

BUILDERS OF JEWISH EDUCATION

A COMMUNITY OF BUILDERS



2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

From Strength to Strength



As part of its strategic planning process (well underway, at this writing), BJE engaged a consulting firm to interview and survey hundreds of stakeholders throughout the Jewish communities of greater Los Angeles. All who care about the present and future vitality of Jewish life are stakeholders in

the enduring mission of BJE. Reflecting the diversity of L.A. Jewry, BJE is blessed with a dedicated board of directors drawn from many sectors of the community, each member of which is deeply committed to the Jewish education of successive generations of children and families. Since its inception, BJE has been led by outstanding presidents.

Over the most recent three years, BJE was headed by Bennett L. Spiegel, a past president of Adat Ari El and long-time director of the board of Bet Tzedek Legal Services and the Advisory Board of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies. A Senior Counsel Emeritus at Hogan Lovells U.S. LLP, Bennett's lifelong commitment to Jewish learning and legal and business expertise were evident throughout his presidency. Amidst the pandemic, Bennett ably guided BJE, enabling it to help schools, educators, parents, and students from a position of strength. Looking to the future, Bennett encouraged the board to embark on its current, ambitious strategic planning process. I cannot sufficiently thank Bennett for his exceptional leadership throughout his term.

The content of this Annual Report is testimony to his impact. BJE's long history of outstanding lay leadership continues with the election of Craig S. Rutenberg as president of BJE, effective September 1, 2023. Craig, a partner at Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP, has played an active role at BJE since joining the board in 2015. Prior to his election as president, Craig served as a BJE Vice President and chaired the organization's Planning & Budget and Investment committees. A member of Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Craig is a past chair of the legal division of the Jewish Federation and proud dad of Jonah, 14, and Sloane, 6. He embodies the combination of skill, demonstrated leadership, and commitment to the advancement of Jewish education that has enabled BJE to flourish.

As a new year approaches, BJE expresses thanks to the many individuals, families, and institutional partners who make the activities described in these pages possible. Your partnership nurtures the Jewish education of thousands of children and families, enriching their lives and building the Jewish future.

With wishes for a *shanah tovah*, a year of goodness and abundant blessing,

De Roy

Gil Graff, Executive Director

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This year, BJE, in partnership with the Center for Positive Education, completed a program of training in Positive Education for a second cohort of educators in BJE-affiliated schools. BJE's Positive Education program brings together early childhood, day school, and part-time religious school educators for shared learning in the practice of Positive Education, the application of the science of wellbeing and principles of Positive Psychology, Neuroscience and Integrative Health. The program was made possible in great part through the support of a **REIMAGINE** Grant from the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles. There are now 28 BJE-affiliated schools with at least one educator trained and certified in the program. They are bringing their learning back to their individual schools to help enhance student, staff and community wellbeing.



Educators from BJE-affiliated schools (L to R): Rabbi Moshe Blumberger of Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy, Joseph Zipkin, of Brawerman Elementary School, Rabbi Rebeccah Yussman of Temple Menorah and Rabbi Adam Schaffer of HAMAKOM

"We are slowly beginning to shift not just our way of learning but our school culture as well. I am proud to say that because of the benefits of positive education and the culture we've built this year, not a single teacher is leaving at the end of the year. Infusing Positive Education into our school culture has helped our staff to see that mistakes are simply learning opportunities, both for adults and children."

Randee Bishoff, Director of Education, Temple Akiba

"Since we introduced positive education this year, as a teacher I feel happy and supported physically as well as emotionally. I have learned and grown both personally and professionally and am excited to help our children build the resilience skills they need to be successful."

Mayanna Napchan, Teacher, Temple Akiba

"Just coming out of the pandemic is its own project. Kids have both social and academic deficits, and we are supporting them through these challenges. We hope that what we can teach kids about Positive Education will add to the tools they need to continue to emerge from this challenging time."

