country, youth groups of different ideologies, programs for teens with special needs, other teen programs, Hillels, twenty-something organizations, service organizations, synagogues with well-developed adult education programs, and unique organizations like museums. To gain a number of perspectives, we deliberately spoke to different types of practitioners, ranging from executive directors to program directors, from national organizations and from local branches of national organizations. We sampled from the entire field as broadly as possible and include these many different perspectives in this report.

An external consultant with expertise in research, evaluation, and goal-setting in experiential Jewish education asked these practitioners a series of questions about their goals and the role that goals play in their work. These questions included the following:

- Does your organization work with goals?
  To what extent? How were they developed? With whom, and in what process?
- What role do goals play in your organization? In your day-to-day work?
  Is there a relationship between organizational activities and goals?
- What does each goal mean to you?
  Why this goal? Is this important to the organization?
- What indicators do you use to evaluate these goals?
  What methods do you use to know that you have succeeded?
  What are participants thinking, doing, or feeling that reflect these goals?

In introducing these questions, we immediately found evidence of the lack of uniformity. Practitioners understood the word "goal" in all kinds of ways, sometimes choosing a different language for their work. They often wanted to discuss the nature of experiential Jewish education, suggesting that they see their work in other ways. Or, they wanted to speak about the challenges they face in working toward educational goals. As a result, we spent a significant amount of time with each practitioner trying to understand how they understand the work that they are doing.

1 Organizations included in the study can be found in the Appendix.

We discovered that many of the practitioners with whom we spoke did not have robust goals recorded and often had not spent time reflecting on the nature of their goals. Their implicit goals could be elicited from their talk about their work, but often they did not have clarified, established goal language that had been created by organizational stakeholders. As a result, we explored the nature of their work from as many perspectives as possible, trying to understand what they are trying to do and, in the absence of written goals, what drives them to make decisions about which activities to facilitate. In these conversations, we heard similarity in process and content from each practitioner even while there was inconsistency in language used.

Using these interviews, the product we offer in these pages begins to explore the nature of goal-setting in EJE organizations. It provides ideas about what goals are and can be and outlines practices for how organizations use goals in their daily work. A practitioner wanting to set goals might use some of the language shared in this document to write her or his goals, or a scholar wanting to know how goal-setting can advance experiential Jewish education might explore the processes outlined here. The paper also points out examples of the differences in this field that is, broadly construed, experiential Jewish education. Taking into account the lack of uniformity among the organizations represented here, this paper asks big questions: On what foundational principles should experiential Jewish education be based? What is rigor in this field? Even with these theories, how can research about the field's principles feed into practice? With practitioners not familiar with goal-setting, how can practitioners develop the skills and capacities necessary to set them ? This paper both offers ideas to advance goal-setting and sets the stage for this needed additional work.

Although we did not collect goal statements from all organizations, we heard a great deal that informs the work of goal-setting and can launch additional inquiry into the subject. We heard directly from practitioners and were able to build ideas based solidly in the field itself, ideas that we can now give back to the field to strengthen our work. The ideas we share also, ultimately, help to define and expand a research agenda, pointing to even more questions about the role of goal-setting in EJE. The paper comes full circle, suggesting that as the field of EJE grows and becomes sharper, study of the field will help to create a common language and shared principles through which to advance the field further. While it comes full circle, its substance also demonstrates that this language and the principles involved can come not (only) from academic discourse but directly from EJE practitioners.

The paper's ideas are shared in three significant areas:

- Articulation of the organizations' goals: how organizations record and use goals;
- Comments about the operation of goals in the organizations, including needed considerations in setting goals, strategies for communicating goals, and indicators used to evaluate goals;
- The content of the written and implicit goals that practitioners use.

The paper closes with conclusions, implications, and recommended further research steps.

Articulation of Organizational Goals

The twenty-two organizations included in this project range in their articulation of organizational goals. They 1) work with extensive written goal statements, 2) work with a short organizational goal statement but not more, and 3) work with intuitive or implicit but not articulated goals. Explanations and examples of these three categories follow.

First, some have well-articulated goals, with goals mapping to desired indicators or outcomes. This is particularly true for those organizations that have worked with philanthropic foundations. Often, these organizations map their theories of change or possess written articulations of how their activities are meant to accomplish their goals. When they speak about their work, the goals written about their theories of change reflect the entirety and the essence of what they say they do. The process of writing a theory of change demands careful goal articulation and organizational examination; it is not surprising that practitioners at organizations that have undergone this process are articulate about their goals and can explain how their activities match their goals.

Some of these organizations are also careful to use these goals and outcomes when they evaluate their work. The language of the goals and outcomes directly becomes the language that the organizations use to ask questions of participants on evaluation surveys and assess their experience and learning in various ways.

