



Jewish Summers. Jewish Future.

THE FJC PLAYBOOK: ENHANCING JEWISH IMPACT AT YOUR DAY CAMP

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of *The FJC Playbook: Enhancing Jewish Impact at Your Day Camp* was led by the camp professionals who were part of the Foundation for Jewish Camp's Jewish Coaching Project, funded by UJA-Federation of New York.

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- JCC of Manhattan: Nessa Geffen and Genna Singer
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INTRODUCTION

Jewish day camps offer children and their families many opportunities to connect with Jewish tradition, peers, and role models in ways that differ from more formal institutions, such as schools and synagogues. While the openings are there, many Jewish day camps struggle with the implementation of effective, transformative Jewish experiences for their campers, families, and staff.

The Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) created this workbook to help day camp leaders (and their teams) generate observations and questions about Jewish programming and the Jewish impact of day camp. By completing the questions in this guide, day camp leaders will be able to take the first steps toward developing a strategic plan to create an excellent Jewish experience at their camps for campers, families, and staff.

Elevating Jewish impact at day camp is not an easy process. It requires time, energy, and buy-in from all stakeholders to make effective changes. If you need assistance as you are developing the next steps in your Jewish day camp journey, please reach out to FJC at any time at 646-278-4500.

PART 1: BENCHMARKS FOR AN EXCELLENT JEWISH EXPERIENCE

Gathering Data

In the following pages, you will use simple worksheets to help you understand the Jewish impact of your camp on campers, families, and staff. It will be necessary to gather data from a range of people (e.g., camp leaders, unit heads, counselors, specialists, families, campers, etc.) so that you have enough information to answer the questions completely. The more diverse your sources, the greater the chance that your data will be reliable. Reliable data helps camp leaders evaluate their options more effectively and improves their decision-making. Methods for gathering data may be formal or informal. Three basic methods are:

1. Surveys
2. Interviews
3. Focus Groups

Survey: a survey is a printed or online instrument that asks respondents to complete a series of close-ended (multiple choice) and open-ended (written response) questions related to a theme or a program. The process includes zeroing in on the important focus of the survey, brainstorming questions and response options, formatting the survey, and disseminating the survey. When respondents return their surveys, it is necessary to review and tabulate the close-ended responses and to read the written responses carefully so that you can find themes across respondents. Once you have analyzed the data, you are ready to apply the data to the worksheets. Adults and students 12-years-old and older are capable of completing a basic survey. Remember that you must receive permission from a parent/guardian to gather data from a minor (anyone younger than 18 years of age). Responses can be kept confidential or names can be used – make sure to let the survey respondents know upfront which is the case. It is more likely respondents will complete a survey if you assure them that their responses are anonymous.

Interview: an interview – by phone or face-to-face either online or in-person – is an immediate way to gather information through a structured or semi-structured conversation. A structured conversation means that you have created a set list of questions for the interviewee to answer. A semi-structured interview means you have created a set of questions or guidelines, but allow for a more free-flowing discussion. Informal interviews most closely resemble a casual conversation guided by questions about the idea or program you are researching. Interviews are useful for the ability to ask and answer questions in real time, to ask for clarification, and to ask follow-up questions. They can last anywhere from 10 minutes to 60 minutes. Longer interviews are not advisable as the interviewee may experience fatigue. The interviewer should take careful notes and record the interviewee's answers to the questions as close to verbatim as possible. The interviewer then reviews the notes and searches for themes, patterns, unusual ideas, etc.

Once you have analyzed the data, you are ready to apply the data to the worksheets. Adults and students of all ages (depending on the complexity of the interview questions and the length of the interview) are capable of completing an interview. Remember that you must receive permission from a parent/guardian to gather data from a minor (anyone younger than 18 years of age). Responses can be kept confidential or names can be used – make sure to let the interviewees know upfront which is the case, or ask their permission at the start of the interview. It is more likely respondents will answer freely if you assure them that their responses are anonymous. Note that if you are seeking interview responses from important leaders or constituents, you may want to be able to use their names to add weight to your findings.

