



Silber Family Centre for Jewish Camping

UJA Federation of Greater Toronto



GROWING JEWISH CAMPING FROM THE YOUNGEST AGES: The development of day and residential camp pipelines

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UJA Federation's mission is to preserve and strengthen the quality of Jewish life in Greater Toronto, Canada, Israel and around the world through philanthropic, volunteer and professional leadership. Year after year, UJA's Annual Campaign allows UJA to care for our most vulnerable: build and strengthen Jewish identity and education, invest in Israel and overseas, and promote Jewish/Israel advocacy, while also creating infrastructure throughout the GTA that serves not only the Jewish community but also the community at large.

SILBER FAMILY CENTRE FOR JEWISH CAMPING

UJA Federation of Greater Toronto's Silber Family Centre for Jewish Camping is the central backbone agency supporting Jewish summer camping in the Greater Toronto Area. Building on a vision that Jewish camping is an impactful life experience along the continuum of continuity for identity development, the Silber Family Centre fosters best practices and positive life experiences through its network of 18 partner summer camps.

Growing Jewish Camping from the Youngest Ages: The development of day and residential camp pipelines

Introduction

Over the last decade, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto’s Silber Family Centre for Jewish Camping (Silber Family Centre) has witnessed an emerging trend in Ontario’s summer camp market where private residential camp owners buy, or develop close collaborative partnerships with private day camps.

Anecdotally, the owners of these camps cite a number of rationales: economies of scale on purchasing, back office and marketing; the structures to attract and train higher quality staff; and most importantly, the ability to recruit younger campers into a longer tenure within their camping system.

It is this last rationale that has caught the attention of the Silber Family Centre, as we recognize that the trend to capture participants into the private camping system at a younger age will ultimately impact Jewish camping.

The Foundation for Jewish Camp identifies over 150 Jewish residential camps across North America. As of yet, there is no official count of Jewish day camps but it can be said with confidence that Jewish day camping far surpasses residential camps in both number of camps and number of campers served. That being said, just over a dozen residential camps across North America (listed to the right) were identified as having an intentional, structured and developed relationships and partnerships between a day and residential camp.

| Affiliation | Day Camp | Residential Camp |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bnei Akiva | Bnei Akiva Moshava Ba’ir | Camp Moshava IO |
| Bnei Akiva | Moshava Ba’ir Toronto | Camp Moshava Ennismore |
| Chabad | Chabad Lubavitch Day Camp | Camp Gan Israel Toronto |
| JCC | J-Day Camps | Camp Wise |
| JCC | Camp JCA Shalom Day Camp | Camp JCA Shalom |
| JCC | St Louis JCC Day Camp | Camp Sabra |
| JCC | J&R Day Camp | Emma Kaufman Camp |
| JCC | Atlanta JCC Day Camp | Camp Barney Medintz |
| Ramah | Ramah Yomi Philadelphia | Camp Ramah in the Poconos |
| Ramah | Ramah Yomi Chicago | Camp Ramah Wisconsin |
| Ramah | Ramah Yomi DC | Camp Ramah in New England |
| Ramah | Ramah Nyack Day Camp | Ramah Berkshires |
| URJ | URJ Harlam Day Camp | URJ Camp Harlam |
| Young Judaea | Sprout Brooklyn Day Camp | Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake |

Purpose

Recognizing the trend coming to life in Ontario – and likely in other communities across North America – this project sought to explore how partnered Jewish camps (with existing relations between day & residential camps) benefit from the partnership with particular

emphasis on the development of a pipeline of participants (campers, CITs, staff) moving to/from the day and residential camps. In particular, we sought to answer:

- What is the history of the camping network? What precipitated the partnership?
- What are the goals of the partnership? To what extent are the goals financial, marketing, pedagogic etc.
- What is the lay and professional structure of the camps? How does the structure facilitate or inhibit the pipeline?
- What are the challenges in terms of staffing, recruitment etc?
- What does success look like? What, if any, metrics do the camps use to measure retention between day and residential camps?

Method

To learn from the experience of the partnered Jewish camps, which do have some type of existing and formal partnership, we undertook a four-step process:

1. Through a process of snowballing interviews with key informants, we developed the list of camps which fit these criteria;¹
2. We undertook a review of websites and other materials relating to these camps in order to get a sense of the camps, the ways they speak – or don't speak – about one another etc.;
3. We conducted structured interviews with key camp personnel. In some cases this was a day or residential Camp Director, in other cases we spoke with a professional who oversees both camps, and in other cases we spoke with a lay leader;
4. In the fall of 2015, in collaboration with the Foundation for Jewish Camp, we conducted an in-person meaning making conversation with a group of day camp leaders (most of whom did not represent a partnered camp) from the field. There, we presented early data for discussion and to elicit input and insight into the trends we were observing.