BBYO is an example of an organization with highly clarified written goals. They were developed through an organizational process involving various stakeholders and are published in their "educational framework." BBYO has developed three overarching goals, and each goal has a set of core outcomes related to the goal as well as behavioral indicators that relate to the core outcomes. The educational framework is new in recent years; BBYO is now developing a usability document that will make the goals usable throughout the organization

One of BBYO's goals, for example, is, "Identify: Strengthen Jewish identity." Three outcomes related to this goal include:

- "Teens feel confident questioning and integrating into one's life Jewish principles about G-d and Torah, history, traditions, and culture."
- "Teens respect diversity within the Jewish community and in the world."
- "Teens use leadership skills to help others develop their own Jewish pride, connections, and commitment."

Sample indicators for these outcomes are:

- "Describe how Jewish values and beliefs correspond with current American values and issues."
- "Advocate on Jewish issues."
- "Explore how your Jewish identity can expand during college, such as through Hillel and Jewish fraternities and sororities."

When BBYO practitioner Rachel Meytin describes her ongoing work, she begins with these goals and then discusses activities that seek to achieve these goals. She uses language that was created and clarified by organizational stakeholders and uses this language consistently throughout her work.

Second, a greater number of organizations have a more general goal statement, articulated as an organization. These are public goal statements, used most often on websites or stationery. Sometimes staff can recite them, or they are integrated in some way into the life of the organization. They are created by the organizations and represent public, organization-wide conversation about desired goals. The statements are brief; they do not give great detail as to what students may know, think, feel, or do when they are finished. When practitioners describe their work, they allude to goals that go beyond these larger organizational missions or goals, referencing a variety of outcomes for students.

Such mission guiding statements include:

- Camp Ramah in Wisconsin's, "Where fun and friendship build Jewish lives," or
- Columbia/ Barnard Hillel, which suggests, "Columbia/Barnard Hillel is the catalyst for students to explore and consciously define their Jewish identity."

These are general statements that point to what the organization hopes to accomplish in a broad way.

Third, a few practitioners explain that they rarely or never talk about organizational goals, even while they have a sense of what they are trying to achieve. The practitioners implicitly understand what they are working toward while the organization has little public conversation about goals, outcomes, or indicators.

As described by Josh Broide, Camp Mesorah is an example of such an organization that has goals that become articulated as a practitioner describes his work but are not necessarily recorded or clarified by the organization. As he describes the work he is trying to do with campers, the experience that he hopes campers will have, and why camp is effective, Broide alludes to or outright mentions the following:

- Campers will experience spirited Judaism.
- Campers will practice Judaism independently, developing confidence.
- Campers will develop their own ideas about Jewish tradition and practice, separate from their parents and families.
- Campers will develop "derech eretz," particularly, respect for others.
- Campers will participate in a system of making good decisions.
- Campers will develop their self-esteem.
- Campers will develop their love for Judaism.

These goals are not necessarily recorded anywhere, but they exist within the practitioners' discourse about camp.

The existence of goals, differs, then, among organizations and includes formal statements, claims that practitioners make, and implicit ideas that they use regularly or intentions in their behaviors.

When this paper shares ideas about goals, it does so using both formal organizational goal statements and practitioners' talk about goals in their work.

Using Goals in the Organization

When practitioners spoke about using goals in their organizations, they spoke about several areas. First, they mentioned considerations that they have in setting goals, which include issues such as students' backgrounds as well as the theoretical frameworks that they use in thinking about where they want to go. They also spoke about the challenge of communicating goals; they shared a number of strategies that they use to communicate goals. Finally, they outlined how they evaluate goals, sharing indicators that they use. Some of these indicators are explicit and documented, while others are implicit, and can be deduced from conversations with the practitioners.

SETTING GOALS

Practitioners discussed a variety of important factors to consider in setting organizational goals.

First, particularly in voluntary experiential Jewish educational organizations, students (participants) can have all different levels of experience with Jewish life. At some camps, for example, campers arrive to the session as long-time campers or as first-time campers, with and without experience with the camp's subject matter. In another example, Hillel can pull together a group of students to explore Israel, and some have been to Israel and some have never been; some may have had deep exposure to Israel's history and others may know nothing of Israel's past. In Young Judaea, according to Simon Klarfeld, students come to their year program in Israel, YearCourse, from a Taglit: Birthright Israel trip, while others come to YearCourse after ten years in the Young Judaea system. Those who come from the Taglit program have little experience with Israel and those who are long-time campers have a great deal of experience, and YearCourse needs to set and work toward goals for this one cohort with these students of all backgrounds. At Hillel of Columbia-Barnard, as described by Brian Cohen, students are highly "comfortable in their Jewish skin" or they are just exploring Judaism, tentatively entering Jewish learning spaces. Goals set in most of these organizations need to take into account these differences in background knowledge, confidence, and experience each student comes with, creating goals that advance each student while honoring the fact that some may have entered the learning space with a more informed background than others. One consideration, then, in setting goals is students' varying backgrounds and the need to set goals that evaluate all students' achievement, whatever their backgrounds.