Focus Group: a focus group is a terrific way to gather data from a small group (4 to 8 people) in conversation with one another for no longer than 60 minutes. There are two important jobs necessary to run a focus group well: the facilitator and the recorder. A focus group facilitator takes the questions the focus group organizer created and uses them to initiate a conversation among the group. One important benefit to a focus group is that as the conversation gets going, participants play off one another's ideas. This can lead the conversation in unexpected and useful directions. On the other hand, without a skilled facilitator, the conversation can drift into unhelpful territory. The facilitator must balance his/her need for information with the group's needs to explore the topic at hand. The recorder takes notes on the conversation as close to verbatim as possible, noting when different people are saying different things. Focus group organizers can identify participants by name (if participants consent in advance) or by number (to remain anonymous) so that the recorder can track the conversation easily. The recorder and facilitator should never be the same person. Once you have analyzed the data, you are ready to apply the data to the worksheets. Adults and students of high school age or older are capable of participating in a focus group. Remember that you must receive permission from a parent/guardian to gather data from a minor (anyone younger than 18 years of age).

The timing of your data gathering depends upon the day camp's schedule, timetable for planning, and available resources. Do not rush the initial stage of understanding your goals and developing your questions. Evaluators have a saying: "Garbage in, garbage out." Make sure you craft the best questions possible so that you get good data in and good reporting out. Surveys can be fielded quickly, but require at least a week in the field. A large survey with many questions shared with a wide group of potential respondents will need a longer time and plenty of follow-up. Schedule interviews at least a week in advance and send reminders to confirm the date, time, and proper phone number. Focus groups take the longest to arrange due to the disparate schedules of participants. Allow for plenty of time for identifying and securing the right mix of people and experiment with a group calendar application like Doodle to facilitate scheduling.

Eight Essential Elements

In this section, the guide presents eight essential elements that FJC has identified as the overarching categories for achieving Jewish excellence at your day camp.

1. Clarity of Mission
2. Senior Professional Leadership
3. Lay Leadership
4. Staffing
5. Mission-aligned Programming
6. Physical Plant
7. Ongoing Engagement
8. Systems and Operations

Clarity of Mission

A clearly defined Jewish mission statement acts as a framework for every aspect of camp life.

Please answer the questions below as they relate to the mission statement of the camp.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
There is a clearly defined Jewish mission statement for the camp.			
The camp brand is based on its mission.			
The camp's vision is implicitly felt and noticed, even when not referenced explicitly.			
At every level, camp stakeholders can articulate the vision in age-appropriate ways.			
Marketing, both online and traditional, reflects the mission statement.			
Camp has mapped out a journey for campers, families, and staff to ensure that the mission is being met.			
The camp regularly reflects on its mission when refining and enhancing its Jewish story.			

Senior Professional Leadership

The senior professional leadership promotes a cohesive, intentional, and nurturing Jewish community of campers, staff, alumni, parents, lay leaders, and community stakeholders.

Please answer the questions below as they relate to the senior professional leadership of the camp. The senior leadership team...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
Exemplifies and commits to the camp's Jewish values and culture year-round.			
Attends to the physical, psychological, developmental, and cultural needs of every member of the community.			
Has a vision for Jewish life at camp.			
Can understand and explain Jewish values of camp through multiple Jewish lenses.			
Demonstrates comfort and confidence when sharing their personal narratives at camp.			
Can identify and communicate what Jewish life at camp means.			
Is adaptable and reflective, consistently raising the bar in all aspects of the Jewish experience.			

Lay Leadership

The lay leadership helps to promote and advocate for the Jewish mission of camp to all of camp's community stakeholders. Like their professional counterparts, lay leaders are committed to and model Jewish life aligned with the camp's values and culture year round and model lifelong Jewish growth and learning.

Please answer the questions below as they relate to the lay leadership of the camp. The lay leadership...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
Regularly engages as a group in learning and the exploration of questions related to camp's Jewish mission.			
Participates in Jewish events during camp and within the year-round camp community			
Ensures that the appropriate resources are secured and allocated.			
Ensures that the policies are in place for senior professionals to realize camp's Jewish mission.			
Can identify what Jewish community means at the camp.			
Has established a pipeline for lay leaders to become camp advocates.			

Staffing

The staff play a critical part as role models for the campers. Significant time and resources should be invested in the support, ongoing development, and fine-tuning of the staff experience. These engagement opportunities help to foster a more cohesive staff team and inspire future involvement with camp and Jewish life beyond the summer months.

