



# The Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute Playbook

Sivan 5782

**JECELI**  
Jewish Early Childhood Education  
Leadership Institute



**JTS**

WILLIAM DAVIDSON GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF JEWISH EDUCATION

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# Introduction

What does it mean to be a leader in Jewish early childhood education? This is an essential question for the ongoing development of our field. Ideas and practices of leadership direct every aspect of our work, from curriculum approaches to program culture, and ultimately determine the vitality of Jewish life.

The Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute (JECELI), a project of the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of JTS, was established to provide intensive professional leadership development for new and aspiring leaders, including directors, assistant directors, and teacher leaders, within a Jewishly informed context. The JECELI educational philosophy, expressed through its vision, mission, and leadership capacities, allowed participants to realize the profound effects of actualizing their roles in their schools and in the field. JECELI programming built on this philosophy, offering the formats, skills, and tools that these educational leaders needed to develop exciting centers of ongoing, meaningful Jewish learning communities centered on young children and their families.

The purpose of this playbook is to share the JECELI model with leaders and practitioners who are interested in our philosophy, theoretical bases, and resulting practices. We describe how the JECELI approach was expressed in formats and experiences that flowed together to create a synergistic whole. All or some of the parts of this playbook can be used by anyone who wishes to advance the leadership learning in their own schools or institutions, not restricted to early childhood educators. Other users could be administrators in formal and informal Jewish education settings, curriculum coordinators, synagogue leadership, board executives, and Jewish community center professionals.

We hope that you will consider the *JECELI Playbook* as a means of exploring your own understandings of leadership in Jewish early childhood education, and leadership in its broadest sense. We also hope that you will experiment with the formats and test their value in your own leadership research. Finally, we join you in generating ways to make joyful, vibrant Judaism accessible and meaningful to educators, families, and early learners in our communities.

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**“Feeling part of this community and feeling the support of the JECELI staff, the participants are empowered to take risks—try new approaches, taking on new leadership roles in their classrooms and/or early childhood program, and becoming more effective leaders in their program.”**

**—FROM A MENTOR**



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# The Origins of JECELI:

## The Rationale and Need for a Professional Leadership Training Program for Jewish Early Childhood Educators

JECELI, created as a project of the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at JTS, arose out of a concern about the future of Jewish early childhood education.<sup>1</sup> It was clear that there was a crisis—who would be the upcoming leaders in the field when so many were retiring and there were few opportunities for leadership learning? While salaries and benefits were difficult to change in the near term, professional development was attainable, particularly if it included advocacy to make the field more attractive. In addition, there was a clear need for elevating the Jewish learning element of many synagogues and JCC-based early learning programs.

JECELI's first format was a national program, with two weeks of residence in each of two summers and an Israel Study Tour in between. Fellows and mentors were recruited from across the country. In 2016, JECELI evolved into a community-based program in three locations: Greater Chicago, Greater Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Five or six three-day-seminars were held over approximately 16 months, with one overnight retreat. Mentors were selected locally and met frequently during the program with mentees.



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**“I was able to bring within small groups, Jewish text study but in a way that was not intimidating, in a way that could be embraced by them.”**

**—CC1 PARTICIPANT**

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<sup>1</sup> JECELI was originally conceived to meet these leadership-development needs, with funding from the Jim Joseph Foundation, and later by the Crown Family Foundation, an anonymous funder, and in partnership with the Federation of Greater Los Angeles. In the beginning (2011) both The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) were co-collaborating institutions.

# The JECELI Vision and Mission

## The Philosophy, Theory, and Practice of JECELI

JECELI was founded on the belief that leadership learning for Jewish early childhood leadership should be grounded in a Jewish perspective, which allows for self-understanding, engagement with others through text, and investment in community.

The JECELI vision also recognizes the role of early childhood education in advancing Jewish life and learning (Miller, 2020; Beck, 2002; Chertok and Saxe, 2004; Miller, 2004; Vogelstein and Kaplan, 2002). Effective leadership is essential for the field to fulfill this role. The vision and mission reflect how JECELI sought to help leaders develop their abilities to inspire others, and themselves, in a Jewish context. These ideas changed over time with the deepening of our understanding of Jewish educational leadership.

JECELI arose out of a concern about the lack of upcoming leaders in the field of Jewish early childhood education. It was clear even before 2011 (the year that JECELI began operating) that many longtime directors would be retiring in the near future and that there were very few candidates to replace them. The reasons for this lack were threefold: practices in the field had changed but current educators did not have experience with them; there were almost no avenues to learn about these practices; and salaries and benefits were too low to attract new leaders who would commit to the profession and requisite learning.

### JECELI Vision

Jewish early childhood educational leadership learning inspires vitality in Jewish life, learning, and culture, and builds Jewish communities.

### JECELI Mission

- To provide leaders in Jewish early childhood programs with the knowledge, dispositions, and skills needed to:
  - Engage with Jewish content through inquiry processes to continuously deepen the meaning of Judaism for the self and others.
  - Use leadership theory and practice in the Jewish early childhood education context to create a professional identity as a leader in the field.
  - Apply knowledge about child and adult development and learning, with attention to and support for cultural contexts.
  - Lead program and institutional change through strength-based approaches, reflective practice, collaboration, and action research.
  - Engage in advocacy efforts for the field of Jewish early childhood education, early childhood education, and social justice.



Based on the information gathered, the overarching goals identified for the new program were to:

- Increase the overall pool of qualified JECE leaders
- Increase the professionalism of the JECE field
- Integrate best practices in early childhood education with best practices in Jewish education
- Create long-lasting professional cohorts
- Promote the value of highly qualified JECE leaders within the Jewish community
- Market a JECE leadership credential

A comprehensive list of leadership competencies was developed and used to playbook the development of the program's curricular content. These competencies included but were not limited to:

- Adult development
- Supervision
- Organizational development and change
- Vision- and mission-driven leadership
- Jewish identity formation
- Jewish life cycles
- Jewish values, texts, and rituals
- The use of technology in JECE settings

## **JECELI Content and Structures**

The orientations that were held at the beginning of Cohort 1 and during the spring for Cohorts 2 and 3 further established the culture and format of the program. Along with building a learning community, the goal of the orientation was to establish the Jewish cultural foundations of JECELI and the institute's approach to leadership. Content during the orientation included an introduction to each of the topics that would be explored during the 18 months:

- Educational values embedded in Jewish learning and practice
- Collaborative leadership
- Human growth and development
- The teaching/learning process
- Working with families and communities

Methods of engagement were also introduced, such as the use of protocols, reflective practice, and small-group learning. The actual scheduling and specific content for the sessions were developed based on these approaches. Each was a full three-day learning experience.

After orientation, the 15-month schedule was initiated. This schedule included the first 11-day summer seminar onsite at JTS (with some sessions also being held at HUC-JIR), a 10-day study tour in Israel in late winter / early spring, followed by a second two-week summer seminar. Facilitators of the sessions in the United States included faculty from JTS, HUC, and the Bank Street College of Education, as well as outside presenters, the director, the mentor coordinator, and the mentors.

During the year between seminars, mentors traveled to spend a day and a half with each of their mentees. These trips gave the mentors the opportunity to experience the reality of their mentees' situations. Monthly seminars with suggested readings, usually on Jewish studies, were offered online. While these sessions were well attended, fellows did not express the same enthusiasm for them as for the face-to-face meetings. Different configurations were explored, but none were found

to be successful (see the Summative and Evaluation paragraph later in this section). The winter Israel seminar was based on answering the questions: Why should Israel matter to children enrolled in Jewish early childhood programs and to their families? How can we engage North Americans in Israel education?

## **Logistics: Interviews, Meeting Spaces, Transportation, Food, Lodging, and Storage**

- Formative and Summative Evaluations

JECELI national programs were continuously evaluated using written and oral feedback. Modifications to programs and structures were put into use before, during, and after sessions. Mentor meetings were held after every day of learning and were particularly valuable in guiding the ongoing evolution of the institute.

A formal evaluation survey was conducted by the American Institutes for Research in 2013, focusing primarily on Cohort 1. Results were overwhelmingly positive, particularly in terms of gains in critical knowledge and leadership skills, as well as establishing valuable professional relationships in the context of Jewish early childhood education. Comments included:

“Our orientation was very rustic but a wonderful experience. Our stay [in New York] while we studied at JTS was incredible. The accommodations were excellent. I loved the face-to-face seminars. I can’t wait to go to Israel with my group.”

“The face-to-face seminars are fantastic.”

“The quality of the retreats and opportunities for both formal and informal reflection and conversation [are] highly valuable.”

“All I can say is [the retreats and face-to-face seminars are] truly amazing and inspiring. [They make] me feel connected.”

“Immersion in the various seminars over a concentrated period of time has allowed me to internalize the concepts being discussed. Learning with others who share the same level of commitment improves the depth of study. Spending concentrated time with the leaders, mentors, and instructors has created an invaluable professional network.”

“It is very powerful to study with the amazing and qualified staff. The ability to make connections and discuss successes and challenges with others who understand is great.”

“All of the retreats and seminars have been of the highest quality. Time spent with the mentors and professors has been an extraordinary learning experience.”

“Our orientation was very rustic but a wonderful experience. Our stay [in New York] while we studied at JTS was incredible. The accommodations were excellent. I loved the face-to-face seminars. I can’t wait to go to Israel with my group.”

## National Cohorts: Surprises and Challenges

The JECELI national experience brought to light several program aspects that are worth mentioning. Some were pleasant surprises and some were challenges that were difficult to overcome. Many of these realizations influenced the development of the JECELI community cohorts.

### Surprises

- Fellows came from all over the country with the expectation that they would form new connections and possibly a national cohort. In fact, in some cases, they developed friendships that were both professional and personal, and that continue to this day. Several meetings of alumni have been held with good attendance. In 2020, one of the members herself called a Zoom meeting of her cohort.
- The inclusion of the orientation retreat for Cohorts 2 and 3 made a tremendous difference in what could be accomplished during the first summer session. The concluding celebration held at the end of every cohort underlined the sense of group identity and self-knowledge.
- One of the most consistent comments received from fellows concerned their interest in and enjoyment of text study. They were greatly surprised by how it was done and by what they gained from it as learners and leaders. They were eager to take this kind of study back to the programs in ways that they had not considered previously.

### Challenges

- The challenges of the national recruiting model have already been stated. A further complication was that there were no area program managers who knew whom to contact. There was no local knowledge that could have come from strategically placed recruiters. Institutional engagement was also very difficult on the national level. Again, without a local representative, there was much less of a connection with the synagogues, JCC heads of program, and other institutions in which early childhood programs were embedded.
- Because of the national nature of the program, fellows returned to their cities without nearby support. For the most part, they didn't have cohort members to call on who were experiencing the same situations. Even those who were in the same cities had not created their own subgroups. Their mentors were also in different locations.
- As two cohorts participated in the program in 2013 and 2014, logistics became very complicated. There were twice as many travel and housing arrangements and food needs, which required much attention. Even more challenging was organizing sessions for one group in its second year and an incoming group. Even more, blending the two groups was difficult. In many ways, during sessions for Cohort 1 and orientation for Cohort 2, fellows in each cohort expressed a desire to meet more often with "their" group. More integrative experiences were added to work on this situation.
- While it was useful to have the depth in the sessions often found in university classes, the timing of two-week/10-day sessions over 18 months presented some problems. There was a long period during which there was no intense contact with fellows. Mentors could go on one visit only and attempts at online work on a monthly basis were unsuccessful. As a result, final projects often did not have the depth that consistent, supported, ongoing work could have produced.



# The Community Cohorts

The community cohorts officially started in 2016, after a preparatory year from 2014 to 2015 to consider viability and were concluded in 2021

In each area, the initiation of the community cohort(s) depended on finding funding and assessing community interest. Both factors were easier to ascertain in these large communities. There were other regions had the interest but could not manage the funding. At the time of the initiation of the community cohorts, it was hoped that the model would eventually be used to reach areas with little support for Jewish early childhood educators, a hope which remains.

## Recruitment on the Local Level

The involvement of on-the-ground staff members and organizations made a tremendous difference in recruitment efforts. While still requiring the identification of groups who could publicize the program and validate its usefulness, JECELI staff could now contact JECE centers directly (and repeatedly). For the third cohort in Chicago, when JECELI Chicago was well known, there were more applicants than could be served. There was great success in the San Francisco Bay Area by presenting three informational sessions in different locations, inviting both potential supervisors and fellows. Regional recruitment was also supported by alumni from the national cohorts who were members of the local community.

## Structures and Content

There were many differences between national and community cohorts in terms of how the JECELI program was implemented. As in the national program, an orientation retreat was instituted; however, this was the only time that the group was in residence. Following seminars were held over three days, for approximately eight and a half hours each day. Usually, five of these programs were provided over the course of 18 months, depending on the relationship of the Jewish calendar to the Gregorian (and the effects of the pandemic; see below).



Content evolved from a focus on particular topics presented in two-week segments to an organized curriculum arc with topics that built on each other over the course of the program. While referencing essential content areas in leadership in Jewish early childhood education, specific topics were tailored to the community within this curriculum arc.

## Formative and Summative Evaluations

The five JECELI community cohorts were developed using the JECELI National model, but each evolved through the actual practice of regionally responsive professional development. This evolution was further supported by two factors that built on each other. The first is that there were often several cohorts running at the same time, so there was a wealth of information at hand. The second was that each cohort had its own leadership team consisting of the mentors and regional coordinators. These staff members, along with the director and the national coordinator, were constantly reflecting on processes and developing new ideas together. Below are some of the surprises/advantages and challenges that arose during these discussions.

### Surprises/Advantages

- By offering five seminars over the 15–18 months of each cohort, learning was spread out. This plan allowed fellows to absorb and work with new information, and for leadership to make changes more easily as the program progressed. Mentors found it easier to meet consistently with their mentees individually and in groups.
- With all of the fellows in one area, face-to-face meetings could be held with their supervisors. In doing so, adjustments could be made to the program based on their suggestions.
- The Leadership Action Research Project, which required fellows to formulate a plan at the beginning of the cohort and work with it throughout the months of the program with their mentors, became much more defined. Because of the proximity, mentors were able to facilitate meetings between fellows and the institutional leaders as these projects moved forward. The project and these meetings made the early childhood programs much more visible to these leaders, as indicated by meeting notes.