Another consideration relates to organizational leaders' preferred theoretical framework. Some practitioners shared that their organizations use frameworks other than goal-setting in their work, and so they do not use goal language. Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, for example, operates with an educational vision, a strong and well-developed sense of who campers should become. This language of "educational vision" is recognized within the study of education; it comes from discourse about educating institutions that work with such educational or institutional visions. These visions establish the capacities, or ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, that students should develop and exhibit when finished with the educational program. Working with its educational vision, Ramah in Wisconsin has certain ends towards which it works, a vision of a successful camper. Jacob Cytryn imagines a "critical thinker," a "hyper-intellectual Conservative Jew." He has an idea of how this person comes to be and how an institution shapes this person; for example, camp leaders work to ensure that Jewish language, ideas, and values, frame and guide all camp happenings and policies, even conducting a conversation about health and safety is accomplished through Jewish ideas about the body. There is a flow from vision to strategy to desired outcomes. In this way, camp can create

a thinking, knowledgeable Jew. This flow is similar to the concepts used in the language of goal-setting, similar to a theory of change, but it uses its own language and concepts to work on similar theories.

The vision framework is an educational framework; other organizations use frameworks that are not necessarily educational frameworks. Sixth and I Synagogue in Washington D.C. operates within an outreach/ marketing frame, with a nimble, start-up mentality. They value "strategic pivoting," according to Shira Stutman, which allows them to adapt quickly in order to adopt an idea.

Other organizations consider their work to be broader than experiential Jewish education; EJE is one mode they use to achieve their goals. As described by Rachel Brodie, at the JCC of San Francisco, for example, the primary goal – and metric for adopting new program ideas – is to help individuals thrive. At this organization, practitioners recognize that they adopt several modalities to do this: one is education, and others include social service and recreation.

Similarly, according to Zach Truboff, at the Mandel JCC in Cleveland, different practitioners approach their work from different perspectives. Some see the work as educational and so might set learning goals, and others see the work as more social/ recreational or business-oriented. In both of these cases, educational goals might be set in smaller program areas of the organization and they are not set for the larger organization. In the case of the Mandel JCC, a Jewish educational paradigm could be considered brand-new for practitioners: before Truboff began his position, the agency had lacked a Jewish educator for several years, and so "many of the professional staff [had] not been exposed to key ideas and core concepts in Jewish education and identity building." Truboff suggested that this "is a significant reason as to why they are not able to articulate in greater detail" ideas about Jewish educational aspects of their goals. The framework of the agency may be only in the midst of shifting.

In another example, at Repair the World, "the L part [of Jewish service-learning], the learning, is a way to deepen the service," according to Mordy Walfish. He continued, "If [students] understand the way that tradition thinks about issues, they will be better volunteers and will do things in a deeper way." Educational goals for Repair the World exist within a framework of service goals and goals related to societal change.

A last example can be seen in the Orthodox Union's Yachad, a national program that integrates children with special needs into Jewish life. Jeff Lichtman explained that, in addition to pursuing goals reflective of general EJE organizations (as outlined later), the goals reflect a special-needs agenda: helping the non-disabled to "see that people with disabilities are people who have abilities," supporting families with children who have special needs, and helping all children to have stronger social skills and to prioritize inclusivity. A consideration in setting goals, then, is how the goals of the organization – including those related to EJE – can inform each other as well as how EJE goals are carried throughout the organization or are focused on one area of the organization.

COMMUNICATING GOALS

Often, goals are set at the most senior level of the organization. It is challenging for goals to "trickle down," in Simon Klarfeld's words, to every member of the staff. Yet, this discussion among the line-staff is most important since these are the staff who often work most directly with students and who make moment-to-moment choices that influence learning. Discussion of goals with counselors, for example, must take place in order for those working directly with campers to help the goals to be achieved. This discussion happens sometimes, but not always.

To address this issue, at the Jewish Farm School, as described by Jacob Fine, national staff takes their clearly-mapped logic model to their Alternative Break (AB) staff during every AB staff training. National and program staff sit together and review the logic model, with AB staff studying the model, noting questions and their responsibilities for reaching various goals. The logic model articulates the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that the Jewish Farm School hopes participants develop through ABs. As a result, AB staff can see clearly the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills that the Jewish Farm School hopes participants develop and acquire through staff's work with participants. A clear connection develops between the national staff's ideas about goals and AB staff's responsibilities.

Hillel's educational foci, as described by Abi Dauber Sterne, offer another example of embedding goals into organizational activity. These foci are used to establish strategy, heavily within the national and somewhat within the local organizations. The educational foci (Jewish knowledge, self-confidence, peoplehood, and memory) are repeated again and again to local Hillels from the national level, in all organizational trainings, in organizational writing, and so on. Working within each focus, Hillel has a set of "growth outcomes" that it hopes students achieve, working from an initial stage to an advanced stage in all four foci. These growth outcomes are used extensively in training professionals in Hillel's methodology.