Overview of Findings

The origin of the relationship between day and residential camps is diverse. In some cases, such as URJ Harlam's day and residential programs and Ramah Wisconsin's day and residential camps, the day camps were explicitly developed by the residential camp for the purpose of bringing campers into their system of camps at an earlier age. Others, such as

¹ We recognize that the landscape of camps is constantly changing, and we apologize for any camps missed in this overview.

Moshava Ba'ir New Jersey and Toronto, were opened by the national movement (Bnei Akiva), with the goal of advancing the youth movement's educational mission, with the potential pipeline into Bnei Akiva's residential camps as a secondary prospect. Still others, such as Ramah Nyack and Ramah Berkshires were individually established decades ago for their own educational goals and later developed a partnership. Similarly, many JCC-affiliated camps have been running out of the same organization for years, and only recently have begun to collaborate in strategic ways.

There are many markers of success that camps reported from purposely developed relationships. Camps reported that these intentional pipelines have brought day and residential camps together in meaningful ways and, perhaps most importantly, have increased enrolment of campers across camp systems. While the increases are most prevalent when campers, who start at a day camp move through the pipeline to the residential camp, a number of Camp Directors noted that there are campers of all ages, for whom residential camp is simply 'not the right fit' but having a day camp that the parents trust and is partnered with a residential camp has led the camper to experience residential camp and continue-on at day camp, as opposed to not attending Jewish summer camp at all. Perhaps most impressively, there are striking cases where residential camps were not full, a partnership with a day camp began and within a few years, the residential camp saw a substantial increase in numbers. Where the challenge of underutilized capacity had transformed into an opportunity for enrollment, the pipeline was so effective that in some cases, camps instituted waitlists.

While Jewish camp leaders across more than a dozen camps expressed a view that there are significant advantages to both day and residential camps in developing a pipeline between them, we found that in many cases - and as a field - the relationship is being treated ad-hoc, without a coherent vision underlying their efforts or a clear strategy to move campers through the day & residential camp pipeline.

Notwithstanding the lack of overarching strategy, the ad-hoc efforts have developed promising models of collaboration that have already demonstrated benefits to the camps. Below, we categorize these tactics into the early form of best practices that could be replicated and expanded across other camps.

Developing Best Practices

Through dialogue with camp leaders, we identified six strategies to "get the most bang for your buck" in a partnered camp relationship where establishing a pipeline system is the underlying goal. We recognize that there may well be other strategies not listed here, but we propose these principle ideas to be tested:

1. COMMON CULTURE

The partnered camps interviewed report varying degrees of common culture. Some make purposeful efforts to ensure that they use similar language, songs, and nomenclature, while others have not created this form of cultural bridge building. By purposely shaping institutions to share language and culture, and allowing campers at day camps to “talk to” campers at residential camps and vice-versa, camps can shape a spiraled experience – where campers can move comfortably from one experience to another without the disorientation often associated with early camp experiences. Going to residential camp for the first time will always be a bit of a tensional experience, but by embedding aspects of residential camp culture in an affiliated day camp (and vice versa), the gap will be less jarring and will smooth a camper’s transition. Such aspects of the culture can start with something as simple as the language used for activities, job titles, and other camp terminology. For example, if a residential camp refers to arts and crafts as “amanut”, then a day camp using the same terminology can help a camper when they make the transition to the residential camp, making the unknown more known and familiar. Language is an easy and effective way to soften the onboarding experience and lessen the disorientation of a new camp.

Another form of shared culture can be cultivated through music. At one day camp, the song-leader from the partnered residential camp visits every Friday to lead a song session, familiarizing campers with both the songs and the staff member from the residential camp. Similarly, another set of partnered camps have a shared curriculum for torah, music, dance, and tfillah. Creating this type of common culture can not only help camps be purposeful about sticking to their mission and their methods for accomplishing it, but also tie these experiences together in more meaningful and educationally impactful ways, embedding the culture with a clear transition and progression that builds on itself. Having campers “in the system” for longer allows for camp professionals, who also wear an ‘educator hat’, more time to impart the educational vision of the camp system and make an impact on campers.