### Challenges

- It was difficult to develop a schedule for working educators so that they could request release time for three days in a row. It was also necessary to avoid the region's programs for early childhood educators and Jewish early childhood educators. For the most part, everyone was able to attend, but there were a few days missed due to logistics.
- For the community cohorts, two simultaneous cohorts were quite manageable. With a third added, however, planning and travel became more difficult. For that reason, the program manager position was added to support both logistical and content work.

## Moving from Vision and Mission to Theory and Practice

The JECELI Vision and Mission were expanded into the JECELI Domains, Core Capacities, and Components<sup>2</sup> using conceptions about Jewish leadership, social constructivist learning theory, and grounded theories about educational leadership.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Miller, L. (2022). "Leadership in Early Childhood Jewish Education in the United States."

In Achituv, S., Muller, M., Alexander, S., and Alexander, H. (in press). *Early Childhood Jewish Education: Multicultural, Gender, and Constructivist Perspectives*. Bloomsbury.

<sup>3</sup> While a discussion of these theories and ideas are not within the purview of this playbook, resources on each of these areas can be found in the References at the end of the playbook.

The essential JECELI domains of leadership learning became:

- Transformative Engagement with Jewish Life and Learning
- Foundations of Leadership Theory and Practice
- Human Growth and Development in Context
- Learning Theory and Curriculum Development
- Organizational Development
- Community Context and Advocacy

Within each of these domains, core capacities were identified, resulting in the JECELI Leadership Core Capacities. These core capacities were used, in turn, to develop program components to be addressed in the structures and content of the JECELI experience. Table 1 illustrates the relationships between the domains, the capacities, and the components.

**Table 1**  
JECELI Domains, Core Capacities, Program Components

Domain	Capacities	Potential Program Components
Transformative Engagement with Jewish Life and Learning	1. Expanding knowledge of Jewish life and learning, including how to render Judaism accessible to others	Investing in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective practice and meaning-making using Jewish perspectives</li> <li>• Dialogic Jewish study</li> <li>• Deepening knowledge of Jewish foundational values and dispositions</li> <li>• Inquiry into Jewish tradition and practice</li> <li>• Pedagogical leadership of Jewish learning</li> </ul>
Foundations of Leadership Theory and Practice	2. Self-awareness through engagement with a mentor	Awareness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengths</li> <li>• Relationship to Judaism</li> <li>• Biases and assumptions</li> <li>• Habitual reactions</li> <li>• Professional image</li> <li>• Self-trust</li> <li>• Self-care</li> <li>• Curiosities and interests</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Professional knowledge and “holes”</li> <li>• Reflective practice</li> </ul>
	3. Building relationships through trust	Understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Active listening</li> <li>• Perspective-taking</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Dialogue</li> <li>• Managing conflict</li> </ul>



	4. Engaging in pedagogic leadership through dialogue, collaboration, and teamwork; shared leadership	<p>Acquiring tools for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Productive dialogue</li> <li>• Conflict management</li> <li>• Team building</li> <li>• Collaborative leadership</li> <li>• Change management</li> <li>• Time management</li> </ul>
Human Growth and Development in Context	5. Applying knowledge of human development across life spans and cultural contexts	<p>Developing knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity development /Jewish identity development</li> <li>• Adult development</li> <li>• Parenthood/family development</li> <li>• Group development</li> <li>• Anti-bias education</li> <li>• Stages of leadership development</li> </ul>
Learning Theory and Curriculum Development	6. Expanding professional knowledge of child learning theories and curriculum development, particularly in the areas of Jewish learning	<p>Practicing with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergent curriculum in Jewish early childhood education</li> <li>• Pedagogical documentation processes</li> <li>• Protocols for co-inquiry circles</li> <li>• Spiral curricula for Jewish learning for adults and children</li> <li>• Anti-bias teaching</li> </ul>
	7. Expanding professional knowledge of adult learning theories and practices	<p>Developing knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult learning styles / teaching adults</li> <li>• Mentoring others</li> <li>• Peer mentoring</li> <li>• Reflective supervision</li> </ul>
	8. Developing an inquiry stance with close attention to Jewish life and learning	<p>Engaging in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquiry into program learning processes</li> <li>• Inquiry into program advancement</li> <li>• Inquiry into problem-solving</li> <li>• Inquiry into new ways of providing Jewish experiences</li> <li>• Supportive protocols for productive inquiry</li> <li>• Action research</li> </ul>

<p>Organizational Development</p>	<p>9. Collaborative development of program vision and mission that reflects the Jewish context</p>	<p>Developing tools for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncovering values expressed in Jewish life to create a shared vision and mission</li> <li>• Understanding and creating Institutional change management</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Anti-bias education</li> <li>• Connections to local and national initiatives and institutions</li> <li>• Social justice awareness and activism</li> </ul>
	<p>10. Referencing the vision and mission to create organizational structures for a school learning community that successfully responds to change</p>	<p>Developing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective communication systems</li> <li>• Structured opportunities for shared leadership</li> <li>• Structured opportunities for ongoing learning</li> <li>• Systems in response to needs and change</li> </ul>
	<p>11. Studying and understanding the organization of the institutional context and promoting change</p>	<p>Finding ways of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquiring knowledge of organizational structures</li> <li>• Including the institutional leadership in new program initiatives</li> <li>• Establishing a voice on professional and lay boards</li> </ul>
<p>Community Context and Advocacy</p>	<p>12. Understanding the cultural context of the community and its impact on all aspects of the program</p>	<p>Learning about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sociological backgrounds of the school families</li> <li>• The attributes and needs of the local Jewish community</li> <li>• The general sociology of the larger community beyond the Jewish community</li> </ul>
	<p>13. Advocating for the program within the institution, for the field of Jewish early childhood education, and for social justice, calling on stances found in Jewish texts and Jewish foundational concepts.</p>	<p>Considering how to promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional awareness of the program</li> <li>• Understanding of the crises in Jewish early childhood education both locally and nationally</li> <li>• Awareness of social justice issues within the school, the institution, and the community</li> </ul>

This chart shows how the JECELI mission statement generated the structures and content of the program. While specific areas were emphasized during seminars, components were explored throughout the program, to deepen learning.

## Recruiting and Selecting Participants

The admissions process for fellows included applications, résumés, recommendations, and interviews. These interviews were conducted in person or on Zoom and lasted for 15–30 minutes. A set of questions was used to try to ascertain if the candidate would be able to make use of the growth mindset of the program. We made it clear that we expected the experiences in each cohort to be transformative in unanticipated ways, and that the goal was for JECELI staff and fellows to create interdependent learning relationships. We needed to know that those we brought into the learning community would be open to its intensity. Over time, we learned that the candidates learned both about the program and about themselves through these first contacts. In many ways, the admissions process was the beginning of the JECELI experience.

### The ideal cohort profile participant possessed:

- At least three years of early childhood teaching experience with a strong interest in assuming a leadership position.
- A bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field OR documented learning in early childhood education.
- A basic foundation level of Jewish learning (such as a knowledge of the cycle of holidays).
- The ability and interest in working with colleagues to build knowledge and practice
- Interest in developing emergent Jewish early childhood curriculum
- The ability to speak to others to advocate for the field

### What are the expectations of fellows?

- Fellows will attend all of the seminars (one three-day, overnight orientation, four three-day learning sessions), and participate in intensive monthly mentoring and other community events. Dates and times of mentor meetings will be set up at the convenience of the participant, the mentor, and the institution.
- Fellows will engage in Jewish philosophy, thought, and practice in action.
- Fellows will learn leadership tools and discover who they are and can be as a leader.
- Fellows will explore values and engage in reflective practice.
- Fellows will continue the learning journey begun during the program, both through individual efforts and through participation in the JECELI community of practice.

### The applicants were asked the following key questions during the recruitment/application process:

- Tell us your story of how you became part of a Jewish school.
- What qualities do you have that help you in your work as a leader?
- What would you like to further develop as an educator?
- What do you enjoy about working with adults in teams? What do you find challenging?
- What professional development or other learning experiences has been most helpful to you?
- What do you think enables or hinders change in your institution?
- Who in your institution would be part of the conversation about change?

### Personal/Professional Narrative

- Short Essays (100–200 words):
  - How do you define leadership?
  - How would you briefly describe your approach to developing curriculum for young children? Jewish curriculum?
  - What do you consider to be a critical aspect of building community in early childhood programs among staff members?



- What are a few pivotal moments in your own journey in Jewish education? These can be moments throughout your life or as an educator in a Jewish program.
- Why would you like to be a member of JECALI?
- Why would the leader of your institution like you to be a member of JECALI?

### Sentence Completion:

- I am excited about learning situations in which:
- What I find challenging in learning situations is:
- I can imagine a mentor helping me to:
- One of the most important aspects for me in working within a group is:
- When I don't know how to solve a problem, I:
- I would like the families in my early childhood education program to:



## Application Process for Institutions

Candidates' home institutions were required to give permission for participation and to not penalize fellows for taking time off, either through removing sick days or personal leave, and to pay a fee in some cohorts. For some of the community cohorts, a fee was required from the institution for the fellow (and from the fellow) to participate. Scholarship monies were available for those schools (and individuals) who did not have the necessary funds. In the latter cohorts, institutional leadership was also asked to work with the fellow to develop and meet as an Institutional Leadership Team.

## Commitment to Mentorship as Reflective Practice

JECALI engaged in a rigorous and multidimensional approach to hiring the professional staff and accepting fellows. The JECALI program required risk-taking in the form of self-examination and exploring outside one's comfort zone by everyone involved. JECALI culture depended on learning through interdependent relationships. In seeking and accepting mentors and fellows, emphases were placed on dispositions, as well as education and experience. We tried to determine the interest of each person—mentor or fellow—in investing in the community itself as a place of shared growth. Fellows' institutions also had to commit to supporting substantial learning time for staff with an understanding that participation would lead to change.

### Hiring Mentors

Mentor candidates needed to have had extensive experience in mentoring, as well as being mentored in Jewish early childhood settings. An advanced degree in early childhood education, social work, or a related field was preferred. The hiring process included interviews, résumés, recommendations, and essays. In addition, the program depended on mentor candidates to be ready to enact the vision and mission of the program and to participate in its evolution. They also needed to be ready to engage in transformative change and deep learning themselves.

### Four mentors were hired per cohort, to be assigned from three to six mentees. Some of the key questions that were asked in the mentor recruitment process were:

- What is a significant experience that you have had in the field of Jewish early childhood education as a mentee? As a mentor?
1. What is a significant experience that you have had in working on a collaborative project? What did you learn and/or have validated by this experience?

2. From your perspective, what is the role of the mentor in Jewish education?
3. What do you feel are essential elements in Jewish early childhood education? (Describes experience in Jewish early childhood education, indicating strength-based, learner-centered approach.)
4. How would you describe leadership? What are the qualities of an ideal leader? (Describes leadership experience indicating collaborative inquiry and team approach.)
5. What do you feel that program leaders need to know about adult development and learning? (Familiar with concepts of adult development and adult learning.)

Do you have any examples of curricula that you have created for a Jewish early childhood classroom or program? (Indicates experience in curriculum development in Jewish early childhood education referencing constructivist-learning theory.)

What do you see are the advantages and disadvantages of working in a diverse community? (Explains the use of diversity in learning communities.)

### Elements of the mentor responsibilities included:

- Working with the director to develop orientation, seminar, and event planning
- Participating in recruitment and assessment of program applicants
- Developing and maintaining a collaborative, supportive culture among the mentors
- Meeting monthly with each mentee individually, in a group, or at events
- Reporting to and meeting with the JECELI project director
- Attending orientation for mentors and working with the JECELI staff members to orient the program to the local community
- Interviewing applicants with project director
- Assisting in planning (including logistics), attending, and teaching an orientation for participants and in each of the four seminars
- Participating in a meeting with supervisors of JECELI fellows twice during the program
- Meeting monthly with four mentees individually and as a group



# JECELI Theory and Practice in Action

As early childhood educators, we know that the key to meaningful learning is play—engaging with ideas to make them one’s own. This is true for adults, as well as children. In this part of the *JECELI Playbook*, you will find descriptions of the ways JECELI fellows and staff entered into play. Each experience can be used by itself or as part of an ongoing professional development program. They should be tailored to your own situation. The end goal for us was to create a learning community that met the JECELI vision and mission; you need to meet your school’s vision. A note about leadership—one doesn’t need a title to be considered a leader. Each person in a school—including the children—should feel that they have a voice in what happens, and that they know how to express themselves and take action. We hope that the playbook can help you get started in building and encouraging leadership whatever your role.

## In the Beginning

Advance preparation was one of the keys to our success. We knew that for real change to occur, participants first needed to feel that they were safe enough to take risks. A sense of safety leads to letting go of defensiveness and an openness to new possibilities—and play. Much work went into setting the stage and building connections from the very beginning. This was true for the staff members who would be leading JECELI, as well as the fellows. In each of the sections below, you will find ways in which we created situations in which we could learn more about each other and ease into learning experiences as we became a learning community.

## JECELI Mentoring: Discovering Strengths

### Overview

The JECELI mentoring system was inspired in part by the teacher-student relationship found in Jewish tradition (Artson, 2006). This relationship considers the value of the unique contribution of each learner to the successes of the community. JECELI mentoring was asset-based, focusing on mobilizing each person’s strengths and then using reflection, dialogue, and collaboration to move leadership learning forward (as expressed in *Appreciative Coaching*, Orem, Binkert, and Clancy, 2007). As in all worthwhile mentoring relationships, those in JECELI depended on the development of a trusting relationship in which the mentor gained as much as the mentee, while the mentor helped the mentee identify and solve problems, learn skills, and manage change. In addition, the relationships between mentors and other staff exemplified the processes of collegial respect, co-constructing learning and the energetic engagement expected of the fellows.

In general, mentors and fellows engaged in reflective practice, planned on implementing the learning provided in seminars, and moved JECELI Leadership Action Research Projects forward (more on these below). Sometimes fellows needed help with a crisis, particularly as we moved into the pandemic. When the pandemic became our reality, they set up meetings online and engaged in their own professional development to learn how to maximize the online experience. The mentors used the JECELI leadership concepts and structures, as well as their own knowledge and skills, to provide a productive sharing space for troubled educators during this time.