MEMORY

DISCOVER	GROW: EXPLORE	GROW: EXPERIMENT	GROW: MATURE	OWN
ABSENT	WARM	POSITIVE	DEEP	ALIVE
THE STUDENT HAS FEW TO NO JEWISH MEMORIES OR EXPERIENCES PRIOR TO COLLEGE. OR, THIS STUDENT WAS INVOLVED JEWISHLY AS A CHILD BUT DOES NOT REMEMBER THE INVOLVEMENT FONDLY (FOR EXAMPLE, SHE HAS NEGATIVE MEMORIES OF HER BAT MITZVAH OR SYNAGOGUE EXPERIENCE).	THE STUDENT HAD A POSITIVE JEWISH CHILDHOOD AND HAS MANY WARM MEMORIES FROM THAT CHILDHOOD. HOWEVER, SHE HAS MADE FEW SUCH MEMORIES AS AN ADULT.	THIS STUDENT IS STARTING TO DEVELOP POSITIVE JEWISH EXPERIENCES AND MEMORIES DURING COLLEGE – TRIPS, CELEBRATIONS, LEARNINGS, MENTORS AND RELATIONSHIPS.	THIS STUDENT HAS CREATED AN EXTENSIVE CORE OF WARM, ADULT JEWISH MEMORIES THAT CAN SUSTAIN HER LIFE AS AN ADULT. OR, MANY OF THIS STUDENT'S SIGNIFICANT LIFE MOMENTS AND EXPERIENCES AS AN ADULT ARE CONNECTED TO JEWISH LIFE.	THIS STUDENT'S MAJOR LIFE MOMENTS ARE INTERTWINED WITH JEWISH TRADITION OR THE JEWISH NARRATIVE. OR, THIS STUDENT ACTIVELY SEEKS TO INFUSE JEWISH TRADITION INTO HER MAJOR LIFE MOMENTS, FOR EXAMPLE, BY ADDING DIFFERENT JEWISH RITUALS TO HER DAY TO DAY EXPERIENCES.

HILLEL'S "GROWTH OUTCOMES" — ASSESSING HILLEL'S EDUCATIONAL FOCI

This set of outcomes helps Hillel professionals understand how Jewish memory might change and manifest over time in a student's behavior and attitudes. "Jewish memory" is one of Hillel's educational foci, or an educational goal or growth area.

SOURCE — HILLEL: THE FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CAMPUS LIFE

EVALUATING GOALS: INDICATORS USED

Organizations often use indicators to evaluate progress made against goals. Indicators might speak to behaviors or attitudes that participants exhibit during a program that show that program as meeting its goals. Indicators might be lead indicators, ideas that students express or behaviors that they exhibit that indicate that students will achieve the goal. They also might be lag indicators, ideas or behaviors that come as a result of the goal being achieved.

As discussed earlier, a few organizations (for example: BBYO, Hillel in its growth outcomes, Young Judaea) have or are experimenting with explicit, written indicators to assess progress toward goals.

Other organizations discuss specific indicators for which they look or listen including behaviors or expressed attitudes of participants. They know their impact when they see it. These indicators are discussed among staff within the organization but are not necessarily recorded.

In addition to the examples offered from BBYO and Hillel, above, indicators mentioned by practitioners include:

- Lead indicator: The energy in the room is high, participants are speaking frequently in response to questions
- Lead indicator: Participants are making comments to staff, sharing that they have learned something
- Lag indicator: Teens deciding to study in Israel, asking advisors why they live in Israel or otherwise clearly reflecting on their possible interest in living in Israel
- Lag indicator: Participants send emails, make comments that they are increasing their Jewish behaviors in addition to their program participation
- Lag indicator: Participants explain that they are excited about Judaism for the first time since childhood

Organizations that have clearly articulated goals, likely in theories of change, often also have clearly articulated outcomes. Organizations that work with implicit goals, with goals that they speak about but have not clarified, also use indicators, often also intuitively. Their indicators are those for which they look or listen; they likely have not been recorded in a public organizational document, but practitioners confirmed that when they reflect on their success, they focus on these indicators. At Sixth and I Historic Synagogue, for example, practitioners know success when they hear that individuals or couples have become involved in synagogue life beyond Sixth and I. Their goals involve greater and deeper Jewish involvement, including future synagogue membership, and they recognize these – synagogue involvement, synagogue membership – as evidence of success, even when these are not written as formal indicators. Shira Stutman explained, "If none of the people join synagogues, that will be a failure. If we find people are joining synagogues ... we will feel like we have succeeded." Similarly, many practitioners interviewed for this work agree that active engagement in programs – participants speaking frequently, for example – is a sign of learning, even while this is not a recorded, formal organizational indicator of success.

