

Prepared for: **Foundation for Jewish Camp**



Teaching Israel at Camp (TIAC): An Evaluation of Impact, Summer 2025

November 2025

Background

Teaching Israel at Camp (TIAC) was an ambitious program implemented at 52 Jewish overnight and 18 Jewish day camps across North America by Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC). Designed to increase the number and quality of Israel education experiences at camp, over 34,300 campers and 6,000 staff directly benefited from TIAC in summer 2025.

The goal of the TIAC program was for campers and staff to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Israel and strengthen their connection to the country and its people. To that end, participation in the program required camps to hire a Head of Israel Education (HIE) well in advance of the summer. To support these HIEs in their roles at camp, FJC provided them with three resources: individualized sessions with professional coaches, online training sessions featuring Israel education experts who presented on topics relevant to Israel education initiatives at summer camps, and an online database of Israel education resources suitable for camp.

FJC hired Rosov Consulting to evaluate three aspects of the TIAC grant:

1. How HIEs felt the provided professional development, coaching, and resources contributed to their ability to strengthen Israel educational experiences at camp this summer.
2. Whether campers and staff who benefited from the TIAC grant showed higher rates of satisfaction with Israel education and better outcomes on Israel-related metrics than their peers in camps that did not receive the TIAC grant (based on end-of-summer staff and family surveys).
3. Whether camp leadership and HIEs observed a qualitative or quantitative difference in Israel education initiatives this year in comparison to previous summers.

Key Findings

1. **Personalized coaching improved Israel education.** The professional development services provided by FJC to the HIEs were of considerable value in helping the HIEs prepare for the summer and implement meaningful programs for campers and staff. In particular, the personalized nature of the sessions facilitated by professional coaches supported the HIEs' development.
2. **TIAC grantee camps received higher Israel engagement ratings from both staff and parents.** Parents whose children attended TIAC camps consistently scored their children's Israel experiences more highly than parents whose children attended camps that did not participate in TIAC. Parents of children that attended TIAC camps were more likely to report that camp strengthened their child's connection to Israel and their familiarity with Israeli culture.
3. **Directors and educators reported stronger Israel education due to the grant.** Staff at TIAC camps were more likely than staff at non-TIAC camps to say that campers were provided with meaningful Israel experiences and had opportunities to increase their knowledge and understanding of Israel and to engage with Hebrew language initiatives. They were also more likely than staff at non-TIAC camps to say that they left camp having deepened their own knowledge of Israel and having maintained or strengthened their connection with Israel and Israelis.
4. **Directors and HIEs reported that Israel education was enhanced in comparison to previous summers.** Both camp directors and HIEs reported that Israel education in 2025 was qualitatively and quantitatively different than previous summers' Israel education, with a majority from both groups saying that meaningful and positive changes occurred in a significant way.

Methodology

To measure the perceived value of the professional development that was offered by FJC, pre- and post-summer surveys were completed by the HIEs. All HIEs completed the survey.¹ The data on satisfaction and outcomes are drawn from FJC's end-of-summer staff and family surveys (Table 1). The data was segmented to compare TIAC camps to non-TIAC camps and day camps to overnight camps. Comparisons between summer 2025 and previous summers are drawn from questions that were included in the end-of-summer HIE survey and also from the grant report survey that camp directors were required to submit at the end of the summer.

Figure 1: Number of responses submitted to FJC's end-of-summer staff and family surveys

Overnight staff responses



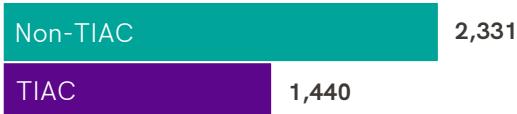
Day camp staff responses



Overnight parent responses



Day camp parent responses



¹ Ahead of the summer, 71 HIEs completed the survey (one of the TIAC camps had two HIEs in place); at the end of the summer, 69 HIEs completed the survey (one camp's HIE quit in the middle of the summer and the camp that initially had two respondents had only one respondent at the end of the summer).

Professional Development

As noted above, ahead of the summer, HIEs were provided with three types of professional development. The primary method was individualized coaching sessions with professional coaches who were hired to help the HIEs perform their role. Second, was a series of online training sessions led by scholars and experts who shared suggestions and strategies for bringing Israel to camp in new and creative ways. Third, was a curated database of Israel education resources that the HIEs could use at their camps during the summer.