Rabbi Adam Schaffer, Director of the Jewish Learning Cooperative of HAMAKOM

I am excited about implementing various elements of Positive Psychology that are appropriate to our early childhood center. Some of the initiatives we will be exploring include gratitude



practices, character development, mindfulness exercises, fostering positive relationships, and promoting a growth mindset. These exercises have the potential to create a lasting impact on our students' happiness, resilience, and academic achievements.

Claire Peikon, Early Childhood Center Director, Gindi Maimonides Academy

"There is something powerful in coming together with colleagues from different roles and institutions to discuss the ways in which we are converting theoretical learning into practical steps, lessons and culture changes. We know all our students need the values of positive psychology to help them fulfill their potential and hopefully bring out goodness with and for others."

Rabbi Scott Westle, Heschel Day School



Strategic Planning to Calibrate Focus on Current Needs



Responding to our growing community's ever-evolving needs has been a hallmark of BJE's 86 years of leadership as an advocate, planner, catalyst, and creative force for strengthening and advancing Jewish learning, with special emphasis on children and youth, early childhood through high school, their educators, and parents.

In the coming few months, BJE will complete a yearlong strategic planning process and, by the close of 2023, produce a 5-year plan calibrated to address current and emergent Jewish educational needs most effectively in the changing landscape of Greater Los Angeles.

As part of this process, BJE's board and staff, facilitated by 2B Communications & Strategy Group, have studied factors including changing community demographics, habits, innovations, offerings, and new realities, as well as organizational data, resources, and the anonymous feedback of hundreds of BJE stakeholders. BJE looks forward to sharing the strategic plan in the months following its adoption.

"Impact and outcomes are the ultimate measures of success. Strategic planning helps ensure that not only are we doing things right, but that we are doing the right things. The plan that emerges will help define BJE's direction for years to come."

- Dr. Gil Graff, BJE Executive Director



BJE Secures over \$7.1 Million in Government Funding for Jewish Schools in 2022-2023

Since 2008, with the support of funding from the Jewish Federation, BJE has represented BJE-accredited schools in accessing federal Title funding previously known as "No Child Left Behind" and currently known as the "Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*." Over the last decade, BJE has helped secure close to \$22 million in government funding to support services to students, educators, and parents at BJE-accredited schools.

In the 2022-23 school year alone, BJE assisted 28 BJE-accredited day schools and yeshivot in accessing over \$7.1 million in government funding and services. In addition to ESSA funding, BJE also assisted schools in accessing COVID-19 relief funding through the Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools Program (EANS).**

*ESSA Title I Funding assists students who are falling behind academically by providing support in English Language Arts and Math, counseling services and support for teachers working with Title I students.

Title II funding is available for educator professional development (workshops, coaching, tuition reimbursement and conference attendance.)

Title IV funding provides for student support in obtaining a well-rounded education, strengthening the use of educational technology, and supporting safe and healthy students. Services can include academic and counseling services for students, workshops for parents and educators, coaching and conferences for educators and educational technology equipment and training.

**COVID-19 ARP EANS funding assisted schools in obtaining equipment to address the additional safety needs created by Covid, such as additional school furniture to enable distancing and classroom and mental health support for students falling behind academically as well as technology.



Early Childhood Educators Putting the Pieces Back Together

BJE's Bebe Feuerstein Simon Early Childhood Institute was one of the largest in recent history, with more than 460 registered participants gathering in one location for the first time since the pandemic began. After an opening session with renowned Israeli artist Hanoch Piven, participants attended workshops on a range of topics. Following lunch, everyone had the opportunity to visit one of five early childhood centers to learn from one another and share successes and challenges.

Increased conference participation reflects the growing strength of BJE's Early Childhood Directors Network (ECDN). Connectivity among network members was fostered during the pandemic, at a time when great support and key learning was facilitated by BJE professional staff, with considerable mutual support among Directors. A highly subsidized registration fee made this year's Institute accessible to a maximum number of educators.

Alisha Sela, ECC Director at Kadima Day School and President of BJE's Early Childhood Directors Network stated, "There was an amazing energy around the opportunity to collaborate. In addition to a number of



engaging speakers, many schools participated in a special Expo during breakfast to share something they're proud of as a school. It was a meaningful lesson in the benefits of learning both from experts, and from your peers. My teachers came back very excited; one reported being so energized and filled with new ideas she could hardly sleep!"