Goals that Guide Experiential Jewish Education

A variety of goal areas emerged as prevalent among the organizations, from both the organizations' written goal statements and the ways they describe their work. A first area is that participants should find Judaism meaningful; this involves finding personal relevance in Judaism, determining what aspects of Judaism a student, for herself, sees as salient, and identifying why these aspects are important to her. A second goal is that a student's affective relationship with Judaism results in behavior change, in action, even without prompting from educators or parents. In other words, students will act Jewishly, independently; students will "own" their Jewishness. Third, students should also, in EJE, develop socio-emotionally, learning capacities and skills related to growing up, being in groups, and leading complex Jewish organizations and communities. Finally, students should learn aspects of Jewish subject matter, developing cognitively and learning facts and behaviors.

(1) PARTICIPANTS WILL UNDERSTAND JUDAISM AS PERSONALLY RELEVANT AND "MEANINGFUL."

Practitioners used the word "meaning" fairly often in association with their goals and the nature of their work. Ultimately, the most significant goal that they articulated related to "meaning" is primarily an affective one: students will find Judaism personally meaningful. As the practitioners used or described meaning, they complicated this goal in a variety of ways. For example, practitioners further define meaning as looking for specific ways for something to be meaningful. Practitioners described why the meaning-making process matters and they referenced the personal nature of meaning and the importance of independence in meaning-making. They also emphasized the importance of relevancy in the process of helping students to make meaning of Judaism: students must find Judaism relevant in order to find it meaningful.

Practitioners further defined what they meant by meaning. For example, for Mayanot, meaning involves understanding why Judaism and aspects of Judaism should or can be important to them. Danny Sack (Mayanot) emphasized that at sites in Israel, for example, "You need … to get them to understand it.... to engage the participants, get them to be part of the story," so that they can understand and articulate "why Israel is part of them as a Jew, why Israel has meaning for them." The goal of the educational interaction is understanding and engagement in order to find meaning. Ami Hersh (Ramah) explained something similar: "We want them to feel...that [the material is] touching them in some way. That's a piece of what good experiential Jewish education does. It touches their souls... and inspires them to be lovers of Hebrew and lovers of Israel and lovers of Judaism." The meaning is affective, and it happens through creating a foundation of "touch" or "love" in the student. For these practitioners, affective learning is imperative. It accompanies cognitive learning, and neither is privileged over the other.

Marc Fein explained why the meaning-making process matters. The meaning, he articulated, provides a kind of foundation for exploration. Without the affective foundation, any challenge to one's Jewishness will push a student off course. Fein (NCSY) said, without the meaning work, "You're building on a foundation of sand that will wash away with the slightest conflict." That is, as they explore Jewish life voluntarily, students may confront ideas in Jewish tradition that are confusing or distasteful, and when students confront these ideas, they should have a strong core of motivation that keeps them in the conversation. He is suggesting that motivation comes from the idea that Judaism is in some way personally relevant and meaningful to them, that it offers them something, and so they will not dismiss the entire tradition in order to grapple with one aspect of the tradition. In other words, their affective, meaning-based connection is almost a weapon, a tool with which to push against the urge to abandon Judaism altogether, a source of motivation to stay in the exploration. For Fein, affective learning is not just important but imperative. If only cognitive learning happens, the cognitive learning can be wasted; the student can walk away without the affective foundation.

Fraidy Aber pointed out that meaning is highly personal. At San Francisco's Contemporary Jewish Museum (CJM), she said, each interaction with CJM material is meant to provoke a connection within each student or guest of the museum: "We have an inquiry-based philosophy: presentations are intended to be open-ended; questions that might be posed, especially in a tour and art-making, allow for personal meaning-making." Aber shared a triangle of "person, big idea, artwork," within which the meaning is developed.

Practitioners also spoke about developing a "relationship" with Judaism. For Canada Israel Experience, according to Lior Cyngiser, participants are to build a "relationship with Israel" and a "connection with Israel's land, culture, and people." This relationship and connection are dependent on personally defined meaning. They happen through affective learning.

Additional practitioners added that the process of making meaning is personal, and it is also independent. Meaning cannot be lectured or taught; students cannot hear "Judaism is meaningful" and then believe it. Moreover, the answer to why Judaism is meaningful is not offered but explored, discovered by students. In NCSY, for example, according to Fein, "There is no 'the' answer. You have to figure out [for example] why Israel is important to you..." and NCSY gives students "an array of approaches, intellectual, cultural, for [students] to decide." Shira Stutman (Sixth and I) said something similar, that the learning process itself is not complete until the student has reacted and engaged in meaning-making. She commented, "The benefit of EJE is that it can be initiated and managed by an educator but the actual work has to come from the participants. It cannot happen without the participants." Personal meaning and relevance happen in conversation and in process, and learning, meaning-making, happens not when teachers teach but when students engage.