FJC provided each HIE with at least four hours of individual coaching designed to help the HIE prepare for summer 2025. At least one coaching session needed to include the camp director or HIE supervisor. Coaches were assigned either to HIEs working at day camps or overnight camps in order to provide more focused professional development. The coaches supported the HIEs in shaping their summer program and developing the necessary resources. They guided the HIEs in articulating their camp's vision or philosophy for Israel education and in determining practical ways to bring that vision to life. Coaches also collaborated with the HIEs on strategies for working effectively with both Israeli and North American staff.

The pre-summer HIE survey responses demonstrate that the HIEs found the time spent with coaches to be very valuable in helping them prepare for the summer (Figure 2). Across four of the seven measures, 90% or more of HIEs rated the coaching sessions "good" or "excellent," and the remaining three measures were all rated "good" or "excellent" by 80% of the HIEs. There were only minor differences between HIEs in day and overnight camps and between HIEs with varying degrees of experience at camp (Figure 3). Across both types of camps and among staff by years of experience, the area that received the lowest score was "developing a thoughtful approach to the role of *shlichim*, Israeli staff, and Israeli campers at camp."

Figure 2: HIEs' assessment of pre-summer coaching sessions (n=71)



Figure 3: HIEs' assessment of pre-summer coaching sessions, by camp type and years of experience (% Good or Excellent)

	Day camp (n=18)	Overnight camp (n=53)	First year at camp (n=19)	Second year at camp (n=10)	Third year at camp (n=13)	Fourth (or more) year at camp (n=29)
Accessing Israel education resources	89%	94%	84%	90%	100%	97%
Clarifying my goals for the summer	94%	100%	95%	100%	100%	100%
Developing a thoughtful approach to the role of <i>shlichim</i>, Israeli staff, and Israeli campers at camp	78%	83%	68%	90%	67%	93%
Engaging campers in meaningful conversations about Israel	83%	89%	90%	90%	67%	93%
Engaging staff in meaningful conversations about Israel	78%	96%	79%	90%	92%	100%
Planning programs	95%	89%	84%	100%	85%	93%
Sharing the Israel education goals among camp staff	72%	93%	79%	80%	85%	97%

The HIEs' open-ended responses at the end of the summer also show that the coaches helped the HIEs in several ways, including in clarifying goals for the summer, planning programs and experiences, navigating Israeli and North American staffing dynamics, and understanding what it means to be a head of Israel education. As two HIEs wrote:

[My coach] helped me better understand the role and what I want to focus on in my work, as well as how to integrate the camp's vision and its relationship to Israel.

My mentor really helped me with resources and how to include more topics in a creative way for staff and campers.

For some HIEs, the coaching sessions were also a safe space where they could voice their concerns and have the ear of someone whose job was to help them succeed. One HIE shared the following:

Going into the summer—I had a lot of anxiety and lack of clarity around how my personal opinions on Israel and my political beliefs [that] differ from many in the camp community would impact my summer at camp. This is something we were able to talk through, and I gained confidence that this would not be an issue, and it wasn't.

Others shared that their coach helped inspire and motivate them to embrace their role as HIE:

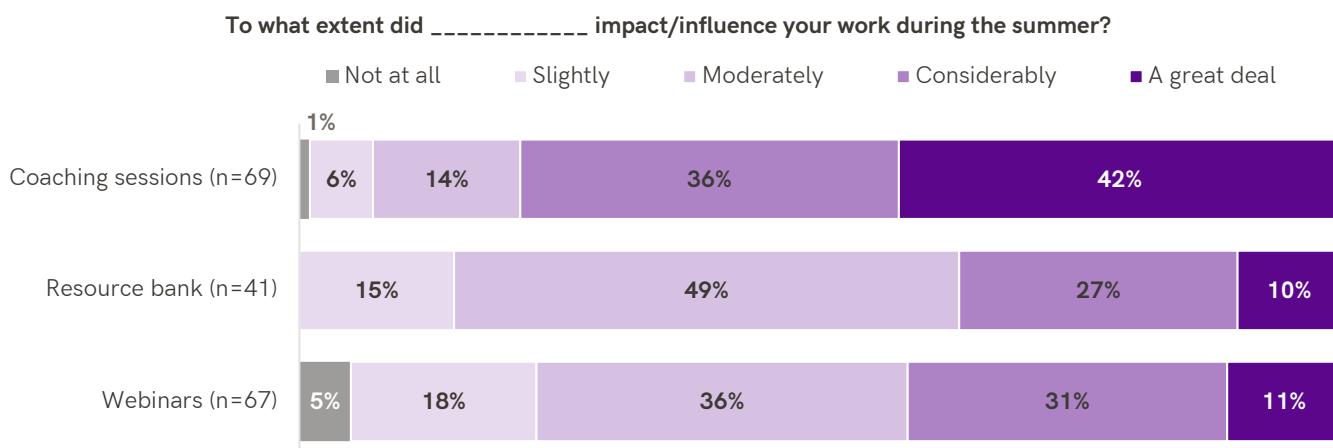
My coach just introduced confidence and hope into what I was bringing and gave me helpful frameworks.

In addition to the coaching, HIEs were expected to attend or watch a recording of at least three out of the nine online training sessions. The average number of online training sessions viewed was 3.8, and some HIEs attended all nine. Four online training sessions received very positive feedback from the HIEs: “Talking with Campers about Israel” with Sivan Zakai, “Bringing Hebrew to Life at Camp” with Hebrew at the Center, “Immersive Israel Experiences” with The iCenter, and “Writing Good Israel Programs” with Jill Stepak. By the end of the summer, it was apparent that the pre-summer online training sessions had a lasting impact on the HIEs’ work. Two-thirds of the 67 HIEs who indicated that they had watched or attended at least three online training sessions reported that the sessions influenced them “moderately” (36%) or “considerably” (31%).

FJC also provided HIEs with a resource bank of Israel education resources. By the end of the summer, 41 (59%) of the 69 HIEs reported that they made use of the database, with many finding it to be useful. The most common answers selected by HIEs were “moderately” (49%) and “considerably” (27%).

While the HIEs found that the online training sessions and resource bank were of value, the coaching sessions had the greatest value to the HIEs and the greatest impact on their work during the summer. Nearly 80% of HIEs reported that the pre-summer coaching sessions significantly affected their work.

Figure 4: End-of-summer responses by HIEs about the impact and influence of types of professional development on their work



According to one HIE, the value of the coaching sessions had to do with the way they were designed to respond to their specific needs. They wrote:

The conversations I had with my coach were greatly appreciated, and she helped me with ideas to facilitate the session I had with Israeli staff and the rest of the American and international staff.

While the personal coaching sessions were more resource intensive, they were also the most valuable and impactful educational method.

TIAC's Impact

Both the staff and family surveys asked questions related to satisfaction with Israel education initiatives and experiences, as well as questions about attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

Staff Survey Results

The survey sent to camp staff at the end of the summer included questions about how Israel, Israelis, and Israel education were encountered at camp. Questions were asked about how staff benefited from Israel initiatives and what they observed about campers' experiences. The questions covered the content of Israel initiatives, the new skills they gained because of the initiatives, interactions with Israelis, and connections and relationships with Israel. In addition, select questions were only shown to some staff based on their involvement in Israel-related initiatives.

Overnight Camp Staff

At overnight camps, TIAC staff consistently rated the quality of Israel initiatives higher than staff at non-TIAC camps. Regarding camper experiences at overnight camps, TIAC camp staff were more likely to report that Israel initiatives increased campers' knowledge and understanding of Israel and that campers were provided with meaningful Israel experiences. They were also more likely to report that campers were provided with opportunities to encounter Hebrew (Figure 5a).

TIAC staff were also more likely to report personal gains from Israel initiatives than staff who worked at non-TIAC camps. They reported leaving camp having maintained or strengthened their ability to have a nuanced conversation about Israel and having deepened their knowledge and understanding of Israel at higher rates than staff at non-TIAC camps (Figure 5b). TIAC staff also returned home feeling more prepared to confidently talk about Israel with others. They felt more strongly that they maintained or strengthened their connection to Israel and to the Israelis whom they met at camp.