Please answer the questions below as they relate to the non-leadership staff at the camp.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
Staff is evaluated in light of well-defined expectations and camp's Jewish values.			
Camp supports its staff in the creation and implementation of educational programs.			
There is an arc created for the staff experience that evolves as the staff person returns each summer.			
Staff support the mission and exemplify the Jewish values of camp.			
Staff reflect the diversity of Jewish life in the camp community.			

Mission-Aligned Programming

Programming should strive to be congruent with year-long and lifelong engagement with the camp community and the larger Jewish community.

Please answer the questions below as they relate to the programming at your camp.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
Programming aligns with the camp's overall Jewish mission.			
Jewish and educational programming is safe, developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and accessible.			
Jewish and educational programming has an aspirational arc that provides a course for campers to travel and grow in their educational experiences summer to summer.			
The desired outcomes for Jewish programming are explicitly articulated and have been achieved.			
The steps necessary for successful Jewish program implementation are clear and realistic.			
The staff are trained, supported, and confident in their ability to facilitate Jewish programs successfully.			
Staff are active agents in facilitating Jewish content in formal/informal moments.			
Staff have a genuine sense of ownership of the programs they are running.			

Physical Plant

The camp space needs to facilitate and communicate camp's mission, values and program intentionally.

Please answer the questions below as they relate to the physical plant at your camp.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
The overall facility is welcoming and inviting for all campers, families, and staff			
Camp sets aside spaces for the campers and staff to put their stamp on the environment, making it feel like their own.			
Signage, messaging, and images intentionally communicate camp's mission, values, and programs.			
There are intentional spaces dedicated to mission-aligned programs (e.g., a dedicated space for Shabbat or learning).			

Ongoing Engagement

For excellent Jewish camps, the end of the summer is anything but the end of yearly programming. Ongoing engagement helps bolster retention staff and campers. It also makes sure that the messages imparted at camp continue to hold long-term meaning.

Please answer the questions below as they relate to the ongoing engagement with campers, families and staff.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
There are opportunities aimed at current campers and staff members, their families, and alumni that support the Jewish mission of the camp throughout the year.			
There are opportunities aimed at camp families during the summer outside of the camp day.			
There is an online resource to connect with staff throughout the year.			
There are many opportunities to expand programming and partner with other Jewish organizations.			

Systems and Operations

Systems are critical to ensure reflection, institutional memory, and a high level of performance. With the right systems in place, the camp will ensure that everyone will get the most out of the arc of experiences over their lifetime at camp and “graduate” camp exemplifying the camp’s values and culture.

Please answer the questions below as they relate to the systems and operations as they relate to the camp.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
Meaningful professional, lay, and organizational systems are implemented to support the Jewish mission, structure, communication, supervision, year round work schedule, development, and stakeholder relations.			
Regular systems of evaluation and reflection are present for all areas of the camp, including Jewish programming.			
There are systems in place that are used to help tell the camp’s Jewish story.			

PART 2: EVALUATING YOUR CAMP'S SWOTS (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS)

SWOT Analysis

Now that you completed the first part of the analysis with your team, it is important to complete a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis of the Jewish programming and impact at your camp. The SWOT Analysis will help you to take best advantage of your abilities and opportunities.

Use a separate page of flipchart paper for each of the four categories (SWOT) for this step to allow for as much brainstorming as possible.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your camp's strengths in terms of its Jewish mission and programming? • What do you do better than other Jewish camps? • What unique capabilities and resources do you possess? • What do your campers/families/staff perceive as your strengths? 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do your campers/families/staff perceive as an area that you need to improve on? • What can you improve given the current situation of your camp? • What are some best practices for Jewish programming that you do not do currently?
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some external factors that may contribute to your Jewish impact at camp? • What are the latest trends or programs that you heard about in the field of Jewish education? • What opportunities/relationships are available to you? 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What trends may have a negative impact on your camp? • Do you have solid financial support to help you achieve your Jewish mission? • What impact do your weaknesses have on the threats to you?