### Mentor Orientation

Usually, the work of the mentors began with a three-day mentor orientation with the director and the program manager/

coordinator. This meeting was held in advance of the orientation for the fellows. Even before we gathered, mentors were asked to read selections of Artson's book *Gift of Soul, Gift of Wisdom: A Spiritual Resource for Mentoring and Leadership* (2006) to consider a Jewish perspective on the mentoring process. In the meeting itself, we talked about our own goals for Jewish early childhood education and what they should be for JECELI. Each of these meetings, before every cohort, reexamined all aspects of JECELI, including purpose, mission, vision, structures, and content, as well as the mentoring process. This review included what we wanted to repeat and what we did not want to repeat. These discussions set the tone for the shared leadership and social constructivist approach that characterized the program.

We also reviewed all the applications of the accepted fellows so that we could shape the seminars to meet the learners' interests and needs. Discussions continued throughout the program based on this original conferencing, and we continuously considered ways to tune the program. Eventually, the ways that the leadership team interacted demonstrated, more than anything else, how professionals trust and work with each other.

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**“I think the program has helped me to explore and embrace my Judaism in a deeper way.”**

—CC1 PARTICIPANT

### **Mentor Meetings**

After the orientation for fellows, mentors and mentees received their assignments, and mentors met with their mentees in mentor groups during every seminar day. Initially, the Appreciative Inquiry approach was used to set the tone for positive, asset-based mentor-mentee relationships.

The director, the project manager or project coordinator, and the mentors also met each day after the seminar to discuss observations of both the seminar day in general and the mentor groups, in particular. Often these discussions would result in modifications for the very next day.

In addition, in months when seminars were not held, mentors alternated 60–90 minute individual sessions with small group discussions. Mentors kept records of their conversations, concerns, and discoveries for each mentee on each of these out-of-seminar meetings. Finally, monthly meetings with the mentors were held on non-seminar months with the director and the program manager or project coordinator, or with just one other staff member. All of this information was used in seminar planning.

The mentor team worked together with the rest of the staff in continuously developing the JECELI structures and content in their area as a leadership team. This very document is the result of many hours of collegial, collaborative, and highly stimulating work. No one had more responsibility in helping the fellows realize their potential than the mentors. The importance of their role in JECELI cannot be overemphasized. As a group, the mentors embodied a Jewish social learning community and brought the ideas behind JECELI to life. Frequent meetings were essential for the formation of these kinds of lasting connections.





## The Learning Environment: Inviting Presence

### Overview

A welcoming environment shows concern and care for the people who will be learning in it. While this principle is a key element of early childhood classrooms, often the directors and educators as learners themselves end up in less-than-optimal conditions. For each seminar and retreat, we worked to take unique advantages of the space in which we found ourselves while maintaining consistency in how the learning environment would be structured. Below are some questions we considered when setting up adult learning environments.

- **Comfort:** Are there suitable adult chairs and tables in the room? Is there good visibility for presentations so no one gets a stiff neck?
- **Aesthetics:** Beauty draws us out of ourselves and into the environment. Does the space positively engage the senses? Are there windows that provide natural light? Or are there stacks of chairs and storage all around so that people feel that they wandered into a storage closet?
- **Jewish culture:** Elements that are in the background often have a subconscious and conscious impact. What does the space say about Jewish life and learning?
- **Snacks:** Food is a sensory way to keep adult learners present. It also helps educators feel that someone is looking out for their basic needs. Are special dietary restrictions known and respected?
- **Visible notes:** Large sticky notes can be used for taking down fellows' and mentors' ideas during each discussion. These provide validation that they are being heard. Are there trails and traces of learning to which everyone can all refer during the seminar?
- **Grouping for community:** Chairs and tables can be set up so that both small group and large group work are convenient. Name tags can be put out on the tables to indicate where fellows and mentors should sit. Are seating arrangements being used to allow new relationships to form and avoid cliques?

## Loose Parts

In this context, loose parts are open-ended collections of objects that can be used in infinite ways. Curated collections were always available, throughout each seminar, for everyone to use, either as part of a session or in an individual exploration. Their arrangement contributed to the sense of an appealing welcome to the learning space. As soon as participants came in, they were given a prompt for engaging with the loose parts chosen specifically for that day. Adults seem to need guidance to let themselves play. These prompts requested that they use the materials to express an individual reflection (such as a representation of one's name to thoughts about leadership), as well as a group project that required collaboration (such as a representation of an ideal school layout). Fellows were encouraged to try this process with their own staff members, colleagues, and families to convey the power of play in self-understanding and collaboration.

There was yet another layer to the use of these materials in our context. Judaism uses *Klai Kodesh* (holy tools) to stand as metaphors for ideas and values. As such, they evoke strong emotions and connections to the Jewish community. While objects could seem ordinary in other contexts (for example, a cup, a set of candlesticks, a cloth), they can be transformed when configured together as representations. The creation of representations through loose parts promoted this awareness of how the everyday can be transformed into complex, meaningful symbols.



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**“The Community/kehillah created among Chicago early childhood professionals has been extremely valuable and significant. Prior to JECELI, I felt we all worked within our own silos.”**

**—CC2 PARTICIPANT**

# Scheduling: Rhythms in Time

## Orientation

The first seminar was always an orientation held at a retreat center. Orientations provided experiences for the fellows with each of the learning structures and expectations that would be used throughout the program. In particular, we introduced ways of listening carefully and respectfully to others, engaging in text study, collaborating using protocols, and expressing ideas in small and large groups. **An example of an orientation retreat schedule can also be found in xx.**

## Scheduling the Seminars over the Program Duration

Typically, five three-day seminars were held over the course of 15–18 months (depending on the timing of the Jewish holidays). We met about every two months at a local synagogue, JCC, or other Jewish communal building. This interval seemed to be the best for the fellows to absorb new ways of working with information and experimenting in their own contexts. Fellows did not seem overburdened by time commitments, and the learning continuously advanced. This schedule also allowed enough time for the fellows to complete their Leadership Action Research Projects. **A sample JECALI program calendar ....**

## Scheduling the Day

As every good educator knows, learning is more accessible if offered with human needs, interests, and learning styles in mind. Each person's daily rhythm may be different, but there are some general assumptions that informed the usual JECALI daily schedule. Individual and small group experiences alternated with those that included everyone. Heavy content gave way to active movement and often joyously ridiculous learning games. Still, as each cohort moved through the program, the schedule was adjusted based on the feedback from fellows and the observations of the staff members.

A typical day during a three-day seminar followed the schedule below:

- 8:30–9:00: כניסה *K'neesah* (Entrance)
- 9:00–9:30: אסיפה *Asayfah* (Gathering)
- 9:30–10:00: לימודי קודש *Limudei Kodesh* (Text Study)
- 10:00–10:10: הפסקה *Hafsakah* (Break)
- 10:10–12:15: שיעור א' *Shi'ur Alef* (Session 1)
- 12:15–1:00: ארוחת צהריים *Aruhat Tzohorayim* (Lunch)
- 1:00–2:05: חוויות *Havvayot* (Experiences)
- 2:05–2:15: הפסקה *Hafsakah* (Break)
- 2:15–3:30: שיעור ב' *Shi'ur Bet* (Session 2)
- 3:30–4:30: מפגשים *Mifgashim* (Mentor Meetings)
- 4:30–5:00: השתקפות *Hishtakfut* (Reflections)

Sessions had Hebrew labels for two reasons. The first was to expose fellows to it as part of every day, not just holidays. The second was to provide some new vocabulary.

## Tefillot: Settling into the Group

We introduced *tefillot* to give participants the experience of centering in themselves and into the group using spiritual intention to demonstrate the accessibility of prayer in a Jewish context and to add to participants' Jewish literacy. We were clear that we were not engaging in a service, rather, it was a time for shared contemplation.

To make the *tefillot* selections accessible, we offered them as a curriculum with music. We started with just a few pieces with transliterations, translations, and prompts, adding more selections throughout the program. None of the selections required a minyan. Prompts and *kavvanot* (intentions) provided potential links between the words of the prayers and the fellows' life experiences, often leaving room for responses or physical activity. For example, when we said the *bracha* (blessing) *Malbish Arumim* (Who Clothes the Naked), those who wished talked about something special that they were wearing. This exercise proved to be very interesting; for so many of us, the important item was symbolic of an important relationship to a friend or family member.

Overall, this part of the morning lasted about 20 minutes, and we practiced every day we met, standing together in a circle<sup>4</sup>. The basic model we used was adaptable for use in the classroom. As a result, several fellows added *tefillot* to their morning meetings with the children in their groups.

After the second seminar, we asked different individuals to lead individual selections. We also asked for alternate music that they might be using in their schools. By the end, we engaged in a longer version without explanation or dialogue—just moving with the rhythm of the prayer experience.

This time came to be significant to all of us in the JECELI community, based on our observations of the intensity of engagement and our evaluations. In fact, during the pandemic, particularly at the beginning, several fellows and mentors requested a regular Monday *tefillot* meeting on Zoom for those who wanted the comfort and engagement with prayer to start the day during such a disruptive time.

The Initial *Tefillot* sheet contains the foundational set:

- *Modeh Ani* (Giving Thanks)
- *Mah Tov* (How Good It Is to Be Together)
- *Birkat HaTorah* (Blessing for Jewish Study)
- *Oseh Shalom* (Make Peace)

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<sup>4</sup>We had conversations about *tefillot* with fellow candidates during recruitment to make sure that they would be comfortable either joining in or standing quietly during this time. We did not have any difficulties.





The Final *Tefillot* sheet indicates the range of selections at the end of the JECALI program and included:

- *Modeh Ani* (I Give Thanks)
- *Mah Tovu* (How Good It Is to Be Together)
- *Birkat HaTorah* (Blessing for Jewish Study)
- *Malbish Arumim* (Clothing the Naked)
- *Zokayf Kefufim* (Raising Up Those Who Are Bowed Down)
- *HaNoteyn L'Ya'ayf Co'ah* (Giving Strength to the Tired)
- *Hallelu* (Rejoicing)
- *Shma* (One-ness)
- *Mi Shebeirakh* (Hope for Healing)
- *Oseh Shalom* (Make Peace)

It should be noted that the topic of spirituality and God-talk was frequently included in at least one of the seminars. For *tefillot*, participants were encouraged to consider their own connections to a spiritual center.

There were two other times that prayer was used. We shared some words from *Kaddish DeRabbanan* from the song “For Our Teachers,” by Debbie Friedman (z”l), at the end of every seminar and at the final program. By doing so, we recognized our teachers of antiquity and our teachers and mentors in the program. We also identified ourselves as links in the chain of Jewish learning. Finally, we also used a selection from the *Hadran*, the words said at the end of the study of a portion of the Talmud, at the conclusion of the cohort.



**Tefillot (Blessings and Prayers)**Initial *Tefillot*

מִזְדָּה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם

**Modeh/Modah Ani Lifanekha, Melekh Hai V'Kayam**

I give thanks before You, living and eternal Ruler . . .

מה טוב  
אהליך יעקב  
משכנתיך ישראל

**Ma tovu oha-leha Ya'akov. Mish-k'no-teha Yisrael**

How goodly are your dwellings, O Jacob,  
Your sanctuaries, O Israel.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ  
לַעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה

**Barukh Atta HaShem Elokeinu Melekh Ha'Olam Asher Kiddshanu B'Mitzvotav, V'Tzivanu La'asok B'Divrei Torah**

Blessed are You, Our G-d, Ruler of the universe, who makes us holy by Your *mitzvot*, and has commanded us to engage (be busy) with the words of the Torah.

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו	Oseh shalom bim'romav
הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ	Hu ya'aseh shalomaley nu
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל	v'al kol Yisrael
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.	v'Imru Amen.

He who makes peace in High Places, He will make peace for us and for all Israel and let us say, Amen.

Final *Tefillot*

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם . . .

**1. Modeh/Modah Ani Lifanekha, Melekh Hai V'Kayam . . .**

I give thanks before You, living and eternal Sovereign . . .

מֵה טוֹב אֱהִיָּךְ יַעֲקֹב מִשְׁכַּנְתֶּיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל

**2. Ma tovu oha-leha Ya'akov. Mish-k'no-teha Yisrael.**

How goodly are your dwellings, O Jacob,  
Your sanctuaries, O Israel.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסּוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה

**3. Barukh Atta HaShem Elokeinu Melekh Ha'Olam Asher Kiddshanu  
B'Mitzvotav, V'Tzivanu La'asok B'Divrei Torah**

Blessed are You, Our G-d, Sovereign of the universe, who makes us holy by your mitzvot, and has commanded us to engage (be busy) with the words of the Torah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרֻמִּים

**4. Barukh Atta HaShem Elokeinu Melekh Ha'Olam Malbish Arumim**

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who clothes the naked.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זֹקֵף כְּפֹופִים

**5. Barukh Atta HaShem Elokeinu Melekh Ha'Olam Zokayf Kefufim**

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Who straightens the bent.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַנּוֹתֵן לַיֶּעָף כָּח

**6. Barukh Atta HaShem Elokeinu Melekh Ha'Olam HaNoteyn L'Ya'ayf Coah**

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Who gives—to the tired—strength.

הַלְלוּ

**7. Hallelu**

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד

**8. Shema Yisra'el HaShem Elokainu HaShem Ehad**

Hear Israel the L-rd our G-d the L-rd is One.

מי שברך אבותינו מקור הברכה לאמותינו...

**9. Mi shebeirach avoteinu, M'kor hab'racha l'imoteinu**

May the source of strength, Who blessed the ones before us,

Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing,

And let us say, Amen.