With the high caliber of professional learning and meaningful relationships strengthened in recent years, BJE anticipates continued growth of participation in the annual Early Childhood Institute.



Onward Hebrew – BJE Helps Improve Hebrew Learning in Religious Schools

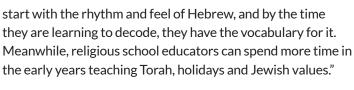
Dr. Isa Aron

Over the past five years, BJE has brought a fresh approach to Hebrew instruction to educators in BJE-affiliated religious schools. In *Onward Hebrew*, students are introduced to decoding Hebrew starting in 5th grade

or later, once they've developed a rich foundation in the sounds of Hebrew. To prepare them for this, the program relies on playful movement-based Hebrew learning, enriching the use of Hebrew during tefilah, and use of Jewish life

vocabulary to help create familiarity for younger students.
The program was funded in part by the Judith and Louis G.
Miller Family Foundation.

Isa Aron, Emerita Professor of Jewish Education at Hebrew Union College, who led the BJE trainings, explained, "Decoding Hebrew takes so much time when students are too young and not ready for it. With Onward Hebrew, students



The program has been implemented at synagogues across the country, and a hallmark of the program is the depth of shared resources and tools among educators nationwide. More than half the BJE-affiliated religious schools have been exposed to the program and are implementing core elements of the program.

Rabbi Carrie Vogel, who served as Director of Kehillat Israel's Jewish Experience Center, explained, "Incorporating the philosophy and methodology of Onward Hebrew has proven to have a tremendous impact in our school. Now that we are many years in, we are seeing a dramatic shift in stronger Hebrew reading and deeper comprehension, as well as far less anxiety from our students. Onward Hebrew has helped us teach Hebrew in a way that truly adds value to the supplemental school experience."



A "New Normal" for BJE's March of the Living

In April, BJE's March of the Living returned to its full experience, traveling to Poland and Israel with 168 high school seniors from 10 different high schools across Los Angeles, including public, private, Jewish and non-sectarian schools. This year, BJE's delegation, the largest from the U.S. to join the international program, was honored to have been selected to lead the international march. A survivor who traveled with BJE – 92-year-old Gabriella Karin – officially led the group.

One hallmark of BJE's delegation has always been the survivors who have traveled with the group. This year, only Gabriella Karin was able to make the trip. However, a new paradigm has emerged; children and grandchildren of survivors who traveled with the group in the past are joining the group.





Sidonia Lax z", a Holocaust survivor who passed away this year, traveled with the BJE group for more than 10 years when she was in her eighties. Each year she shared the story of her father's capture after he attempted to sneak out to get her an apple. It was the last time she ever saw him, and she always urged the students not to take even an apple for granted. Her grandson, David Benson, joined the trip this year.

"In 2013, my journey on March of the Living began. On that trip, I made a commitment to my Nana that I would bring her back every year for as long as she wanted to or could. And when she couldn't anymore, that I would continue in her place to tell her story and represent her message to the teens on the

BJE delegation (and anyone else within earshot!). This past April was the first time I have been back since Covid – and since my Nana passed in December. It was my honor to speak with the teens the morning of the March. I could feel my Nana in the room while I told her famous 'apple' story and my brother handed out apples to each teen. At the end of my talk, I was asked why I fly to Poland for three days every year for this event. Simple – because it's that important." After traveling to Poland, the BJE delegation joined the international March of the Living community in Israel, where the group had the amazing opportunity to be in Jerusalem to celebrate the 75th birthday of the State of Israel.



View the BJE March of the Living in Poland and Israel





Helping Day School Leadership Master Difficult Conversations

This spring, BJE's Day School Leadership Retreat focused on helping heads of school and other administrators address conflict within their communities and learn how to better participate in difficult conversations. The program, facilitated by Rebecca Powell of Resetting the Table, provided tools to build a culture of productive dialogue on charged issues – even in the face of profound differences. Through a series of experiential activities, participants focused on the practice of active listening in order to engage those who may think differently, rather than shut them down. All participants were asked what the organization calls the Million Dollar Question: "How do we replace rigidity with receptivity while addressing charged differences directly?"