Teachers do not offer answers and neither do parents; personal meaning is found through independent exploration. Often in EJE, parents are absent, and in immersive experiences, parents and caregivers are absent for long periods of time. Students' independence allows personal meaning to develop as they make their own choices. At Camp Stone, there is an "opportunity for each one of the kids to explore Judaism in a way they can't really do at home," in Kiva Rabinsky's words. "The lack of inhibition, the lack of feeling that there are parents or a strict guide who is telling you a certain way you have to be" allows students to find their way into personal meaning and practice. At Hillel, according to Abi Dauber Sterne, practitioners work toward "ownership," where students have a personal sense of what is important to them in Jewish life and can actively engage in Jewish life at

their own initiation. In other words, working on the meaning of Judaism with students independent of parents and dogma is important because it helps them advance their personal understanding of meaning, and it also is important because it facilitates action even without parents or institutions in the future. With a sense of the personal meaning of Judaism, students will be motivated to act independently in their futures, to observe Jewish life in their own spaces and on their own time. These practitioners suggest that the affective learning is more powerful – the meaning means more – when it is discovered independently. They also suggest that there are no "right" answers, that Jewish tradition makes room for the creation of independent meaning.

Another means of helping students to explore personal meaning is to help them find Judaism compelling, to get them to walk through the door. Abi Dauber Sterne (Hillel) emphasized the importance of this, stressing "marketing" to students, which involves helping students find the activities personally compelling so that they will walk through the door. At the Jewish Student Connection, according to Susan Holzman Wachsstock, relevance is used to help students choose activities, and relevance is used in the educational process. Judaism is shown to be relevant to students' lives in order to attract them to the activity and to help them find meaning in Judaism. Judaism is also integrated with topics and ideas the students will find engaging and to which they already relate, like arts and sports. As students talk about the Jewish values involved in a present-day news story, or they talk about explaining Judaism to their non-Jewish friends, they are touching on issues they care about generally — current events, or their social relationships — and JSC is helping them to find Judaism meaningful by making that connection between their lives and interests, which are deeply relevant to them, and their Jewishness. Finally, the JCC of Manhattan, as described by Ayelet Cohen, helps students find meaning in Judaism by giving students what they were already looking for, or discover what they did not know they were wanting. Ayelet Cohen explained, "I'd like to think that we are not only giving people what they are already looking for but giving them what they might not even know they are looking for: opportunities to engage in Jewish life from a multitude of entry-points, tools to deepen their knowledge and practice, a sense of connectedness and belonging to a wider Jewish community." On Thanksgiving, for example, the JCC uses Jewish language to help those in the building and those connected with the JCC to think about gratitude. Relevance involves integration with the everyday and with the student's entire self, her other interests and activities. Relevance helps EJE start with who the students are — an interest in current events, or their social relationships, or an American holiday, or a Jewish holiday — and then turn to Jewish tradition for students' exploration, rooted in the students themselves.

It is worth noting that in context of EJE, for the most part, Jewish education is voluntary. Students can come and go as they please. Helping Judaism to be relevant, marketing based on relevancy, making it compelling, allows practitioners to increase the numbers of participants and increase the number of individuals involved in exploring Judaism. The right people aren't always in the room, and Judaism should matter to more people.

Practitioners, therefore, who are helping students to find meaning in Judaism are creating a strong affective foundation, helping each student to create a personal process of meaning-making, giving students independence to explore, and helping Judaism to be relevant and integrated into who students are. Personal meaning-making requires the building of an affective foundation and the freedom for students to explore the tradition. The primary goal is that "students will find meaning in Judaism;" the process of education is one of exploration, and outcomes beyond that goal, particularly as related to behavior, are left open.

(2) PARTICIPANTS WILL DO JEWISH FOR THEMSELVES.

Practitioners want students not to be reliant on Jewish organizations in order to live their Jewish lives. Ami Hersh (Ramah) outlined this idea: "When I teach about Israel I teach [counselors] about teaching the content and love of Israel, but ultimately my real goal is to get them to the next level, of loving it and exploring it on their own. So that when they get to college or beyond, they're going to want to keep doing things beyond what we've given to them." He continued, we want to "inspire them to go fishing on their own. That really is a good end goal of experiential Jewish education." Rachel Meytin of BBYO agrees, explaining, "teens are making a commitment to living adult Jewish lives." She emphasized that this includes not just a commitment to feeling Jewish, but also to living active Jewish lives. Similarly, Jordan Fruchtman (Moishe House) explained that Moishe House hopes that "participants will learn how to lead rituals for themselves," developing "young adults who actually feel confident, who actually feel like they're prepared" to lead their Jewish lives.
Shira Stutman (Sixth and I) was also explicit about this goal, explaining, "The goal is for them to own Judaism in the future, live an active Jewish life," to take Jewish action. She outlined her strategy, designed for students to learn to take action: "We're piloting a number of programs where we are teaching concrete Jewish skills: how to participate in Friday night services, how to have Shabbat dinner at home, and then 'workshopping' the material together." She explained, "The whole workshop is case study-based: they bring experiences of their own lives to the table and we discuss them as a group." By unpacking their own experiences, they develop personal meaning — their experience becomes a part of their identity — as described earlier, and they also have an opportunity to learn from what they did in order to do it again. Stutman suggested that by living the material and then reflecting on it, the learners internalize it. The material becomes a part of their skill set and a part of their way of making meaning of the world.