*Mi shebeirach imoteinu, M'kor hab'racha l'avoteinu*

Bless those in need of healing with *r'fuah sh'leimah*,

The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit,

And let us say, Amen

Source: Musixmatch

Songwriters: Debbie Friedman and Drorah Setel

*Oseh shalom bimromav  
Hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu  
V'al kol Yisrael  
V'imru: amen.*

עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְמֵי הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ  
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

**10. The One who makes peace in high places will make peace for us and for all Israel.****From Kaddish DeRabbanan**

Upon Israel, and upon our sages, and upon their disciples, and upon all the disciples of their disciples, and upon all those who occupy themselves with the Torah, here or in any other place, upon them and upon you, may there be abundant peace, grace, kindness, compassion, long life, ample sustenance and deliverance, from their Father in heaven; and say, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and a good life for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

## Kaddish D'Rabanan

*Music and lyrics by Debbie Friedman*

For our teachers and their students  
And the students of the students.  
We ask for peace and lovingkindness.  
And let us say: Amen.

And for those who study Torah,  
Here and everywhere,  
May they be blessed with all they need,  
And let us say: Amen.  
We ask for peace and lovingkindness,  
And let us say: Amen.

## From the Hadran

*Hadran* is an Aramaic word used in the Talmud. It is thought to mean “return” or “to review.” It is the first word of a short prayer that appears at the end of each tractate.

The wording of the *hadran* is an expression of love and friendship, as if the tractate has become the learner’s friend since they have studied it, and they long to be reunited with it.

### Part of the prayer reads:

הדרן עלך מסכת \_\_\_\_ והדרך עלן דעתן עלך מסכת \_\_\_\_ עתך עלן לא נתנשי מינך  
מסכת \_\_\_\_ ו ולא תתנשי מינן לא בעלמא הדין ולא בעלמא דאתי

(Transliteration) *Hadran alakh Masekhet \_\_\_\_\_ ve-hdrakh alan da'atan alakh Masekhet \_\_\_\_\_ ve-da'atekh alan lo nitnashi minekh Masekhet \_\_\_\_\_ ve-lo titnashi minan lo be-alma ha-din ve-lo be-alma deati.*

(Translation) We will return to you, Tractate \_\_\_\_\_ [fill in the name of the tractate], and you will return to us; our mind is on you, Tractate \_\_\_\_\_, and your mind is on us; we will not forget you, Tractate \_\_\_\_\_, and you will not forget us—not in the world of judgment and not in the world to come.<sup>5</sup>

We will not forget, and we will return in times to come.

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadran\\_\(Talmud\)#cite\\_note-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadran_(Talmud)#cite_note-1)

## Text Study: Jewish Conversations

Before our first encounter, many of our fellows were worried about the words “text study.” When we started with Hillel’s famous mishnah from Pirkei Avot (1:14), “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, when?”—they became fascinated. Eventually, they themselves realized the potency of studying the thoughts and words that set us up to explore values from a Jewish perspective.

Indeed, engagement in Jewish traditional text study activates many of the JECALI leadership capacities. Talking about actual texts from the Tanakh or selections, statements, questions, and stories from the Talmud brought everyone in the JECALI community into Jewish modes of thinking about values, self-reflection, and relationship building. The very nature of text study required collaboration to discover shared meaning while learning about deep personal commitments. These discussions also provided the opportunity to confront conflicts with each other and/or with the text.

As with prayer, it was essential to render the texts accessible to everyone in the group. They were usually in Hebrew (sometimes in Aramaic). While being exposed to the original language was part of the teaching, all texts were translated into English. However, often, different translations were used to demonstrate that every translation is a commentary. The introduction of each text was followed by a set of questions. These questions supported a close examination of the wording, the sequence of statements, and possible meanings.

While we didn’t have traditional *hevruta* (partners who studied together exclusively for the whole program), we did ask everyone to pair off at the beginning of each discussion. This approach was important for the same reasons that dyads are common in text study: it is almost impossible for someone to be silent, statement and response is likely, and ideas can evolve more easily through dialogue if just two people are talking about them. Questions were provided to help focus these conversations.

After about 15 minutes, the pairs would join the others at their table in discussion. The leader would then ask for thoughts that had emerged across the group, then return the fellows to their tables to think about what others had said. The text study would enter with a final debrief.

The entire process usually took a half hour to complete.

Great care was taken in choosing the texts. For example, three texts from Pirkei Avot were typically used during orientation. Hillel’s famous statement about the relationship between the self and others (1:14) was studied to support the reflection on self, others, and action on the first day. On the second day, we learned Pirkei Avot 1:6, which refers to engagement in learning as a collaboration between students and teachers, and students and students, and judging all favorably, moving from the self to establishing the JECALI culture. On the last day of orientation, we returned to Hillel in Pirkei Avot 2:4, focusing on what it means to be a part of a community.

In the same fashion, the theme of any particular day was introduced by the study of a carefully selected text. Focus questions were developed for each.

The practice in diving into authentic Jewish texts and building meaning together was rated very highly by the JECALI community members. Frequently, texts would be referenced throughout a particular day or seminar, or even across the entire program. Many brought this core aspect of Jewish life and learning to meetings with staff members and families. Through such dynamic participation in text study, the words leaped off the page and into our lives.



## Protocols: Shared Leadership and Teamwork

Protocols were extremely helpful in coming to a shared understanding of issues of importance or in sorting out difficult situations. While many of us were schooled in teamwork as a way of dividing tasks, these protocols made sure that all voices were heard, and demonstrated that vulnerability could be productive and that group work could be energizing. In particular, the ones that we chose reduced the need to have the “right answer,” while advancing the ability of the group to find solutions together. Comments during a protocol discussion tended to be more like “I wonder what would happen if . . .” instead of “Why didn’t you try this?” Ultimately, fellows became accustomed to using protocols for problem-solving and planning, so that they could promote a culture of productive dialogue in their own programs.

A note about the first two protocols listed below. Speed dating—in which two lines of participants face each other and answer silly, but useful, questions—is an informal way for group members to get to know each other. Active listening requires pairs to listen to each other without interruption for a short period of time, repeat back what was heard, and respond as to the accuracy of the repetition. No writing is allowed. These protocols were introduced first. Active listening, in particular, provides the foundation for authentic communication throughout the program.

The following is a list of the protocols we used most often, in the order that they were introduced. Most of these were taken from the *School Reform Initiative Resource and Protocol Book* (2014).

- **Speed Dating:** Learning about fellow participants in an active, game-like setting
- **Active Listening:** Focusing on hearing what another person is saying before responding
- **Adapted Microlab Protocol:** Reflecting on and expressing thoughts about important ideas in small groups, encouraging open sharing
- **Affinity Mapping:** Discovering essential categories that have emerged from a discussion or learning
- **The Final Word:** Critiquing fellows’ programs’ vision and mission statements
- **Issaquah Protocol:** Coaching others using a progression of questions/responses, modeling good coaching practices
- **Emergent Small Groups:** Creating interest groups based on topics that originate with the fellows (an advanced protocol)
- **The Charette:** Fine-tuning work on the Action Research Project in mentor groups
- **I Notice, I Appreciate, I Wonder:** Giving positive critical feedback
- **Reflections with Sentence Stems:** Learning more about the fellows’ and mentors’ thoughts and feelings at the end of a learning program

### The following were used for virtual meetings during the pandemic:

- **Mad Tea Chat:** Discovering emergent trends in response to a question or a series of questions
- **Chalk Talk with Jam Boards:** Gathering individual thoughts in response to questions and then looking for emergent trends
- **What, So What, Now What?** Reviewing a problem or a question in a short amount of time

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“When I met [the parents in my class] the first time, I asked them to give me three things that they were hoping their children would become as adults. And I really took that and I turned it into Jewish values.”

—CC1 PARTICIPANT

- **Virtual Success Analysis:** Reflecting in a group on what has made each individual successful and using that information to determine actions that can lead to future success
- **Clarifying and Probing Questions:** Developing useful questions to be used during the protocols

The debrief at the end of each protocol was essential. At first, both fellows and mentors felt confined by the rules. After a few experiences during which they saw their power, however, they recognized their value and used the protocols themselves. This realization was possible because of the reflection and validation of mixed feelings after every process.

## Games: Motivated by Fun

While not strictly protocols, games used in JECALI had rules governing group interactions focused on a challenge. The challenge was usually something inconsequential, yet interesting and often silly. The unusual situations required by the games increased teamwork on a variety of levels. Most were physical and required people to get up and moving. They were also useful for warm-ups, breaks, or closings. In general, they added to the sense of joyful play that was so important to JECALI culture.

An example of a meaningful closing game was the Yarn Web, in which the leader held the end of the yarn, stated an idea about what they were taking away from the day, and then named a person to catch the yarn, still holding the end. The next person would catch the yarn, respond to the prompt, and toss it to another while holding onto the yarn. After the final toss to back to the leader, the group would put the configuration of yarn down on the ground and think about how their ideas formed a web.<sup>6</sup>

## Go and Learn: Studying Ideas About Leadership

Prioritizing leadership concepts to study together was a challenging task. We were guided by the JECALI Domains, Core Capacities, and Capacity Components. While there were many components listed, the main priority was to make sure that we were building capacities within the identified domains.

The concepts in each day of every seminar built on the day(s) before, and each seminar used previous learning to introduce new information and perspectives. Different emphases were placed on areas that were needed or were of interest to particular cohorts. By close listening, staff members continually generated new content while remaining within the designated leadership development domains, developing a spiral curriculum. Presentations during seminars were interactive: information was followed by followed by small group discussion, a large group debrief, and journaling.

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<sup>6</sup> Resources for games can be found at [playmeo.com](http://playmeo.com), [group-games.com](http://group-games.com), and [theatrefolk.com/blog/improv-games-for-collaboration](http://theatrefolk.com/blog/improv-games-for-collaboration)

- **Orientation (Seminar 1): Foundations of Leadership in Jewish Early Childhood Education**
  - Self-awareness and relationship to Judaism
  - Introduction to text study
  - Exploring cultural values, Judaism as a reference
  - Introduction to leadership capacities
  - Introduction to action research
  - Introduction to learning community culture
- **Seminar 2: Developmental Perspectives**
  - Children’s classroom social-emotional development (focusing on the Jewish holiday cycle)
  - Adult development
  - Stages of parenthood
  - Leading professional development
  - Jewish identity development
  - Reflective supervision and peer mentoring
  - Introduction to stages of program change
- **Seminar 3: Learning Theory and Curriculum Development**
  - Inquiry and emergent curriculum in Jewish early childhood programs
  - Collaborative curriculum development through documentation
  - Immersive Jewish cultural experiences for children and families
  - Adult learning styles
  - Pedagogical leadership
  - Learning through action research
- **Seminar 4: Organizational Contexts: Programs, Families, Institutions, Community, and Society**
  - The development of program vision and mission
  - Teamwork and participatory leadership
  - Leading change
  - Valuing families
  - Understanding institutional leadership
  - Building community teamwork
- **Seminar 5: Building a Learning Community and Promoting Advocacy**
  - Sharing learning through action research
  - Building a professional leadership identity
  - Advocacy Inside an Institution
  - Advocating for the fields of Jewish early childhood education and early childhood education
  - Creating communities of practice

As the topics show, we had many different ways of addressing the JECELI domains and the corresponding components. Some of the components, such as time management, were addressed during another major topic; others were combined. Descriptions of the sessions of each seminar were provided to the fellows and their supervisors. Fellows were often asked what they had been doing while at JECELI. The descriptions were also reminders of what they had studied in a particular seminar.

For deeper learning about how to help Jewish early childhood programs make progress, we brought in UpStart<sup>7</sup>, a nonprofit

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on UpStart, please see their website at [www.upstartlab.org](http://www.upstartlab.org).

organization “that supports social entrepreneurs who are seeking to bring new relevance and meaning to Jewish life.”<sup>8</sup> An expert facilitator, Jacob Watson explored “Adaptive Design,” “Framing Stories of Change,” and “Leading and Imagining in a Landscape of Change.” It was novel for UpStart to be working with a professional development program for Jewish early childhood educators; this work was offered to two of the community cohorts (Chicago Cohort 3 and the San Francisco Bay Area).

A different configuration of topics and emphases could certainly be proposed for a JECE leadership development program. One question could be why vision and mission were discussed in Seminar 4 rather than at the beginning of the program. The reasoning behind this choice was that fellows would have the chance to explain how they might expand their envisioning of ideas and how that might be accomplished by previous learning.

## The JECELI Notebook: Collecting Resources

At the orientation retreat, each person (staff and fellows) was given a two-inch three-ring binder. Every seminar generated schedules, seminar session descriptions, and handouts of protocols, as well as slides of content presentations and additional articles. The JECELI notebook was also a useful place to keep JECELI community contact information. There is guilt regarding the amount of paper we used, but we have heard from fellows about how often they use these notebooks in their daily work.

### Journaling: Reflective Writing

As a professional practice, journaling is an effective tool for reflecting on and consolidating learning (Stevens and Cooper, 2009; Sankey, Scalzi Wherley and Sutterlin, 2022). For JECELI fellows, the goal of regular writing was to explore the application of seminar experiences to their own programs. There were several false starts, including an attempt to use technology. Success was finally achieved through two approaches. First, we gave every fellow and mentor a colorful journal of their own. Second, we tried hard to make sure that there was time for reflection and writing at the end of the sessions. If a presenter did not leave enough time, we reflected at the end of the day by writing and talking about journal notes. In some of the later cohorts, we saw all the fellows take out their journals during the sessions.

Ultimately, the JECELI Leadership Action Research Project (discussed below) spurred even more use of the journals. Fellows knew that they needed to track their thinking and their progress as they moved through the steps of their investigations. The reflective writing during the process made tracking possible, demonstrating the importance of professional journaling for promoting change.

### School Tours: Gaining Perspectives

For some of the cohorts, seminars and mentor meetings were held in fellows’ schools. In these situations, the guiding fellow provided specific questions they wanted the group to consider. The visitors were also asked to note the values that they saw exemplified in the school. The protocol of “I Notice, I Appreciate, I Wonder” ( was used here, as well, so that the discussions were asset-based. Over time, fellows and mentors drew closer and more interdependent because of these visits.