2. COMMON SUMMER STAFF

For the most part, partnered camps report little competition for staff, with potential employees being drawn to one or the other due to a variety of personal and professional factors, including a desire to be home over the summer, social connections, and desire to work with a different age group. The challenge to many partnered camps is how to think creatively to strategically deploy staff across both the day and the residential camp, to benefit both. Specialty staff, such as arts, sports, or educational staff, can run programming at both day and residential camps, creating a common culture and enabling staff with particular skill sets to contribute at both camps. Rather than having to find two specialists with these skill sets, camps can hire one and effectively utilize them across camps. It can also serve as an effective recruiting mechanism for a residential camp if some of their talented staff spend time at a day camp – even if only for specialty days - showing off the types of activities that are available there as campers move through the pipeline system.

Staff could work at the day camp for part of the summer and at the residential camp for another part of the summer, further developing relationships between the camps themselves, and serving as guides for other staff and day campers transitioning to residential camps.

Recognizing a friendly face when a day camper begins at residential camp can make all the difference in the world for a camper who is settling-in to a new and often daunting, environment. For camps that have capacity discrepancies amongst sessions, staff could be hired to split their summers between the camps. A variety of mutually beneficial relationships can be developed, and have been observed at the partnered camps. For example, outside experts can be brought in for staff training or special events can be shared between residential and day camps. Shlichim from Israel can go between the two camps, offering their expertise and experience to a larger group of campers. A partnered camp's Counsellor-In-Training (CIT) program can afford the opportunity to be at both day and residential camps throughout the course of the summer, enhancing the leadership development perspective, providing networking moments, varying the experiential nature of the program, and maximizing fun for the CIT cohort.

3. CROSS-CAMP PROGRAMMING

Perhaps the single most effective tool in creating a strong partnered camp pipeline articulated by the camps is to actively engage in cross-camp programming, particularly bringing day campers to visit the residential camp. These visits - whether for a day, overnight, weekend, or multiple days - enable exposure of the younger day campers to the residential camp and build positive memories and connections with the camp itself. Such visits offer value-added programming to the day camps, providing opportunities for day camps to take advantage of resources that are not otherwise available to them, particularly in nature and waterfront activities. At the same time, exposure to the particular residential camp will greatly increase the likelihood that day campers will choose *that* residential camp, when the camper is ready to make the move to residential camp. Visiting is the first step in positioning a camper to "graduate" from a day camp to residential camp, as the next step on an aspirational arc of a young person's broader Jewish journey.

A key logistical consideration is ensuring that these visits do not interfere with the regular running of the residential camp. As one camp director put it, having the visit at one time can be an opportunity while another time would simply be an annoyance. It is also necessary to note that such visits can only work when the camps are located in close proximity to make visits feasible, which is not the case in all partnerships. Such cross-camp visits can also work in reverse; one residential camp brings their older campers to the nearby day camp to work with the younger campers, offering further chances for leadership development. The more that camps take advantage of cross-camp programming to utilize the strengths of each partner, the greater the benefit the partnership can bring.

4. SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

While largely 'backstage' stuff, the systems and structures that operate camps are critical to their success. In some of the camps we studied, the day and residential programs maintain two separate systems – separate year-round staff, separate databases, separate marketing etc. In others, usually those with a more efficient pipeline, these systems and structures are integrated

and operate as one succinct system. In listening to camps, we learned of three categories of that can help develop a stronger pipeline: professional leadership, lay leadership, and back-office systems.

Strong professional structures can mitigate organizational confusion and articulate a clear and holistic strategy. Some of the most effective structures of the camps we interviewed have a CEO or Executive Director who is responsible for both the residential and day camps, and at the organizational structure level below is an appointed Camp Director for each camp. This ED plays a vital role in maintaining institutional priorities and mitigating potential conflicts between what might be best for the day camp or the residential camp in service of the broader goals of the partnership. Individual camps, while well-meaning in their co-operation with another camp, still must look out for themselves, and sometimes this can be to the detriment of the partnership. An ED with oversight over both can set strategic directions and make decisions that maximize benefit to campers, staff and the camps themselves, as a larger group.

In some of the camps studied, separate lay structures exist between the day and residential camps. Several camps reported that this has led to struggles between the partners as they competed for campers, fundraising dollars, etc. In other camps, a joint lay structure holds responsibility for both the day and residential camp, and mirrors the upper levels of the professional structure. While this board may include separate operating committees for the day and residential programs, developing the overarching structure seems to waylay some of the potential conflict and, like a shared professional structure, catalyzes a holistic approach to camper recruitment and development.

Back office systems, including bookkeeping, human resources, finances, scholarships, ordering supplies, and other administrative tasks, can be handled jointly for day and residential camps resulting in cost savings and greater coordination. This is especially prevalent in JCC camps, where these sorts of back office structures exist for the JCC as a whole, and can be utilized by both affiliated day and residential camps. For example, partnered camps with a shared bookkeeper reported cost savings and greater coordination. One note of caution brought up by a number of directors who do utilize such shared back office systems and administrative support is that camps must be purposeful in thinking of how these costs are split between the two camps for budgetary purposes; which salaries or technological costs get attributed to which camp's budget can become a tricky calculus and must be done in a strategic manner.