Given the current national social and political climate that tends toward discord, the ability to remain open to colleagues, parents and students who may think differently is an essential skill set for every school administrator. With grants from The Jewish Federation of Los Angeles and the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles, BJE was able to bring this valuable skills-building opportunity to teams of educators from 12 BJE-accredited day schools across the L.A. region.



Lead administrators from BJE-accredited day schools (L to R): Wise School's Tami Weiser, Beth Behar, and Malka Clement; Brawerman's Brandon Cohen, Nadine Zysman, and Gillian Feldman, and Rebecca Powell of Resetting the Table

Gregory Keer, Chair of de Toledo High School's Department of Visual and Performing Arts and Dean of Students, shared, "Resetting the Table is more than just talk. It's practical in its step-by-step suggestions. Putting the steps into practice resulted in conversations that made me more hopeful for more successful dialogues in the future. One particularly powerful moment was when, after a discussion, each in our group found commonality in long-sublimated memories for why we got into Jewish education in the first place."

Bash

On March 19, more than 300 community members gathered to honor three extraordinary Builders of Jewish Education: Mel and Susan Plutsky and Nancy Schulman.

BJE Gala 2023

Honoring Leadership
That Goes Above and Beyond



In addition to the funds raised to support BJE's programs and services, the gala featured a special appeal in support of BJE's March of the Living trip to Poland and Israel. The appeal was made by two very special alumni of the program – children of the honorees - Emily Plutsky and Michael Schulman. Their impassioned appeal helped BJE raise an extra \$30,000 on the spot toward support of BJE's March of the Living program, which typically fields the largest delegation of teens from the U.S. to the International March.

Nancy, Mel and Susan were celebrated by all attendees for their combined decades of leadership and support for Jewish education in Los Angeles. BJE congratulates and thanks these exemplary leaders!

BJE's 2024 Adult March of the Living

Join BJE on a journey of a lifetime, the 2024 Adult March of the Living. May 3-9, 2024, in Poland and May 9-15, 2024, in Israel.



Explore Poland before, during and after the Holocaust with world renowned Holocaust Educator Dr. Michael Berenbaum.

In Israel, commemorate Israel's Memorial Day and celebrate Israel's Independence Day.

For more information contact Miriam Prum Hess, mprumhess@bjela.org or 323.761.8334.



Welcome to BJE's New President, First-time Officers and Directors!

BJE is very excited to welcome five new board members, two first-time board officers, and install a new President of the Board. They each shared with us why BJE is important to them. To read more about each of them, and see the full board list, visit the Board of Directors page of our website at www.bjela.org/bje-board-directors.





Rutenberg











Mark





Craig Rutenberg, President

"I am honored to lead an organization dedicated to the promotion of Jewish education and values. I am lucky to follow a long line of extraordinary leaders who have led BJE with great skill and care. And I am excited to work with all our board members, lay leaders, and staff as we design, implement, and execute our strategic plan to maximize BJE's impact for our community's children and educators."

Jonathan Gerber, Vice President

"It is a profound privilege to serve in the role of Vice President at BJE. The significance of Jewish education in shaping our community's trajectory and securing our collective future cannot be overstated. BJE's impactful initiatives extend their reach to Jewish schools, educators, and more than 20,000 children annually. I am genuinely thrilled to contribute to BJE's continued advancement this academic year and for the years ahead, bolstering its mission with unwavering determination."

Joanna Kasirer, Corresponding Secretary

"Devoting my time and resources to the vast array of schools and educational programs that BJE supports makes me incredibly confident about the future of Jewish life in LA."

Jessica Jablon, Director

"Jewish education is important to me because it helps future generations understand and appreciate their Jewish identity, learn who they are, and where they come from."

Jacqui Jacobs, Director

"I am a product of Jewish Day Schools, and my life was forever changed by attending BJE's LA Ulpan. I fell in love with the state of Israel and this love has never waivered. BJE created this program, and I am so very thankful that it existed when it did. I met my best friends on this trip whom I am still close to 30 years later. I will always support BJE's mission!"