Practitioners emphasized that part of this process is to help students develop the confidence to explore and practice Judaism on their own. Jordan Fruchtman explained, ".... Young adults... expect that you have to be a rabbi or have a MA in Jewish education to be able to do any of these things... That's where we can succeed — even having the confidence can make a huge difference — not feeling like you have to be an old man" to do this. At Hillel at the local and national levels, according to Brian Cohen (local) and Abi Dauber Sterne (national), similarly, Jewish self-confidence is a key goal so that students will be able to step into Jewish life in greater ways. Self-confidence motivates independent involvement. Participants should act Jewishly on their own and goals related to this — that facilitate this independent action — are the development of self-confidence and of skills.

(3) PARTICIPANTS WILL DEVELOP INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS AND/OR GROW SOCIO-EMOTIONALLY.

Many experiential programs seek to facilitate growth in inter-personal skills or socio-emotional skills and capacities. Practitioners based in camps and Israel programs emphasized these particularly. Kiva Rabinsky (Camp Stone) explained, they are "living with someone 24 hours a day, so they learn to live and act as one group, a group that respects each other. They learn how to just be a mensch around someone else, that the focus is the group, not only the individual... Campers are they same age as their bunkmates, and by working together, they become part of a system larger than themselves." Other camp practitioners added additional skills and goals within this area. Jacob Cytryn (Ramah Wisconsin) included as a goal "life skills. You learn how to fold your clothing, make your bed, set a table." Rabinsky added an emphasis on intergenerational community. "There is significant value in having the older campers run a program for the younger ones." He added an additional comment

about not "sitting on the sidelines" during activities, "about taking risks." Similar ideas are learned through Hillel as well, where responsibility for Jewish life is handed from generation to generation and students of varying ideologies sit together to create Jewish community.

In these examples, socio-emotional growth is a goal in and of itself. Through all of these experiences, students develop a variety of capacities: respect for others, for different ideas, responsibility, cooperation, collaboration, humility. These capacities are the goals of the educational activity.

However, sometimes socio-emotional growth becomes intertwined with Jewish growth. These capacities just listed can serve to foster Jewish growth. Danny Sack (Mayanot) explained that their Israel experiences begin with time in the North, where community is built "in order for individuals to grow within the safety of the group." First, there's "a lot of hiking, fun... creating the group experience, getting the group to be comfortable with each other, to trust each other. Some have never done a hike in their life." Then, they go to Jerusalem, where they explore Judaism together. Their experience in the North allows them to share with each other in order to grow Jewishly through the Israel experience. Here, socio-emotional growth is a means to an end, a way to achieve Jewish growth, but both are goals for the organization, since one cannot happen as effectively without the other.

(4) PARTICIPANTS WILL LEARN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF JEWISH SUBJECT MATTER. PARTICIPANTS WILL LEARN HOW TO THINK ABOUT JEWISH SUBJECT MATTER.

There is also content learning, subject-matter learning, that happens through experiential Jewish education. Practitioners set goals in this area as well. This includes basic facts about Judaism, including "the choreography of the Amidah, what's in the 19 brachot," (blessings), in Jacob Cytryn's words. At Ramah Day Camp in Nyack and in the Ramah system generally, according to Ami Hersh, there are educational goals, expectations that, after certain numbers of summers, campers know how to engage in certain behaviors or can explain aspects of Jewish life or history. At Sixth and I Historic Synagogue, Shira Stutman explained that it is important that students learn to create Shabbat dinner, possessing the knowledge and skills that allow one to lead Shabbat traditions. As outlined earlier, to lead a Shabbat dinner, students need confidence and motivation — they need the affective foundation of a meaningful relationship with Judaism and with Shabbat, — but they also need the basic knowledge.

This goal area also includes more loose areas of subject matter, areas that exist with fewer cognitive boundaries. These could also be called dispositions or habits of the mind, ways of thinking about topics. Cytryn calls this "bigger abstract dispositional stuff" and gives examples of areas, including "talking to God, the efficacy of prayer." Helping students to learn to think about talking to God and to think about the efficacy of prayer are conceptual ways of thinking rather than specific details of subject matter, and these fall in this goal area as well.

This area includes elements of an organization's ideology. In Mayanot, according to Danny Sack, practitioners' understanding of religious life is directly related to goals. They hope, for example, that participants develop an understanding of the soul, which stems from Mayanot's understanding of the broader world and of Judaism.