Even some of the camps that work extremely closely together don't have common technology, which makes effective communication difficult. One camp pointed out a seemingly small discrepancy - the day camp that classifies campers by the grade completed and the residential camp that classifies campers by the entering grade - meant that the data systems became mismatched between camps and could not be effectively utilized together. Effectively utilizing technologies like CampMinder, CampBrain, CampDoc and other similar systems that can work across day and residential camps go a long way to building an effective partnership. For example, when a family wants to register their child for both a day and residential camp, or

extend from one camp to another during the summer, shared technology can make this a simple process. By sharing computer systems, registration, key personnel, and even office space, camps can better utilize the capacity of shared resources for mutual benefit.

5. MARKET AND RECRUIT TOGETHER

Camps reported that both day and residential programs can benefit from cross-marketing in all areas, especially at events and open houses, exposing potential new camp families to both a residential and day camp through the intentional offering of a pipeline and extended camper care. One camp holds a “Family Fun Day” for day camp families at the residential camp facility in August, enabling a fun event for the day camp and exposure to the facility for the residential camp. Another partnered camp noted that by booking one table (between the two camps) at a local camp fair, can save hundreds of dollars.

Some camps have developed common branding and marketing materials including similar logos and websites, while others work together but in an ad hoc way that does not appear coordinated to consumers. In surveying the websites of partnered camps, there are cases in which the day and residential camp relationship is obvious, with a homepage that directs to both the day camp and the residential camp. There are other cases where each camp maintains its own website, completely separate from the other. One director noted that when he began overseeing both a day and residential camp, the two camps were housed on one outdated website. The day camp wanted to create a new website, but he had them wait so that the two websites could be revamped and created in parallel with each other.

Several partnered camps articulated particular benefit to marketing the residential camp in the catchment area of day camp - if the day camp can be the point of outreach responsible for local campers, staff of the residential camp can focus recruitment efforts in regions outside of where the day camp is situated. Costs of marketing opportunities can be shared, contact lists can be shared, and similar strategies undertaken to broaden the recruiting reach of both day and residential camps. Recruitment strategies are at their strongest with a shared mindset wherein day and residential camps don't see feel a sense of competitiveness with each other, but rather see themselves as mutually reinforcing partners working towards a common goal. The more effective partnerships are those where the day and residential camp professionals truly feel that they are working together to grow the system. As one day camp director put it, “I don't want to lose campers. But I'm happy to lose campers to Jewish residential camp.” Working together, partnered camps can more effectively market and recruit, engaging even more children in Jewish camp experiences.

6. PRICING STRATEGIES

Camps utilize a variety of pricing methods to encourage cross-camp experiences. Some camps offer discounts if a camper signs up for sessions at both the day and residential camp in the same summer; others offer the discount only in a specific order (either if a camper comes first to day camp and then residential camp, or vice-versa, depending on the available capacity

at the particular camp). Such discounts can be used to build brand loyalty and to increase registration during low-registration sessions. There are other less obvious ways that camps facilitate shared experiences - some camps will eliminate cancellation fees if a camper extends at the sister camp. Other camps extend sibling discounts to families that have children in both partnered camps. Through interviews, it was clear that creativity in pricing offers another tool to use in promoting and encouraging more affordable and engaging experiences at Jewish camps, of all sorts.

Importance and Next Steps

Day camps serve a vital purpose in the field of Jewish camping, and are also the first entry point into Jewish life for many children and young families. While this study focused on the development of a pipeline system of campers between day and residential camp, it must be clear that day camping as an educational endeavor unto itself, is an important avenue for Jewish identity development. Since day camps are typically open to campers at a younger age than residential camps (often from as early as 18 months of age). Jewish families find themselves challenged with the choice of whether to send their children to Jewish day camp or non-Jewish day camp before this same choice arises in the residential camp context. The day camp choice thus serves as a crucial pivot point where families make crucial decisions with long-term ramifications. With a greater desire to closely link day camps and residential camps and inherently focusing on the key moments of choice, establishing pipelines can have enormous and mutually beneficial affects.

Much learning remains to be done in this area, with particular interest in learning from the activities of camps outside of the non-profit Jewish camping sphere, many of whom seem to have highly developed partnered camp systems which the Jewish world can learn from. Keeping in mind that each camp operates in a unique space, with unique relationships and market forces, one-size-fits-all solutions are not necessarily applicable. However, by investing more thought, more effort, and by learning from some exemplars of best practices, the pipelines between day and residential camps can be strengthened and result in stronger camps, a more coherent system, and many happier campers.