Ari Mark, Director

"Somehow, despite unprecedented advancement in tech and communication, it seems to have gotten harder and harder for people to connect and activate - as Jews. I want to change that."

Liora Petel, Director

"I graduated from a Jewish university, and I've always worked in Jewish nonprofits. I love working for Hillel, because their mission is to help college students find their Jewish community. It's important to me that my kids feel connected to their Judaism, so we've always made the effort to bring Judaism to them and into our home. I'm very aligned with the work of BJE – personally and professionally – and happy to support that work as a member of the board."

Jessica Mani Schreiber, Director

"I believe Jewish education is important for so many reasons, but the community and support Jewish education provides is unparalleled. I am very excited to contribute to the success of our Jewish schools."

Give the perfect gift of Jewish education in honor or memory of a dear one.

They (or their family) will receive a beautiful card like this, and you'll be helping secure and enrich Jewish education! Go to www.bjela.org/make-a-gift. (Click "Ways to Give" on the left and then "Send a Tribute!") or call (323) 761-8367.







2022-2023 BJE by the Numbers

29,750

JKidLA

29,750+ people used JKidLA services, including educational consulting, website, bi-monthly newsletter, and social media community.

20,000

Jewish Students

20,000+ L.A. students in early childhood, day school, and part-time Jewish education benefited from BJE services and programs.

9,093

Direct Services

9,093 hours of direct services in English Language Arts, Math, Counseling and Hebrew were provided to **917** students.

2,883

Professional Coaching

539 teachers & administrators received **2,883** hours of professional coaching.

460

ECE Institute

460 early childhood educators attended BJE's annual Early Childhood Institute

168

March of the Living

168 students traveled to Poland and Israel with BJE March of the Living.

87

Educators

87 Educators from parttime religious schools participated in multisession professional development programs. 28

Schools Trained

14 additional schools joined **14** trained last year in Positive Education, which focuses on students thriving as they learn.

28

Title Services

BJE accessed Title services on behalf of **28** BJE-accredited schools grades K-12 21

Professional Networks

BJE convened **21** ongoing professional networks by school role (heads of school, etc.) strengthening L.A.'s Jewish education system.

\$575K

Financial Aid

Through BJE, day school students received over **\$575,000** in financial aid.







Please join us for BJE's 2024 Gala Honoring Four Outstanding Leaders

From Early Childhood Onward: So Many Roads to Jewish Education February 25, 2024

Each of BJE's 2024 gala honorees has dedicated many years of service as Jewish community leaders. All have been active in their synagogues and their children's schools as well as on the board of BJE. Our honorees chose varied routes for the Jewish education of their children, including part-time religious school, day school, summer camp and Israel experiences. All, however, share two things: a deep family commitment to Jewish education, and a start to their children's Jewish education at one of the 50 BJE-affiliated early childhood education centers.

BJE and the L.A. Jewish community are grateful to **Rachael Gordon** and **Don Snyder**, **Alan Petlak** and **Sharon De Mayo** for their decades of support and leadership. We hope you will join BJE on February 25, 2024, to honor these distinguished community leaders in Jewish education.



Sharon De Mayo

Sharon grew up in Italy. Upon moving to Los Angeles, Sharon and her husband, Luca, felt a warm welcome from Temple Isaiah, where they enrolled their two children in Temple Isaiah Preschool. Both boys attend secular private schools and have participated in Temple Isaiah's Religious School – one as a teaching assistant, the other as a guitar player during Tifilah – throughout the years. Sharon recently completed six years as Vice President of Education at Temple Isaiah. She is a Vice President of the BJE board of directors and chairs the BJE Board Member Education & Engagement Committee.



Alan is an alumnus of L.A. Jewish day schools. He and his wife Lisa chose Pressman Academy and Shalhevet High School for their children's education, augmented by summers at Camp Ramah. Their children's Jewish education journeys began at Pressman's Early Childhood Center and Temple Isaiah Preschool. Alan serves on the board at Temple Beth Am. At BJE, he is a Secretary of the board and chairs the Planning and Budget Committee.