SWOT Analysis Continued

You now have four lists created in the SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The next step is to identify your top four priorities for action in each area. You and your team will use colored stickers to identify and rank these priorities. Here are the steps to follow:

- Before this exercise, obtain four different colors of stickers (e.g., red, blue, yellow, green)
- Assign a value to each color (e.g., red = highest priority, green = lowest priority). Post a chart of the colors and their corresponding levels of priority clearly for the team to see.
- Give each team members four dots of each color (one for each quadrant of the SWOT)
- Ask your team members to rank their priorities by placing a colored sticker next to their four top priorities in each of the four categories (SWOT). Refer to the chart to ensure the correct use of the colored stickers.

Once your team completes this step, take the flipchart and tally up the colored dots in each category to determine the top priorities for your camp. Type this up and distribute it to your team.

The next step is to begin the process of turning the results into actionable steps for yourself and your team. Once you distribute the lists, use the following questions to facilitate the discussion:

- How can we maximize the use of our strengths?
- How can we overcome the threats that we have identified?
- What do we will to do to surmount the identified weaknesses?
- How can we take advantage of our opportunities?

Next Steps

FJC's experience running the Jewish Coaching Project has yielded a model for success in working with day camps to improve the Jewish experience at camp. Engaging in searching self-evaluation exercises, such as the ones this workbook provides, is a crucial first step.

As part of the Jewish Coaching Project, staff from the participating camps attended cohort workshops, where they were able to learn from professionals in the field and from their peers. Additionally, each camp worked with an assigned coach to work toward its specific goals. These coaches are leaders in the field of Jewish education.

In Part 3 of this guidebook, the coaches outline some of the effective methods they have used to guide the camps with which they have worked. They also provide brief vignettes of the camps they have engaged in this educational intervention.

PART 3: MODELS OF SUCCESS

Jewish Coaching Project: A Coach's Responsibilities

In order to deepen the Jewish learning at camp, and in response to requests from the field, FJC is developing an educational consulting methodology for camps that will help camps to define, refine, and articulate their Jewish missions and to implement programs of excellence to fulfill these missions.

This process is co-created by experts in both practice and theory, key change agents in the field of Jewish camp, and leading minds in Jewish educational best practices and research. This methodology is realistic and implementable at camp. It also contributes significantly to the broader field of experiential Jewish education.

Together with FJC staff, coaches:

- Develop a shared language of excellence and execution of experiential Jewish education at camp.
- Develop a shared language of assessment to measure outcomes for campers and staff.
- Concretize a methodology of change for and within the field.
- Develop a repository of best practices, models, and educational resources that can be disseminated and utilized broadly at diverse camps.
- Assist with the development and implementation of cohort training sessions.
- Assist in the development of a manual/workbook that can be distributed to help Jewish day camps across the country implement effective Jewish education programs.

Coaches work with Jewish day camps to encourage forward movement as appropriate such that:

- Camps will clarify their vision, which goes beyond being a program service provider to establishing a mindset of Jewish community building at camp.
- Consonant with the camp's mission and with guidance from the Jewish Coaches, camp programs will be enriched so that campers and staff will demonstrate meaningful behaviors that express their Jewish identity now and in the future.
- Camps will establish systems to assess and reflect on how they are actualizing their mission. This, in turn, will ensure that the change accomplished is institutionalized, sustainable, and part of their culture.
- Day camps will develop a vision for year-round camper and family engagement to cultivate a sense of belonging.

About FJC

The key to the Jewish future is Jewish camp. FJC knows from research—and nearly two decades' experience—that this is where young people find Jewish role models and create enduring Jewish friendships. It is where they forge a vital, lifelong connection to their essential Jewishness.

Suddenly, all those Shabbat song sessions and campfire stories take on new importance—and urgency. So FJC is devoted to helping Jewish camps and summer programs thrive. We gather data, build new programs, provide operational support, and help recruit campers. We have elevated camp management into a true profession. In addition, we work to elevate Jewish camp on the cultural and philanthropic agenda.

In short, our mission is to help Jewish camps achieve their mission: to create transformative experiences—and the Jewish future. Please feel free to reach out to us at the Foundation for Jewish Camp for assistance in the Jewish journey of your day camp. We know that Jewish day camps have the ability to expand the impact on the Jewish future.

If you are interested in coaching for Jewish camping, please contact Jenni Zeffel, Director, Day Camp and Strategic Programs, at Jenni@jewishcamp.org or Kate O'Brien, Director of Jewish Education, at Kate@jewishcamp.org.

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