### The JECELI Leadership Action Research Project: Bringing Collaboration to Life

Educators engage in some form of action or practitioner research every day. They ask questions, make observations, investigate change, implement actions, and consider the results. However, they often don’t divide their work into these identifiable parts, *call* it research, or share their learning with others. As a result, the field loses significant information and

<sup>8</sup> From Jacob Watson’s May 2022 newsletter “Collective wisdom: Resources, ideas, inspiration,” downloaded from <https://mailchi.mp/61a77d5a5522/may2022?e=8050bb5f4e>

opportunities for collaboration. The JECELI Leadership Action Research Project was designed to give them the tools and the confidence to engage in making and sharing changes in their classrooms and their institutions. For the purposes of this work, fellows were not requested to engage in a review of past studies on their questions (such as a literature review), as would be true in an academic setting. However, several fellows did investigate sources that would give them information for their own planning.

It was important to introduce this work to the fellows from four perspectives. First, the *fact* that they were already engaging in research regularly. Second, each of them would have the opportunity to *examine an aspect of Jewish early childhood education* that they had questions about with others. Third, through mentor support and seminar learning, they would be able to *apply the research* directly to their work. Finally, they would be *sharing their work with their institutions* as well as their colleagues, raising the professional profile of the field.

The JECELI Action Leadership Project was divided into five parts to be accomplished over the course of a cohort's program. Fellows pulled together and integrated many of the approaches studied during the program, as follows:

**Part One: Reflection.** Fellows confronted their reasons for being in the field. For some, this was the first time that they had really thought about why Jewish early childhood education was so important to them. The exercises in this part were a continuation of our work to help educators to be self-aware and intentional. Those who did and those who did not identify as Jewish found this stage valuable.

**Part Two: Discovery of a research question.** This was one of the hardest stages to achieve. As in all research, finding the true question to investigate takes thought, review, and revision. Many times, fellows would move from total panic to enthusiastically embracing a topic that was too big to manage and then back to panic. Eventually, using the questions from the planning form, each was able to both narrow the focus and deepen the insights.

For instance, examining the role of Judaism in the classroom might start with a global question and then honing in on one particular (and clearly observable) aspect of Jewish life and learning.

**Part Three: Related observations.** In this step, fellows set up the logistics of implementation, the actual project plan, which was more familiar ground for all. However, there were challenges in this phase as well. One was creating a way to keep track of the documentation of efforts and changes before any work took place. A second was convening an Institutional Leadership Team (discussed in the next section) consisting of at least four members chosen from the following: clergy, executive team, education or program director, colleagues, and parents. Once the plan was developed, each fellow called a meeting of the ILT to introduce JECELI and the project. Fellows learned how to choose and invite a committee, set an agenda, and gather responses from organizational heads in nonthreatening ways. This was often very useful and eye-opening for all involved.

**Part Four: Implementation.** This phase involved the actual implementation of the project. Fellows collaborated in their mentor groups to work out problems, support each other, and share enthusiasm. The usefulness of the openness to input from colleagues that had been developed in seminar protocols was demonstrated.





**Part Five: Evaluation and presentation preparation.** Each fellow established a closing point for the sake of presenting the project. This did not mean that the implementation itself had to end, either in the school or in the classroom. Rather, it was time to stop and reflect on what had been done and what had happened as a result. It was critical to be able to consider the most important turning points across the months of the work and why they were significant. The time limit of 10 minutes had an important effect on planning. At first, fellows thought that it was too long a time; then they realized that they had so much that they wanted to say. However, in the end, and through mentor group practice meetings, they understood that they had to get to the very core of the work and why it was important to them to fit the time frame.

### **Preparing to Present Your Action Research Project**

- Each presentation will last only 15 minutes. We will help you stick to the time limit.
- You can use any method you like to present, including a PowerPoint, a talk, a series of drawings, and/or other artifacts, a video, or anything else you can think of. Just clear your method with your mentor and let us know of any technical/material needs.
- You will be offered three choices when you want to present during the seminar.
- Your presentation needs to include:
  - The question
    - Its final form, including how it relates to Jewish life and learning
    - Why you chose it
  - Your planning
    - Information that you gathered to develop your plan of action
    - The plan itself
    - The results of your plan, including any relevant data points to date; this project does not have to be complete
  - Surprises and new questions
  - What you learned by working with an Institutional Leadership Team
  - What you learned about the action research process
  - What you learned about yourself as a leader
- One week in advance of the seminar, we need a 300-word summary of these points to be handed out after your presentation (we don't want to spoil the surprises, but we want to share your learning).
- JECALI-LA fellows and staff will have five minutes after your presentation to respond using the "I Notice, I Appreciate, I Wonder" protocol (five minutes). You choose the questions and comments that you wish to address (five minutes).

**Part Six: Presentation of projects.** By this time, the fellows were ready (if nervous) to share their projects with the whole group. Many had never made such a presentation before and were quite apprehensive. They called on their leadership skills to overcome their concerns. They also knew that they had a very sympathetic audience.

After each presentation, reactions were gathered through the asset-based "I Notice, I Appreciate, I Wonder" protocol. A scribe would ask the group, "What do you notice?" and then call on a few people to respond with what caught their attention; this would be written down on a large sticky note. The next question involved why they appreciated what they noticed. The final question, "What do you wonder?" allowed for some probing questions about what the fellow researcher might do next, what might have happened if something else had been done, or anything else that a fellow wondered about. After so much collaborative and respectful work throughout the JECALI program, this process not only went smoothly but also allowed the fellows to truly show their admiration of each other's efforts. Along with their presentations, each fellow wrote a paragraph about the project. These were put up on the wall after each presentation.

For every cohort, these phases required tremendous involvement from the fellows. Mentor meetings during alternate months were instrumental in helping fellows discover and refine their questions, move them through the rough spots that crop up in any research, and gain confidence in presenting their results. Time was also set aside for this work during many seminars.

Developing trust in one's ability to successfully lead change was one of the biggest rewards of the program as indicated by comments and in evaluations. As mentioned, action/practitioner research both advances and advocates for our field, while promoting a professional identity in our educators.

## The Institutional Leadership Team: Building Understanding

The ILT was developed as a means of including the organizational leaders, both within the early childhood program and the parent institution, in the JECELI Action Leadership Research Project. As mentioned, each fellow was required to choose at least four members for this group from among the clergy, executive team, education or program director, colleagues, and parents. This investment in the fellow's work was required in the Institutional Agreement, signed when a candidate was accepted into the program. The goal was for the fellow to have up to three meetings with this team—at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the project. This gave the Jewish early childhood program director or lead teacher an important platform to be seen and heard. Often the ILT members were surprised by the fellow's insightfulness and ability to conduct research. As a result, they became more interested in and sometimes more connected to the Jewish early childhood program in their institutions.

It was quite challenging for the fellows to create these teams and conduct the meetings. Forms were provided to help them learn these skills. Further support was given by each person's mentor, who came to the first meeting but did not speak or answer questions. They took notes to use in debriefing the fellow after the event. Fellows were requested to have another ILT meeting while the project was in process and a final ILT meeting to present the completed research. Many fellows completed at least two meetings; the pandemic intervened to make holding three meetings very challenging.

## Celebrating: Every Fellow, Every Group

Over the course of each JECELI program, the connections between fellows became ever more significant. The shared learning and experiences lead to the creation of a learning community of belonging and shared language in a Jewish context. It was essential to recognize that community and the work that it had accomplished.

At the end of each cohort, starting with the national groups, the official program ended with a culminating ceremony.

"I think the various components of JECELI—the seminars, the mentoring process, the mentor groups, and the project work—combine to create a stimulating, thought-provoking, enriching, and transformative program. Feeling part of this community and feeling the support of the JECELI staff, the participants are empowered to take risks and try new approaches, taking on new leadership roles in their classrooms and/or early childhood programs, and becoming more effective leaders in their program. It is truly a unique program with much to teach the Jewish early childhood community about effective professional development."

—Chicago mentor

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**“I think one of the main tenants of Judaism, which is not necessarily like a law or rule, or holiday is how this is a collaborative process and learning collaboratively as a community. It is the collaboration and community aspects that are the big parts that I took away. It's those values.”**

—CC3 PARTICIPANT

## Budgetary Considerations: Putting Our Money Where Our Values Are

The priorities of a budget reflect the values of the program it supports. Much of the funding for JECELI over the years went toward highly qualified staff, resources, materials for fellows, excellent presenters, and scholarships, when needed. In other words, we invested in people.

However, because of the different structures (national vs. community), the cost of running the JECELI programming varied widely over the years of its existence. The national program included four weeks of full-time residence, with an additional 10-day trip to Israel. While this model provided a very intense and rich experience, the funding required was prohibitive for individual communities. Moving to the community cohort model allowed for affordability and benefits that were not possible in the national cohort programming. According to our priorities, it is NOT suggested that:

- Mentors receive less than \$100 per hour. As can be seen from the Program Structures, their role is crucial and their hours almost always exceed their contracts.
- An institution/individual be excluded because of the lack of ability to pay fees.
- Fellows and mentors are asked to pay for or bring their own food. The members of the JECELI community need to feel that they are recognized as professionals and treated as such.

## Evaluations: Discoveries about Leadership Learning

Since its inception, evaluation in JECELI has focused on two goals. One was to understand the learning and leadership development of the fellows in relation to the program. The other aim was to constantly realign, adjust directions, and follow up on productive new possibilities. These goals were reached by both informal and formal means.

Informally, anecdotal information was gathered from mentor-mentee conversations during monthly mentor meetings. There was also a staff meeting after every seminar day. Sometimes, based on feedback, we changed course in the middle of the day. Google Forms were used for post-seminar evaluations. Throughout the program, we emphasized that fellows' and mentors' feedback had the power to change the program. We shared our reflections with the group so that our work was transparent. In doing so, we were all able to participate in and model a community of learning. Gradually, the response

rate increased. End-of-cohort assessments were executed by professionals who, at the time of their studies, were not involved with JECELI in any other way. These evaluations included focus groups, which allowed for fellows to end their JECELI experience through reflections, as they had begun during recruitment.

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**“(Regarding the Institutional Leadership Team) It was also kind of surprising to see that so many people are paying attention because I feel like as a teacher, sometimes you feel like people aren’t really paying attention to you.”**

—CC3 PARTICIPANT

## Conclusion: The Final Word Is Yours

Leading Jewish early childhood programs is an incredibly complex task. Along with knowledge and skills, leadership requires experience and reflection while continuously seeking out new perspectives and possibilities in a Jewish context. JECELI worked to give fellows, mentors, and staff Jewish frameworks and the supports to continue to grow as contributing, curious leaders in the field.

While it was worthwhile for us to reflect on our learning and experiences, and to learn from our work through this review, the question remains: What happens now? We want to invite more programs and communities to enjoy the Jewish life, learning, and culture that Jewish early childhood programs can inspire. We hope that this document will spark further discussions about what leadership means in our field.

To that end, we offer the following possibilities:

- Discussions of a philosophy of Jewish early childhood education that includes thought leaders both in and out of the field
- The creation of a group of leaders of professional development to discuss goals and efforts
- Analyses and critiques of JECELI by university students
- A springboard for discussions about leadership in general
- A springboard for discussions about methods of adult education based on Jewish concepts
- A provocation for thinking about the requirements of professionals in the field that should be met, either formally or informally
- A template, in sections or as a whole, for use in communities or by national groups
- Inspiration for other programs to create and share their own playbooks or handbooks
- A way to show institutions and funders the depth, seriousness, and importance of Jewish early childhood education.



**“What was so amazing about JECELI was how connected the professional development was. It was connected to the speakers, and to the text study, which was connected to the activities, which was connected to how we had to do our project, which was connected to documentation, which was connected to storytelling. It all came together.”**

**—CC3 PARTICIPANT**

# Appendix

## Examples of National Schedules

Mon. 7/9	Tues. 7/10	Wed. 7/11	Thurs. 7/12	Fri. 7/13*	Shabbat 7/14	Sun. 7/15	Mon. 7/16	Tues. 7/17	Wed. 7/18	Thurs. 7/19
9:00-9:30 Morning Meeting, PDR	9:00-9:15 Morning Meeting, PDR	9:00-9:15 Morning Meeting, PDR	9:00-9:15 Morning Meeting, PDR	8:45-9:00 Morning Meeting Moadon	Choice of services/ activities	9:00-9:15 Morning Meeting, Moadon	9:00-9:15 Morning Meeting, PDR	9:00-9:15 Morning Meeting, PDR	9:00-9:15 Morning Meeting, PDR	9:00-9:15 Morning Meeting, PDR
9:30-10:45 Text Study, PDR	9:15-10:15 Text Study, PDR	9:15-10:00 Text Study, PDR	9:15-10:30 Text Study, PDR	9:15-10:00 Bank Street Tour		10:00-11:00 Tenement Museum	9:15-10:00 Text Study, PDR	9:15-10:00 Text Study, PDR	9:15-10:00 Text Study, PDR	9:15-10:00 Text Study, PDR
10:45-11:00 Hafsakah הפסקה	10:15-10:30 Hafsakah הפסקה	10:00-10:15 Hafsakah הפסקה	10:30-10:45 Hafsakah הפסקה	10:00-10:15 Hafsakah הפסקה		11:15-12:30 Lunch LES	10:00-10:15 Hafsakah הפסקה	10:00-10:15 Hafsakah הפסקה	10:00-10:15 Hafsakah הפסקה	10:00-10:15 Hafsakah הפסקה
11:00-12:30 Storahelling, PDR	10:30-12:30 Leading with Emotional Intelligence, Berman	10:15-12:15 Adult Development, PDR	10:45-12:30 Observation & Documentation, PDR	10:15-12:15 Adult Development Bank Street 422		1:00-3:00 Tour of Lower East Side	10:15-12:00 Conversations & Communication, PDR	10:15-12:30 Technology & Community, Berman	10:15-12:15 Adult Development, PDR	10:15-12:30 Looking Ahead, PDR
12:30-1:15 Lunch, DH	12:30-1:15 Lunch, DH	12:15-1:00 Lunch, DH	12:30-1:15 Lunch, DH	12:15-1:00 Lunch, DH	1:00 Shabbat Lunch, Moadon	Open	12:00-12:45 Lunch, DH	12:30-1:15 Lunch, DH	12:15-1:30 Lunch with Davidson Panel, MCC	12:30-1:15 Lunch, DH
1:30-2:30 The Tapestry of the Jewish Narrative and What it Means to Me PDR	1:30-3:30 Processes of Supervision, PDR	1:15-2:00 Intro to School Visits, Berman	1:30-3:30 Processes of Supervision, PDR	1:00-2:00 Narrative, Drama & Text Bank Street 422	2:00-4:00 Jewish Storytelling, Moadon	Open	1:00-2:00 Building Community with Parents, PDR	1:30-3:30 Processes of Supervision, PDR	1:30-3:30 Adult Development, PDR	1:30-3:30 Processes of Supervision, PDR