16 Conclusions

We set out originally to learn the content of the goals that EJE practitioners use and to identify a set of common goals for the field of EJE. We learned that the process of goal-setting and the roles that goals play in the work of EJE are not simple, linear, or uniform. Still, in talking with practitioners, we learned a great deal about goal-setting in EJE organizations, about how to use goals, and about the content of the goals that do or could exist. Organizations have clearly articulated goals, with well-developed outcomes and indicators, or they have goals that are implicit, understood only by talking with practitioners or examining their practices. As they discussed working with goals, practitioners mentioned a variety of important considerations related to goal setting: ensuring that goals relate to all students, no matter their background knowledge and experience; taking organizational framework and other goals — such as related to social services — into account; carefully writing indicators; and communicating goals well to various levels in the organization. We learned that EJE organizations have similar goals, whether they are written down explicitly or are implicit in their work and their conversation about their work. Their goals include helping students to see Judaism as personally relevant and meaningful, to engage in Jewish life with their own motivation and on their own terms, to develop inter-personal skills, and to learn various aspects of Jewish subject matter. We could not collect written goal statements from most organizations, but we were successful in eliciting from them their ideas about the purposes of their work. By studying the field in this bottom-up manner, we were able to create a portrait of goals in EJE work, using real language from practice. We "grounded" our theory in the work itself.

"Grounded theory" is a common qualitative research practice. It suggests that theory is developed through the systematic gathering and analyzing of data in order to produce an idea or set of ideas. The researcher begins with a general area of focus and research question rather than a specific hypothesis, then engages in study, allowing ideas to come from the data, with data points building as the research is conducted. "Grounded theories," Strauss and Corbin write, "are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action." Grounded theorists approach their work with the capacity to see through words and to understand the concepts behind them, synthesize information to be reported to others, gather specific ideas from abstract ideas, and sensitively hear respondents. Here, we had a research question: What are the goals of experiential Jewish education? Our method of exploring that question, to probe generally with practitioners the nature of their work and of their goals and purposes, proved effective in creating a textured study about the complex role and nature of goal-setting in EJE organizations, despite many practitioners' lack of written organizational goals.

Early in the paper, we provided a series of questions related to goal-setting. This study begins to outline ideas in response to these questions but offers only an introduction to needed common language and ideas around goal-setting. Some of our original questions stand, and they have grown: What is rigor in this field? Even with these theories, how can rigor be injected into the field; how can research about principles feed into practice? With practitioners not familiar with goal-setting, if goal-setting is advantageous for experiential Jewish educational organizations, how can practitioners develop the skills and capacities necessary to set them? Perhaps most significantly, particularly given

the lack of clarified and written goals among the organizations included here, is goal-setting advantageous to the field? What happens when practitioners do and do not work with goals?

Experiential Jewish education has grown significantly as a field in the past decades. This research points, though, to the extent to which inconsistency continues to exist within the field itself. Language differs among practitioners, and educational ideas — such as goal-setting — have not found their place consistently among experiential Jewish educational organizations.

At the same time, this study demonstrates that by practicing grounded theory — talking with practitioners and documenting their ideas and even observing moments in the field — we can begin to isolate ideas and create language based in real practice, which, therefore, might be adopted by many. We can begin to identify the principles behind the work of EJE practitioners and create a common language with which to exchange ideas and strengthen our work.

18 Appendix: Organizations and Practitioners Interviewed

BBYO Inc., Rachel Meytin

Boca Raton Synagogue, Josh Broide

Camp Mesorah, Josh Broide

Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, Jacob Cytryn

Camp Stone, Kiva Rabinsky

Canada Israel Experience, Lior Cyngiser

Mandel JCC, Zach Truboff

Columbia-Barnard Hillel, Brian Cohen

Contemporary Jewish Museum, Fraidy Aber

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, Abi Dauber Sterne

JCC of Manhattan, Ayelet Cohen

Jewish Farm School, Jacob Fine

Mayanot, Danny Sack

Moishe House, Jordan Fruchtman

Jewish Student Connection, Susan Holzman Wachsstock

NCSY Upstate New York, Marc Fein

Ramah Day Camp in Nyack, Ami Hersh

Repair the World, Mordecai Walfish

San Francisco JCC, Rachel Brodie

Sixth and I Historic Synagogue, Shira Stutman

Yachad (Orthodox Union), Jeff Lichtman

Young Judaea, Simon Klarfeld

YU CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN EXPERIENTIAL JEWISH EDUCATION

Shuki Taylor, Director
ytaylor@yu.edu

Gaby Schoenfeld, Assistant Director
gaby.schoenfeld@yu.edu

President Richard M. Joel
President and
Bravmann Family University Professor,
Yeshiva University

Rabbi Kenneth Brander
Vice President for University & Community Life
The David Mitzner Dean
YU Center for the Jewish Future
Yeshiva University

Yeshiva University
CENTER FOR THE JEWISH FUTURE

500 West 185th Street
Furst Hall Suite 427
New York, NY 10033

Phone: 212.960.5400 ext. 6158
Fax: 212.960.5450

eje@yu.edu
www.yu@edu
www.ejewisheducation.com