CASE STUDY #1: Day Camp runs weeklong session at Overnight Camp

Camp W, an overnight camp, and Camp X, the day camp in Everytown are both part of the local JCC, although the director of Camp W is supervised by the Executive Director and the director of the day camp is supervised by the second in command. Camp W has about a \$3 million budget, almost 1/3 of the overall JCC budget and is a big money-maker, while the day camp's budget is about \$800,000. They offer discounts if kid spends part of the summer with the day camp and then come to overnight camp. This summer, W is becoming the overnight camp experience for the day camp- a one week program, with highly discounted rates. They have a stated goal of 20% of kids coming from the day camp signing up for Camp W the next summer. Organizationally, the two camps operate completely separately, even though they actually operate on the same property, 30 minutes from Cleveland, but on separate ends of the property

Right now, of the 700 kids a summer at Camp W and 900 kids a summer at their community day camp, only 130 utilize both programs, which the director called "a ridiculously horrible crossover rate". In light of this, this summer, Camp W is piloting becoming an overnight camp experience for not just their local day camp, but day camps in 6 other cities, 4 in the state, and 2 in other states. Instead of offering their own one week mini-sessions, which historically have been about 50% full, Camp W is letting the day camp sell one week sessions. The day camp markets, recruits, and registers campers, and can charge whatever they want (right now their local community JCC day camp is offering the session for \$400), and the overnight camp charges the day camp only \$50/day per camper. The overnight camp runs the entire program, though the day camp brings up staff – largely because those staff know the campers the best. The overnight camp staff are typical cabin counselors for the day campers, but it's important that they send some staff who know them well- and can be a touch point back in their local community. The day camp markets and sells the program however they want, though the overnight camp provides marketing material for them to use if they want.

Quotes to Consider: "We'll go big or go home- If it goes well, it's the best partnership ever, and other camps will have to redo their model"

Questions to Consider: How could your camp "go big or go home"? What's the most radical idea you dream of?

Quotes to Consider: "When I came into camping world 15 years ago, the thought process was every day camp should be feeder into overnight camp. But now, we've approached it differently. Instead of it being a feeder, we look at it as a partnership- how we can benefit each other"

Questions to Consider: How can your day camp benefit an overnight camp partner? How can they benefit you?

CASE STUDY #2: Split-Week Sessions - Day Camp, Overnight, back to day camp

The relationship between Camp T and the local JCC day camp started about 10 years ago. Under their current model, the day camp facilitates the sign up for a group of kids to come up to visit Camp T for one or more nights, making their day camp program more special by incorporating this “field trip”. Every Thursday, a group of kids arrives at lunch, and leaves after lunch on Friday, with a schedule that lets them participate in “all the coolest activities” at camp. During first session only, they offer an experience where campers go to day camp on Monday, come up to overnight camp for Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights, and then finish Friday at the day camp. Each of the four weeks offered has a theme- outdoor wilderness adventure, aquatics and boating, cultural and performing arts, etc, keeping in line with the way the day camp works, offering a collection of one-week specialty camps

There is a discount offered for campers who go to overnight camp for the first month and day camp the second month- because first month is the time the overnight camp is looking to fill more beds. They offer similar staff training for both camps, have shlichim from one camp visit the other, a Jewish educator who works at both, musicians will come to both camps. Camp T didn't set a number goal; they decided to try this program out, and see what they could learn. One thing that has evolved is the idea that perhaps Camp T will start allowing kids one year younger to come, if the market drives them to create a younger beginning age.

Quotes to Consider: “Both our camps are affiliated with the JCC, but many years ago the day camp was just seen as a mailing list for the overnight camp- there was no overlap in any other ways”

Questions to Consider: How do overnight camps see your day camp right now- as a mailing list, or something more?

Quotes to Consider: “One is not more successful than the other- you'd think the more time at Camp Barney, the more kids would come back the next summer- but that's not the case”

Questions to Consider: If your day camp does or would like to visit an overnight camp, what's the right amount of time to spend there?

Quotes to Consider: “The appeal of coming to Camp Barney turned out to be a feature of the day camp; any field trip is a good field trip”

Questions to Consider: Is this true for your day camp? Would any field trip be a good field trip?

Quotes to Consider: “We're not doing this during the July session- then, it would be an annoyance. In June session, it's an opportunity”

Questions to Consider: When could a relationship with an overnight camp be an opportunity, and when would it be an annoyance?

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