## JECALI Israel Seminar (February 14–23, 2013)

<b>Thursday, February 14</b>	
5:20 p.m.	Arrival at Ben Gurion
6:30 p.m.	Travel to Jerusalem
	Check in at Dan Panorama
7:30 p.m.	Dinner at hotel

<b>Friday, February 15</b>	
7:30 a.m.	Breakfast at hotel
8:30 a.m.– 12:30 p.m.	Walking Tour with Jared Goldfarb: city center, Nachlaot, and Machene Yehuda
12:30–4:15 p.m	Lunch*, free time
4:15 p.m.	Meet JRS group, candle lighting at 4:45
	Depart for Kabbalat Shabbat at Shira Chadasha Synagogue
7:30 p.m.	Shabbat dinner at hotel

<b>Shabbat, February 16</b>	
	Breakfast at hotel
	Optional services
12:15 p.m	Study session with Brad Burston
1:30 p.m.	Lunch at hotel
3:00 p.m.	Walking tour, Yemin Moshe
5:45 p.m.	Meet with JRS group for Havdalah
7:30 p.m.	Dinner* and free time



<b>Sunday, February 17</b>	
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast at hotel
7:45 a.m.	Depart for Neot Kedumim
	Neot Kedumim: Life in Biblical Times tour
12:00 p.m.	Biblical lunch
12:45 p.m.	Depart for Israel Museum
2:00 p.m.	Israel Museum Tour: expressions of the connection to the Land of Israel in art; model of Second Temple
5:00 p.m.	Return to hotel
6:15 p.m.	Small group meetings
7:00 p.m.	Dinner* and free time

<b>Monday, February 18</b>	
7:30 a.m.	Breakfast at hotel
8:30 a.m.	Leave for Old City with Jared Goldfarb
	Ir HaAtikah: pilgrimage past and present, the Kotel, the four quarters (then and now)
12:30 p.m.	Lunch* in Jewish Quarter
1:30 p.m.	Tour continued
3:30 p.m.	Return to hotel
4:45 p.m.	Depart for Martef, Kol HaOt: "Mapping the Journey" art experience
6:45 p.m.	Dinner, meeting with artist David Moss
9:30 p.m.	Return to hotel

<b>Tuesday, February 19</b>	
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast at hotel
7:45 a.m.	Depart to Caesarea, meet Alice Alfia
9:00–10:30 a.m.	ECE program visit
10:30 a.m.– 12:30 p.m.	Tour of ancient Caesaria
12:30 p.m.	Travel to Tzipori National Park
1:30 p.m.	Lunch, small group meetings, tour of Tzipori
4:30 p.m.	Travel to Misgav area, meet Dr. Sigal Achituv; ECE visit
6:30 p.m.	Travel to Nof Ginosaur hotel (Kinneret); dinner
8:30 p.m.	Group reflection sessions

<b>Wednesday, February 20</b>	
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast at hotel
8:45 a.m.	Meet Department of Jewish Peoplehood
	Visit sites in the Galilee relating to the Zionist narrative and learning about leaders in the development of modern Hebrew and Israeli culture
1:00 p.m.	Visit sites in the Galilee relating to the Zionist narrative and learning about leaders in the development of modern Hebrew and Israeli culture Lunch*
2:00 p.m.	Tour continued; small group reflection
5:00 p.m.	Return to hotel
6:30 p.m.	Dinner at hotel
8:00 p.m.	Group reflection sessions

<b>Thursday, February 21</b>	
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast at hotel
7:45 a.m.	Leave for Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu
8:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Visit ECE program, including the junkyard playground
	Lunch
	Clay workshop with Israeli artist and early childhood educator
3:30 p.m.	Travel to Tel Aviv
5:30 p.m.	Check in at Basel Hotel
6:45 p.m.	Small group meetings
7:30 p.m.	Dinner* and free time

<b>Friday, February 22</b>	
7:30 a.m.	Breakfast at hotel
8:30–11:15 a.m.	Free time to explore Tel Aviv
11:30 a.m.	Travel to meeting with Dr. Rachel Korazim, with light lunch
1:30 p.m.	Return to Jerusalem, prepare for Shabbat
4:00 p.m.	Discussion of the week (candlelighting at 4:51 p.m.)
5:20 p.m.	Kabbalat Shabbat services
7:30 p.m.	Dinner at hotel
8:30 p.m.	Oneg Shabbat with Joyce Klein, Jewish folktales

Shabbat, February 23	
	Breakfast at hotel
	Optional services; Possibility of emergent discussions; tiulim
1:00 p.m.	Lunch at hotel
2:30 p.m.	What are we taking home? Large and small group discussions
5:20 p.m.	What are we taking home? Large and small group discussions; Seudah Shlisheet with six-word poems
6:10 p.m.	Havdalah
7:00 p.m.	Leave for Megillah reading at Har Adar
	Depart for airport

Sunday, February 24	
1:00 a.m.	Flight departure



“Some of what I remember the most was the active participation ... we did a lot of learning by play, instead of lecture about leadership: jumping in, experiencing it, and talking about it afterward. I remember that experience and it was fun.”

—CC2 PARTICIPANT

# Sample JECALI Calendar

## JECALI Chicago Cohort 3 Calendar

<b>January 12–15, 2020</b>	<b>Orientation Retreat: Seminar 1</b>
February 3, 2020	Meeting for Fellows' Supervisors
February 2020	Individual Meetings with Mentor
<b>March 3–5, 2020</b>	<b>Seminar 2</b>
April 2020	Mentor Group Meeting
April/May 2020	Individual Meetings with Mentor
May 3–5, 2020	Paradigm Project conference
Summer 2020	Leadership Team Meeting (Fellow, Mentor, Institutional Leadership)
June 2020	Individual Meetings with Mentor
<b>July 14–16, 2020</b>	<b>Seminar 3</b>
August/September 2020	Mentor Group Meeting
August/September 2020	Individual Meetings with Mentor
<b>October 27–29, 2020</b>	<b>Seminar 4</b>
November 2020	Leadership Team Meeting (Fellow, Mentor, Institutional Leadership)
November/December 2020	Mentor Group Meeting
November/December 2020	Individual Meetings with Mentor
January 2021	Individual Meetings with Mentor
January 2021	Mentor Group Meeting
<b>February 9–11, 2021</b>	<b>Seminar 5</b>
March 2021	Meeting for Fellows' Supervisors
March 2021	Leadership Team Meeting (Fellow, Mentor, Institutional Leadership)
May 2021	Culmination Ceremony

## Appreciative Inquiry Resources

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)<sup>9</sup> is a way of looking at organizational change that focuses on doing more of what is already working, rather than focusing on fixing problems. It mobilizes strategic change by focusing on the core strengths of an organization, then using those strengths to reshape the future.

AI is both a high-participation learning process to identify and disseminate best practices, and a way of managing and working that fosters positive communication and can result in the formation of deep and meaningful relationships.

AI was developed by David Cooperrider and his associates at Case Western Reserve University in the mid-1980s. His wife, Nancy, an artist, told him about the “appreciative eye”—an idea that assumes that in every piece of art, there is beauty. AI applies this principle to business.

### How It Works

Appreciative Inquiry begins with analyzing the “positive core” of an organization (or a person) and then links this knowledge to the heart of the strategic change agenda.

The very act of asking a question influences the worldview of the person who is asked. Because human systems move toward what they persistently ask questions about, Appreciative Inquiry involves the deliberate discovery of everything that gives a system “life” when it is most effective in performance and human terms.

When we link the positive core directly to a strategic agenda, changes never thought possible are rapidly mobilized while simultaneously building enthusiasm, corporate confidence, and human energy.

### Comparison with Problem-Focused Approaches

<b>Problem-solving</b>	<b>Appreciative Inquiry</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What to fix</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What to grow</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinks in terms of: problem, symptoms, causes, solutions, action plan, intervention, and, all too often, blame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinks in terms of: good, better, possible</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaks things into pieces, leading to fragmented responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI keeps the big picture in view, focusing on an ideal and how its roots lie in what is already working</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow pace of change—requiring a lot of positive emotion to make real change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quickly creates a new dynamic—with people united around a shared vision of the future</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumes an organization is made up of a series of problems to be overcome, creating a deficit culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumes an organization is a source of limitless capacity and imagination, creating an appreciative culture</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from <https://coachingleaders.co.uk/what-is-appreciative-inquiry>



## The AI Change Process

### Typical AI Project Start-Up

- Choose the topic: combine themes from generic interviews with research questions.
- Agree on desired outcomes and critical success factors.
- Agree on how to get there.
- Develop draft interview protocol.
- Practice interviews; develop interview playbook lines.
- Plan for collecting and analyzing the data.
- Plan for how the process will drive change.

### Six Generic Questions to Start

- What have been your best experiences at work?
- What do you value about . . . yourself, work, organization?
- What do you think is the core life-giving factor or value of your organization (which it wouldn't be the same without)?
- If you had three wishes for your organization, what would they be?
- What achievements are you (and/or your team) proud of?
- Apart from the money, what makes going to work worthwhile?

### Why It Works

- It doesn't focus on changing people, which leads to relief that the message isn't about what they've done wrong or have to stop doing.
- Instead, people get into a positive, energized state, because you're focusing on what's good about their work.
- It invites people to engage in building the kinds of organizations and communities that they want to live in.
- It helps everyone see the need for change, explore new possibilities, and contribute to solutions.
- It's easier to see your vision of the future vividly when it has roots in your past experiences, rather than trying to start with a blank canvas
- It means you won't be throwing out the good stuff that's already there when you start to build your new

organization.

- Through alignment of formal and informal structures with purpose and principles, it translates shared vision into reality and belief into practice.

### Underlying Principles

- In every human system, something works.
- What we focus on, and the language we use, becomes our reality.
- Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities. It is important to value differences.
- The act of asking questions influences the group in some way.
- People have more confidence and comfort to move to an unknown future when they carry forward parts of the past.
- What we carry forward should be what is best about the past.

## Appreciative Inquiry Interview

(First Individual Mentor Meeting)

Looking back:

- What has been one of my strengths since I was young?
- What is an accomplishment that I am proud of?
- Why does this accomplishment stand out for me?

And today:

- What are some of my strengths as an educator, as a leader?
- What energizes me?
- What sometimes gets in my way?
- What am I most eager to learn about right now?

Making it happen:

- What would I like a mentor to know about me?
- How could a mentor help me in discovering and in working toward my goals?

\*Adapted from Orem, Binkert, Clancy: *Appreciative Coaching: A Positive Process for Change*, (Jossey-Bass, 2007)

[Jacob Watson, Naomi Ackerman of Avdot, and Becca of Second City; Playmeo; improv books]

# Materials List for Loose Parts

This is a partial list. Websites to explore are at the bottom.

## 1. Natural

- Rocks of various sizes
- Crystals
- Gemstones
- Shells
- Tree “cookies” of various sizes
- Sticks
- Dried plants, particularly those with pleasing aromas
- Large wood pieces for display

## 2. Wood

- Spools
- Buttons with designs
- Blocks of different kinds
- Peg people of various sizes
- Small trees
- Shapes of various kinds (hexagons, circles, squares)
- Small laser-cut flowers
- Small laser-cut leaves

## 3. Art

- Colored pencils
- Oil pastels
- Drawing paper
- Origami paper
- Construction paper
- Craft wire
- Beads of many sizes and kinds
- Pipe cleaners
- Ribbon
- Silk cord
- Craft glue
- Small bowls for water
- Brushes
- Felt
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Ultra Fine Point Sharpies
- Washi tape
- Tiles
- Air-hardening clay

## 4. Miscellaneous

- Glass stones
- Bells
- Mirrors of different sizes
- Welcome sign
- Tablecloths
- Placemats
- Photo stands
- Scarves
- Feathers

## 5. Containers

- Boxes with divisions for collecting loose parts
- Bowls of various sizes for display and for collecting loose parts
- Bins for storage
- Ziploc bags for storage

For these and other interesting items, go to:

- Amazon (Amazon.com) for wood objects, glass stones, and basic art materials
- Blick Art Supplies ([www.dickblick.com](http://www.dickblick.com)) for high quality and diverse art materials
- Michaels ([www.Michaels.com](http://www.Michaels.com)) for laser-cut wood shapes and art materials
- Etsy (Etsy.com) for beads and decorative materials
- Factory Direct Craft (<https://factorydirectcraft.com>) for interesting wood pieces

## Sample Orientation/Seminar Schedules and Sample Session Description

Sunday, January 12	Monday, January 13	Tuesday, January 14	Wednesday, January 15
	6:30–8:00: Breakfast	6:30–8:00: Breakfast	6:30–8:00: Breakfast
ברוכות הבאות! <i>Brukhot HaBa'ot!</i> Welcome	8:00–9:00: Morning meeting: בראשית <i>Breish-eet</i> (In Beginning)	8:00–9:00: Morning meeting חזרה <i>Hazarah</i> (review)	8:00–8:30: Morning meeting חזרה <i>Hazarah</i> (review)
	9:00–9:45: What can a text teach us about self-discovery?	9:00–9:45: What can a text teach us about learning from others?	8:30–9:15: What can a text teach us about community?
	9:45–10:00: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>	9:45–10:00: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>	9:15–9:25: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>
	10:00–11:15: Text and context. How do we understand ourselves and others? What is culture? Jewish culture?	10:00–11:30: What do stories have to do with learning about ourselves, each other, and Jewish culture?	9:25–11:30: How do we start stories of change? Working with UpStart <i>Jacob Watson</i>
	11:15–11:30: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>	11:30–12:15: Lunch	11:30–12:30: Looking back, Moving forward! Where are we now in our JECALI story?
	11:30–12:30: What are the values we want to express in Jewish early childhood education?	12:15–2:15: How can we use pedagogical documentation to create Jewish learning stories? Kristin Brizzolara	12:30–1:15: Lunch
	12:30–1:15: Lunch	2:15–2:30: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>	
	1:15–2:30: What do we want leadership to look like based on our values?	2:30–5:00: “Hey? What’s that you say?” Healthy communication. <i>Becca Barish</i>	שלום ולהתראות <i>Shalom U’L’Hitra’ot!</i> Good-bye
	2:30–2:45: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>	5:00–6:30: Photos (extends until dinner)	
4:00–4:45: Arrival and check-in	2:45–4:00: How do mentors help move us forward in leadership?	5:15–6:00: Reflecting on the day	