Israeli staff wrote about how camps created positive Israel experiences for campers. Some identified specific programs like Israel day or "making a map of Israel from flowers". Other staff wrote about the opportunity to have meaningful conversations about Israel with campers. A staff member wrote:

Camp provided me with so many opportunities to discuss my land, my experience as an Israeli, my connection to my family, and my activist work as an Israeli who has lived their whole life in Israel.

Still others wrote about the importance of having diverse Israelis on staff who could model Israel's diversity to campers. One staff member wrote:

There were a lot of Israeli staff which gives you a great perspective of the diversity in Israel.

Israeli staff also recognized the value of campers learning about Israel directly from Israelis:

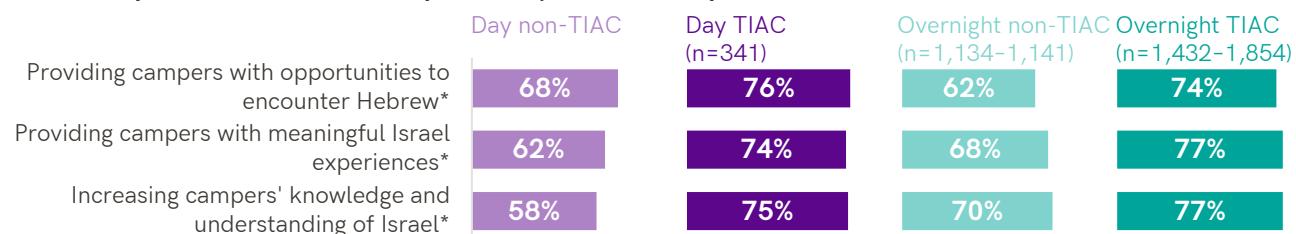
I like that the camp let the Israelis lead Israel-based activities so that we could illustrate what Israel is really like, and the campers could learn about it firsthand.

Day Camp Staff

Like the responses from staff at TIAC overnight camps, the responses of staff at TIAC day camps were consistently higher than those of staff at non-TIAC day camps. TIAC staff reported that their camps provided campers with meaningful Israel experiences and that the initiatives increased campers' knowledge and understanding of Israel. Staff at TIAC camps were also more likely than staff at non-TIAC camps to report that campers had opportunities to encounter Hebrew at camp (Figure 5a).

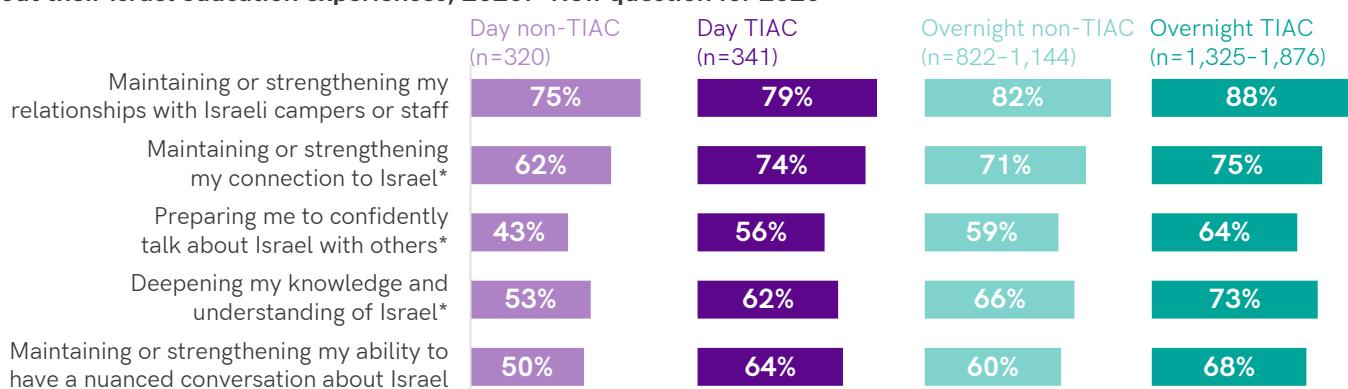
Like overnight staff at TIAC camps, staff at TIAC day camps also reported that Israel initiatives provided them with meaningful opportunities to encounter Israel and Israelis while at camp. TIAC staff left camp having maintained or strengthened their ability to have a nuanced conversation about Israel and feeling more prepared to confidently talk about Israel with others than when camp began. Their self-reported scores on these questions were also higher than the scores reported by staff at non-TIAC day camps (Figure 5b). Additionally, by the end of the summer, TIAC day camp staffers felt they gained a deeper knowledge and understanding of Israel, maintained or strengthened their connection to Israel, and maintained or strengthened their relationships with Israelis.