Don Snyder & Rachael Gordon

Don and Rachael joined the BJE Board after participating in BJE's Adult March of the Living; each has served on several BJE committees. Don is a past member of the Board of Temple Beth Am and chairs BJE's Audit Committee. After completing preschool at Pressman's Early Childhood Center, their children attended Pressman Academy from kindergarten through 8th grade, and both graduated from a secular high school. Their son spent summers at Camp Ramah.

For more information, please contact us at gala@bjela.org



Supporting Jewish Education Honor Roll of Donors

Gifts of \$100+ received July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

BJE gratefully acknowledges the essential support of the donors and organizations whose generosity enables BJE to provide ongoing services and programs to enhance quality, increase access, and encourage participation in Jewish education.

PILLAR

(\$500,000 - \$999,999)

Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles Simha and Sara Lainer Family Foundation

SUSTAINER

(\$100,000 - \$499,999)

Anonymous

Janet Farber

Jerry and Jeanine Goldberg Trust*

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Milken Family Foundation

Dr. Susan & Mel Plutsky

TRAILBLAZER

(\$50,000 - \$99,999)

Anonymous (2)

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Milton Baran Endowment Fund*

Nancy & Jay Schulman

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(\$2,500 - \$4,999)

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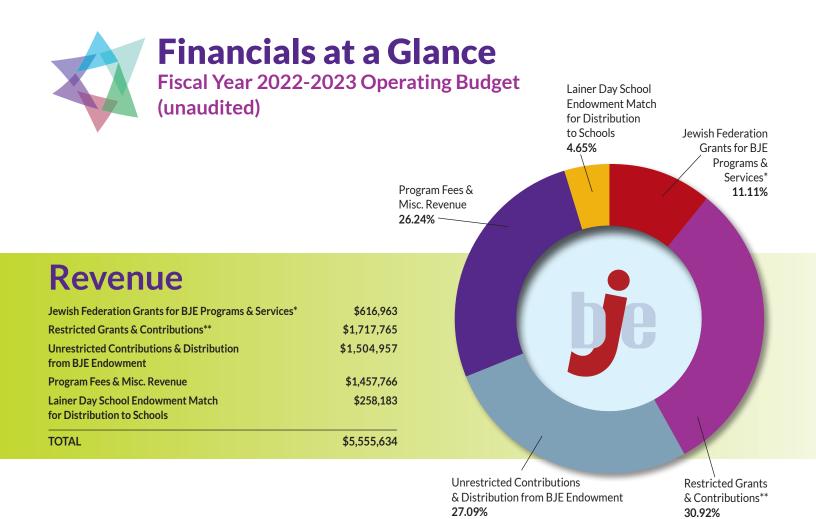
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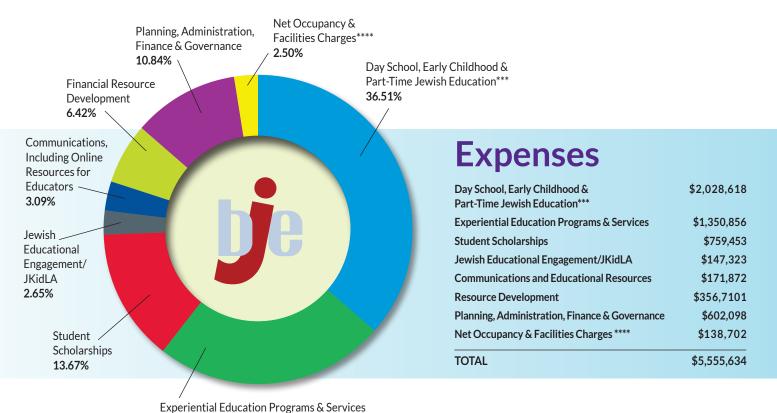
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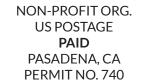




- * Includes \$611,000 in program grants and \$5,564 for CAPSO dues on behalf of BJE-accredited Day Schools
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