5:00–6:00: First impressions	4:00–4:15: <i>Hafsakah</i> הפסקה	6:30–7:15: Dinner	
6:30–7:15: Dinner	4:15–5:30: Teamwork		
7:15–8:00: Second impressions: what will we do here?	5:30–6:00: Reflecting on the day	7:15–8:30: Take a look at a book.	
	6:30–7:15: Dinner		
	7:15–8:45: A night at the movies		
<b>Sunday, January 12</b>	<b>Monday, January 13</b>	<b>Tuesday, January 14</b>	<b>Wednesday, January 15</b>
	6:30–8:00: Breakfast	6:30–8:00: Breakfast	6:30–8:00: Breakfast
ברוכות הבאות! <i>Brukot HaBa'ot!</i> Welcome!	8:00–9:00: Morning meeting: בראשית <i>Breish-eet</i> (In Beginning)	8:00–9:00: Morning meeting חזרה <i>Hazarah</i> (review)	8:00–8:30: Morning meeting חזרה <i>Hazarah</i> (review)
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	10:00–11:15: Text and context. How do we understand ourselves and others? What is culture? Jewish culture?	10:00–11:30: What do stories have to do with learning about ourselves, each other, and Jewish culture?	9:25–11:30: How do we start stories of change? Working with UpStart. <i>Jacob Watson</i>
	11:15–11:30: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>	11:30–12:15: Lunch	11:30–12:30: Looking back, moving forward. Where are we now in our JECELI story?
	11:30–12:30: What are the values we want to express in Jewish early childhood education?	12:15–2:15: How can we use pedagogical documentation to create Jewish learning stories? <i>Kristin Brizzolara</i>	12:30–1:15: Lunch

	12:30–1:15: Lunch	2:15–2:30: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>	
	1:15–2:30: What do we want leadership to look like based on our values?	2:30–5:00: “Hey? What’s That You Say?” Healthy communication. <i>Becca Barish</i>	שלום ולהתראות <i>Shalom U’L’Hitra’ot!</i> Good-bye and see you soon.
	2:30–2:45: הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i>	5:00–6:30: Photos (extends until dinner)	
4:00–4:45: Arrival and check-in	2:45–4:00: How do mentors help move us forward in leadership?	5:15–6:00: Reflecting on the day	
5:00–6:00 First impressions	4:00–4:15: <i>Hafsakah</i> הפסקה	6:30–7:15: Dinner	
6:30–7:15: Dinner	4:15–5:30: Teamwork		
7:15–8:00: Second impressions: what will we do here?	5:30–6:00: Reflecting on the day	7:15–8:30: Take a look at a book.	
	6:30–7:15: Dinner		
	7:15–8:45: A night at the movies.		

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**“I experienced a great sense of feeling respected, valued, and supported as a teacher in Jewish early childhood education.”**

**—CC2 PARTICIPANT**

# Sample Schedule-at-a-Glance



הבאות /ברוכים הבאים/ ברוכים הבאים *B'ruchim HaBa'im, B'rukhot HaBa'ot!* Welcome!  
**JECELI Chicago Seminar Cohort 3** Developmental Perspectives

Moadon Kol Chadash  
 2464 N Clybourn Ave  
 Chicago, IL 60614  
 March 3-5, 2020

ז' ט' באדר תש"פ  
 7-9 Adar 5780

Tuesday, March 3, 2020	Wednesday, March 4, 2020	Thursday, March 5, 2020
8:30-9:00 בניסה <i>K'neesah</i> (Entrance)	8:30-9:00 בניסה <i>K'neesah</i> (Entrance)	8:30-9:00 בניסה <i>K'neesah</i> (Entrance)
9:00-9:30 אסיפה <i>Asayfah</i> (Gathering) Morning meeting	9:00-9:30 אסיפה <i>Asayfah</i> (Gathering) Morning meeting	9:00-9:30 אסיפה <i>Asayfah</i> (Gathering) Morning meeting
9:30-10:00 לימודי <i>Limudei Kodesh</i> (Holy Studies): <i>Pirkei Avot</i> 5:21: Developmental Sages...	9:30-10:00 לימודי <i>Limudei Kodesh</i> (Holy Studies): <i>Pirkei Avot</i> 4:1: Sage Advice	9:30-10:00 לימודי <i>Limudei Kodesh</i> (Holy Studies): <i>Pirkei Avot</i> 1:1: Saging through the Ages
10:00-10:10 הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i> Break	10:00-10:10 הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i> Break	10:00-10:10 הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i> Break
10:10-12:15 שיעור א' <i>Session 1: Implications of Adult Development</i> Dr. Ilana Dvorin Friedman	10:10-12:15 שיעור א' <i>Session 1: Developing Your Leadership Story</i> Jacob Watson	10:10-12:15 שיעור א' <i>Session 1: Co-Inquiry Circles to Plan for Further Engagement</i> Kristin Brizzolara
12:15-1:00 ארוחת צהריים <i>Aruhat Tzohorayim</i> Lunch	12:15-1:00 ארוחת צהריים <i>Aruhat Tzohorayim</i> Lunch	12:15-1:00 ארוחת צהריים <i>Aruhat Tzohorayim</i> Lunch
1:00-2:05 <i>Havvayot</i> Experiential Learning Labs: How can our knowledge of adult development advance our work?	1:00-2:05 <i>Havvayot</i> Experiential Learning Labs: How can we use stories, our own and others', to lead meaningfully and effectively?	1:00-2:05 <i>Havvayot</i> Experiential Learning Labs: How do we use pedagogical documentation to explore learning and plan?
2:05-2:15 הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i> Break	2:05-2:15 הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i> Break	2:05-2:15 הפסקה <i>Hafsakah</i> Break
2:15-3:30 שיעור ב' <i>Session 2: Why are the Kids so Crazy Right Now?! Group Development Over the School Year in a Jewish Holiday Framework</i> Joni Crounse	2:15-3:30 שיעור ב' <i>Session 2: What Makes Stories So Powerful? How Will We Tell Our Leadership Stories in JECELI?</i>	2:15-3:30 שיעור ב' <i>Session 2: The Pesah Paradigm: A Developmental Approach</i>
3:30-4:30 מפגשים <i>Mifgashim</i> (Meetings)	3:30-4:30 מפגשים <i>Mifgashim</i> (Meetings)	3:30-4:30 מפגשים <i>Mifgashim</i> (Meetings)
4:30-5:00 השתקפות <i>Hishtakfut</i> (Reflections)	4:30-5:00 השתקפות <i>Hishtakfut</i> (Reflections)	4:30-5:00 השתקפות <i>Hishtakfut</i> (Reflections)

שלום ולהתראות *Shalom u'Lehitra'ot* Goodbye and see you soon!  
 JECELI is an initiative of The Jewish Theological Seminary supported by a generous grant from the Crown Family and an anonymous funder.



## Sample Seminar Sessions Description

### **“To Live Would Be an Awfully Big Adventure”: Implications of Adult Development**

Ilana Friedman

As early childhood educators, we draw from a variety of child development and educational/learning theories as we interact with children, plan meaningful learning experiences, design classroom environments, and support children as they develop self-concepts and relationships with others. Early childhood educators and leaders also work with adults in a variety of ways. In our work with colleagues, directors, families, and other stakeholders, how do we utilize theories in adult development to inform our practice and our understanding of ourselves as individuals and as professionals?

Human development is a lifelong process involving multiple interlocking domains of development. As we age, we encounter new psychological, social, cognitive, physical, and biological shifts and changes that are expressed and experienced differently based on the cultural context and individual variations. Some argue that we face multiple stages in adulthood that require us to work through new developmental tasks. Throughout this process, adults continuously reconstruct their identities and outlooks, which play a role in their relationships and personal and professional lives.

In this interactive session, we will review influential theories and perspectives concerning adult learning and development, including prominent concepts related to parent and teacher development.

### **“Why Are the Kids So Crazy Right Now?!” Group Development Over the School Year in a Jewish Holiday Framework**

Joni Crouse

The word “relationships” conveys a wide spectrum of interactions. We know that our own development is strongly affected by our connections and investment in those around us. In these sessions, we will consider social-emotional development in young children over the school year to

reveal the delights and challenges as children “grow into themselves” over time, and how they evolve as relational beings. In Jewish early childhood programs, we look at how Jewish tradition invites us to make explicit certain aspects of the actualization of self, and in the ways that we engage with the “other,” we create community.

### **Developing Your Leadership Story**

Jacob Watson

What moments and experiences compel us to lead? And how can we use the stories of our tradition to both affirm and question our shared values? This workshop builds on UpStart’s adaptive design framework with a deeper dive into the processes of cultivating empathy and framing opportunities. In this session, we will continue to identify moments in our work that call for change and practice crafting narratives that compel others to join us in action. We will draw on theories from organizational learning and community organizing as we consider how both personal and public narratives can lead to new possibilities.

### **What Makes Stories So Powerful? How Will We Tell Our Leadership Stories in JECALI?**

Lyndall Miller

We all love stories—why? In this session, we will explore brain research in this area, as well as the construction of stories that makes them effective. We will then return to the use of stories as essential to leadership. The Action Research Project will be introduced within this story-telling framework.

### **Documentation**

Kristin Brizzolara

We will engage in co-inquiry/curriculum meetings using authentic documentation gathered from your classroom experiences, which was initiated with a focus on Shabbat candlesticks. Participants will hear the perspectives of colleagues and plan for next steps with the children as the analysis and interpretation of documentation supports the relaunch of possibilities. The session allows reflection on the process of gathering and interpreting documentation while sharing accomplishments and challenges.



### **The Pesach Paradigm: A Developmental Perspective**

Lyndall Miller

The holiday of Pesah (Passover) is of unique importance in the Jewish calendar. It is also uniquely complex in its narrative and its observance. We will attempt to look at the Festival of Freedom through developmental perspectives. These perspectives include both child development and how we continuously develop what we offer to our young learners. We will also think together about how the children are evolving their own ideas about what this holiday means.

### **Daily Activities**

#### **כניסה *K'nisah* Entrance**

We enter every day with a framing experience with loose parts. These experiences relate to the texts and learning that we will be working on that day, and allow everyone to spend some relaxed time together as we prepare to begin group learning.

#### **אסיפה *Asayfah* Gathering**

We first gather as a group to introduce concepts for the day, review what was learned previously, and engage in singing a few *tefillot*. Each *tefillah* has been chosen because of its relevance to early childhood education and for its ability to center each of us as individuals and as group members as we begin learning together.

#### **לימודי קודש *Limudai Kodesh* Holy Studies**

We continue the framing of every day with a study of text from Torah, Mishnah, or Talmud. Through close reading and thought-provoking conversations, we consider how the Rabbis, ourselves, and our group can interpret life and educational practices using the perspectives of the text. Parallels are drawn between this approach to learning through Jewish text study and critical aspects of staff development, such as close observation, productive dialogue, and negotiating meaning.

**מפגשים Mifgashim Mentor Meetings** (held in future seminars)

JECELI fellows meet in small groups with their mentors to discuss the learning for the day, its relevance for the group members, and ongoing topics of interest. Group members work together to help and support each other with the facilitation of the mentor. This is also a time in which JECELI fellows use the thinking of the group to work on

their leadership projects.

### **מחשבות Machshavot Thoughts**

We conclude our daily work as a community with a brief discussion of the learning and an active game. Our games involve communication, teamwork, and unpredictability, just like our work as Jewish educators.

## Text Study Protocol and Example

### JECELI Text Study Protocol

- Preparation
  - Provide one text for every two people, whether in a book (such as Pirkei Avot) or on a sheet.
    - If using Pirkei Avot, providing different versions is preferable.
  - Ask participants to join in pairs (*hevruta* partners).
  - Let everyone know that mishnahyot can be arranged differently in different books and to look for a mishnah that is a number ahead or behind or incorporated into another nearby mishnah.
- Presenting the text
  - Ask if anyone would like to read it in either the original or in English.
  - Ask if anyone has a different translation if using different books (every translation is a commentary).
    - Point out interesting differences; offer varying possibilities in meanings of particular Hebrew words.
    - The text may be presented in sections for the *hevruta* (pair) work
- *Hevruta* (pair) work
  - Reread the text together.
  - Ask:
    - What do we notice?
    - How is this section of text put together?
    - What do we think about the questions provided?
    - Does this text have meaning for us?
- Discuss in small groups
  - How does this relate to our work?
- Discuss the learning and the relevance in the large group

## Text Study Example

### “If I am not for myself . . .” (Pirkei Avot 1:14)

Source Sheet by [Lyndall Miller](#)

#### Pirkei Avot 1:14

(14) He [Rabbi Hillel] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? And when I am for myself (alone), what am I? And if not now, when?

#### משנה אבות א'י"ד

(יד) הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אָנִי  
לִי, מִי לִי. וְכִשְׁפָּאֲנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה  
אָנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתַי

Transliteration:

*Hu [Hillel] haya omer: Im ayn ani li, mi li? U'khsheh ani l'atzmi, ma ani? V'im lo akhshav, aymatai?*

- What do you notice about the structure of this mishnah?
  - Whom is it about?
  - Do these sentences make sense together?
  - What would happen if you took one out?
  - Does this mishnah have meaning for you?
- Does this mishnah have meaning for you?
- Does this mishnah have anything to do with how we support young children in their growth?

Source Sheet created on Sefaria by [Lyndall Miller](#)



“In finding this new community of leaders, have seen how important a strong and collaborative sense of community is to success.”

—CC2 SUPERVISOR



# Seminar Session Titles

## Seminar 1 (Orientation) Foundations

- Introduction to Text Study
- What Can a Jewish Text Teach Us About Ourselves? Our Ability to Be Leaders? (Pirkei Avot 1:14)
- What Can a Jewish Text Teach Us About Learning from Others? (Pirkei Avot 1:6)
- What Can a Jewish Text Teach Us About Community? (Pirkei Avot 2:4)
- What Does Culture Have to Do with Jewish Early Childhood Education?
- How Does Judaism Inform Culture? An Exploration of Jewish Values
- Introduction to JECELI Leadership Capacities: What Makes a Leader?
- Leadership Self-awareness: What Are Our Strengths? What Are Our Challenges?
- JECELI Mentoring, Modeled in Jewish Tradition
- Establishing Communication for Shared Understandings
- How Do We Start Stories of Change? Working with UpStart
- Introduction to Action Research
- What Are the Essentials of JECELI Culture?

## Seminar 2: Developmental Perspectives

- Developmental Sages: How Did the Rabbis Understand Human Development? (Pirkei Avot 5:21)
- Empathetic Arguing (*Eruvin* 13b)
- Taking Another's Perspective: The Fishpond (*BT Ta'anit* 24a)
- Back to the Beginning: What Infants Teach Us About Development and Culture
- Why Are the Kids So Crazy Right Now? Group Development Over the School Year in a Jewish Holiday Framework
- The *Pesah* Paradigm: A Developmental Approach
- "When I Grow Up": Considerations of Adult

Development in Jewish Early Childhood Programs

- *La'Dor Va'Dor* (From Generation to Generations): How Do We Relate?
- Parenthood: What Does Developmental Stage Theory Contribute?
- Under the Influence: Effects of Parenting on Adult Identity
- Exploring Reflective Supervision: A Professional Development Model
- We're All in This Together: Participatory Leadership Development
- Developing Your Leadership Story
- On Stage! How Do Educators Develop into Ensemble Players?
- Reflective Supervision and Peer Mentoring: How Can We Continue to Develop?
- Returning to Ourselves During the High Holidays: Questions, Biases, and Assumptions, a Foundation for *Teshuvah* (Return/Repentance)
- Developing Your Action Research Question
- Stages of Developing Institutional Leadership Teams
- What Does Empathy Have to Do with Change? Developing Alternative Perspectives (UpStart)

## Seminar 3: Learning Theory and Curriculum Generation Through Collaboration

- How we learn from others (*Ta'anit* 7a)
- The intensity of learning (Pirkei Avot 5:26)
- Relating to others through bringing peace (Pirkei Avot 1:12)
- Inquiry: The Architecture of Education
- Emergent Curriculum in JECE: What's the Story?
- How Can We Use Pedagogical Documentation to Create Jewish Learning Stories?
- A Reggio-Inspired Journey in a Jewish Early Childhood Program
- Diving In: What Does It Mean to Create an Immersive Jewish Culture for Young Children and Their Families?



- Collaborative Meaning-Making: Using Protocols for Group Work in Communities of Practice
- Meaning and Mitzvah in the Jewish Early Childhood Classroom
- Blessings Every Day: Children's Spiritual Development with a Focus on *B'rakhot*
- Teaching for *Sheleimut* (Wholeness): Integrating Mindfulness Practice into Teaching and Learning
- Mai-Hanukkah? What is Hanukkah? Co-constructing a Holiday with the Sages
- What Is My Personal Learning Style? What Does That Mean for Me as a Leader?
- Creating Learning Experiences for Adults
- Protocols for Teaching Texts to Adults

#### **Seminar 4: Attending to Organizational Contexts: Program, Families, Institution, Community, and Society**

- Perspectives on Leadership (*Brakhot* 55a)
- Transformative Leadership (*Pirkei Avot* 1:1)
- R. Akiva's Leadership Journey (*Avot deRabbi Natan*, A:6)
- What Do We Mean by "Vision" and "Mission"? What Do They Have to Do with Everyday School Life?
- Re-visioning the Future
- Participatory Leadership and Program Development Through Change
- The Role of Conflict in Supporting Collaborative Solutions
- How Do Our Encounters with Families Reflect Our Values?
- Crucial Connections: Home and School Flow Together
- Family Engagement? It's a Matter of Relationships
- Working with Families Begins with Working with Each Other
- Preschool from a Parent's Perspective
- Families and Shabbat
- Unmasking Purim's Meaning for Young Children and

Their Families

- Finding Community Through Spirituality, Ritual, and Prayer in the Jewish Early Childhood Classroom
- Inquire to Inspire: Action Research Project Support; Where Do We Need Help with Our "Stories" so That They Will Have an Impact? (UpStart)
- What Do the Issues of Identity, Inclusion, and Anti-bias Education Have to Do with Leadership?
- What Does It Mean to Be an Anti-racist Educator?
- Finding Solutions for a Changing Landscape (UpStart)
- Investigating Community Teamwork
- Preparing for Collective Action: Improvisational Teamwork (UpStart)

#### **Seminar 5: Building a Learning Community and Promoting Advocacy Through Shared Learning**

- Our Responsibility (*Pirkei Avot* 2:5)
- The Never-Ending Story (*Pirkei Avot* 2:16)
- Necessary Virtues (*Pirkei Avot* 6:6)
- Sharing your Action Research Project
- I Notice, I Appreciate, I Wonder: Giving Constructive Feedback to Colleagues
- Mapping Your Leadership Journey
- Creating Your Professional Leadership Identity
- Recognizing Success
- Changing Your Institution with Your Story
- What Is a Community of Practice?
- Leadership in Jewish Early Childhood Education: What Do We Want It to Be?
- Reflections on the JECELI Experience and What They Mean for the Future

# Action Research Planning and Guidance

## JECELI Leadership Action Research Project Planning

What?	Part One: Identifying your growing belief system about values in Jewish ECE leadership. (For first mentor meeting)	Part Two: Asking your important question(s) on Jewish ECE leadership. (Second Seminar)	Part Three: Developing your implementation plan (Third Seminar)	Part Four: Implementation (Between Third and Fourth Seminar)	Part Five: Short term evaluation and preparation (Fourth Seminar)	Part Six: Presentation (Final Seminar)
How?	<p><b>Consider</b> your personal belief system as to what is foundational in a Jewish ECE leader.</p> <p><b>Reflect</b> on the intersection between the JECELI mission and vision statement and your personal belief system.</p> <p><b>Write</b> a bulleted list of your core beliefs as a Jewish ECE leader.</p> <p><b>Decide</b> where you will keep track of your notes and ideas (journal, binder, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Name</b> a Jewish ECE leadership question that you might want to explore.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> the question using the following prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will this strengthen an area of Jewish learning, life, or culture in your setting?</li> <li>• How does this advocate for a child or group of children or family whose voices might not be heard (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.)?</li> <li>• What Jewish values AND actions might be showcased?</li> <li>• As a Jewish educator, why is it important to ask this question?</li> <li>• What might be some of the barriers and bridges in this exploration?</li> <li>• Consider whom you will invite to be on your ILT.</li> </ul> <p><b>Documentation</b> – how will you chart your progress?</p>	<p><b>Develop</b> your plan <b>Preparing</b> (using template):</p> <p>How will your project unfold? Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeline</li> <li>• Consent (from stakeholders)</li> <li>• Materials</li> <li>• Human resources</li> <li>• Communication and collaboration with ILT.</li> </ul> <p>Be explicit about the specific phases and events of your project.</p> <p>Discuss with your mentor and mentor group how the activities, events, and experiences you plan all support the exploration of your question.</p> <p><b>Documentation</b> – Consider if the manner you are keeping your notes is effective.</p>	<p><b>Implementation</b></p> <p><b>Support</b> from JECELI members.</p> <p>Mentor – Conversations to provide support as you get ready for implementation?</p> <p>Fellow Mentees – Critical appreciative inquiry friends groups</p> <p>Lyndall and Meir – Supportive feedback</p>	<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p>What do you think is happening as a result of your project?                  What are you learning through this process?                  What might the results mean?                  Has anything changed in your program as a result (large or small)?                  If so, what?</p> <p><b>Preparing Presentation:</b>                  Prepare to tell your story (beginning, middle, and end). Are there dramatic moments? Interesting characters? Thrilling “aha” discoveries.  <b>Notify</b> Meir of any technical support you may need (LCD projector, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Present</b> your leadership action research project! (10 minutes)</p> <p><b>Submit</b> a paragraph (300 words or less) giving the major outlines of your project and learning to give to everyone in the group, and to go in the graduation handbook.</p>

### Presenting Your Action Research Project

- **Relax.** It’s just us and we are really interested in whatever you have to tell us.
- **Present** your leadership action research project (10 minutes).
  - Use any method you prefer. We have found that slides work well on the Zoom format, but you can also use:
    - Posters
    - Drawings
    - Photos
    - Hand puppets
    - Interpretive dance
  - Ask for any technical support you may need (for example, how to share documentation or videos).
- **Listen** without responding to your colleagues as they use the “I Notice, I Appreciate, I Wonder” protocol that we have practiced during seminars (five minutes).
- **Respond** to your colleagues by choosing only one or two comments made in the previous section (five minutes).
- In turn, **learn** from and **respond** to your colleagues as they tell their research stories over the three days of this seminar.
- **Share** your learning and reflections with your Institutional Leadership Team before June 1.
- **Celebrate** your learning and that of your colleagues.

## JECALI Leadership Team Meeting Format: First Meeting

Adapted from *Building Together* by Fiona Stewart, 2018

- Invitation
    - Ask your immediate supervisor to help plan (all outreach should be approved by supervisor, as necessary).
    - Speak in person or through email.
    - Share:
      - Reason for initial meeting: introducing JECALI Chicago, learning so far, and possible project topic.
      - Logistics: after first meeting will meet twice more, and possibly more often, for approximately an hour.
    - Choose a space for the meeting.
      - Set it up for collaboration (semicircle).
      - Add inviting *décor* like plants, materials.
  - Preparation for the meeting
    - Prepare and send an agenda (see example).
    - Make copies for the meeting.
      - Agenda
      - [JECALI abstract] (see attached)
    - for a volunteer to take notes ahead of time.
    - For yourself, prepare a set of goals that you would like the meeting to achieve.
    - Make sure that you have discussed your project topic with your direct supervisor.
    - Review the protocol (I Notice, I Appreciate, I Wonder).
  - During the meeting
    - Allow everyone to introduce themselves and say a word or two of what brought them to their positions; this can start as a paired and then shared experience as they introduce each other (this should not eat up too much of the meeting time. If members already know each other, perhaps lead a short ice breaker where everyone says one word that they think of when they think of leadership, for example).
    - a. Say a few words about collaborating in JECALI seminars and mentoring with a few highlights.
    - b. Explain the collaborative structure of the Institutional Leadership Team.
      1. Bring together those who can represent the views of different stakeholders (parent, teacher, administrator, clergy, etc.).
        - Mention what each individual brings to the collaboration.
  - Explain that you are open to feedback and express your appreciation for being flexible since this is the first time this is happening.
  - Explain the protocol to the group.
    - First you will talk about the topic of your project, why you chose it, how it aligns with the mission of the school (use a story if relevant).
    - Each person can state in turn what they notice and appreciate about this idea.
    - You will talk about possible plans and potential impact of this project, and possible outcomes, as well as the possibility of surprises.
    - Each person will respond with what they appreciate and wonder about the plans
    - You will respond to comments as you wish, responding with “I don’t know yet,” or “Let me get back to you,” or “Do you have a suggestion?” if you don’t have an immediate response.
    - Share your actionable steps and get input in turn.
  - Wrap up the meeting with your appreciation for the input and an assurance of further communication.
  - Send a note of thanks and next steps to the participants.
  - Send your mentor the notes from the meeting.
- Three samples of program booklets, including the fellows’ projects, can be found at the following links:
- [JECALI Los Angeles, 2020](#)  
[JECALI Chicago Cohort 3, 2021](#)  
[JECALI San Francisco Bay Area, 2021](#)

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# About the Lead Authors

## **Lyndall Miller, EdD**

Dr. Miller (she/her) has been in the field of education / Jewish education for 50 years. She holds master's degrees in Special Education, Jewish Education, and Leadership in Early Childhood Education, as well as a doctorate in Jewish Education. Dr. Miller established several learning programs in Jewish early childhood education, including the Legacy Heritage Certificate in Jewish Early Childhood Education at Gratz College, as well as the Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute (JECELI). She held the role of project director of JECELI for 10 years. Her research interests include foundations of Jewish thought and the ways that Judaism structures dialogue and meaning-making for both children and adults.

## **Rabbi Meir Muller, PhD**

Meir Muller (he/him) earned rabbinical ordination and a doctorate in Early Childhood Education. Dr. Muller is an associate professor in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina, and served as lead author of South Carolina's early childhood state standards and as part of a team of educators who developed curricula that prepares European teachers to address bias, prejudice, and antisemitism. He is co-founder of the Cutler Jewish Day School, where he spent 30 years heading the school, and recently served as the Academic Director for JECELI. His research interests include antiracist pedagogical frameworks, sociopolitical consciousness in children and educators, Jewish early childhood education, countering antisemitism in higher education, and constructivist pedagogy.

## **Hannah Bloom Hirschberg, MEd**

Hannah Bloom-Hirschberg (she/her) holds degrees in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, and Family Studies from both Vanderbilt University and Erikson Institute. She is currently studying leadership and advocacy at Erikson Institute. She has taught in a wide array of educational institutions, ranging from infant programs to the Chicago Public Schools to Jewish day schools. She has worked on initiatives supporting early childhood education and childhood mental health as well as written curricula for childcare providers. Ms. Bloom-Hirschberg began as the program coordinator for the Chicago Cohort of JECELI before taking on the program manager role for all community cohorts. She is passionate about facilitating the growth of children, families, and communities.

“Care from the very start. We are told that we want you to come in and take care of you. We just want you to be here, to absorb what you need, and learn what you need. Always a sense of this is important and [the JECALI staff] really value you and your learning. It was such a beautiful experience of the intentionality and care.”

—CC2 PARTICIPANT

**JECALI**  
Jewish Early Childhood Education  
Leadership Institute



**JTS**

WILLIAM DAVIDSON GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF JEWISH EDUCATION