Figure 5a: Percentage of staff who selected "to an extent" or "to a great extent" in response to questions about campers' Israel education experiences, 2025. *New question for 2025.



Data was collected from 18 day TIAC camps, 34 day non-TIAC camps, 52 overnight TIAC camps, and 44 overnight non-TIAC camps. Differences between TIAC and non-TIAC camps are statistically meaningful for all comparisons.

Figure 5b. Percentage of staff who selected "to an extent" or "to a great extent" in response to questions about their Israel education experiences, 2025. *New question for 2025



Data was collected from 18 day TIAC camps, 34 day non-TIAC camps, 52 overnight TIAC camps, and 44 overnight non-TIAC camps. Differences between TIAC and non-TIAC camps are statistically meaningful for all comparisons except the day camp comparison about relationships with Israeli campers or staff.

Parent Survey Results

The results from both the day camp and overnight camp parent satisfaction surveys reveal that the TIAC grant had a positive impact on campers' Israel education experiences. It is important to note that not all overnight camp parents answered every question that was asked of them.

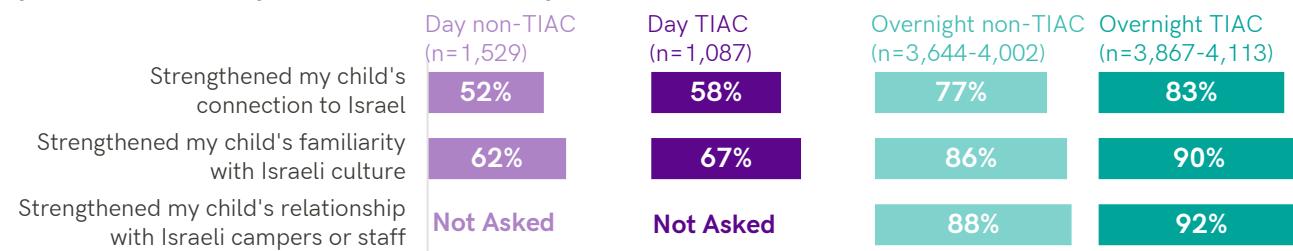
Overnight Camps

Among parents of campers at TIAC overnight camps, 80% reported that camp's Israel education deepened their child's connection to and understanding of Israel "to an extent" or "to a great extent," while only 70% of parents at non-TIAC camps said the same. TIAC parents were also slightly more satisfied than parents with children at non-TIAC camps with the quality of Israel initiatives (4 percentage-point difference) and the quality of the content of Israel initiatives (5 percentage-point difference). As shown in Figure 6, TIAC parents were slightly more likely to report that camp strengthened their child's familiarity with Israeli culture, that camp strengthened their children's connection to Israel, and that camp afforded their children the opportunity to strengthen their connections to Israelis (staff and/or campers). While some of these differences are small, they are all consistent. Given the method employed—parents reported post-summer impact on their children, with no reference to the specific intervention—this consistency should be taken to indicate the meaningful impact of TIAC.

Day Camps

Much like parents whose children attended overnight camps, TIAC day camp parents also reported higher rates of satisfaction with Israel initiatives compared with parents at non-TIAC day camps. There was a six percentage-point difference between TIAC and non-TIAC parents' satisfaction with the content of camps' Israel education. Day camp parents were also more likely to report that camp strengthened their children's familiarity with Israeli culture. Unlike overnight camps, day camp parents were not asked about their children's connections to Israelis. This is because far fewer Jewish day camps have Israelis as staff members or as campers.

Figure 6: Percentage of parents who selected "to an extent" or "to a great extent" in response to questions about campers' Israel education experiences.



Data was collected from 18 day TIAC camps, 39 day non-TIAC camps, 52 overnight TIAC camps, and 50 overnight non-TIAC camps. Differences between TIAC and non-TIAC camps are statistically meaningful for all comparisons.

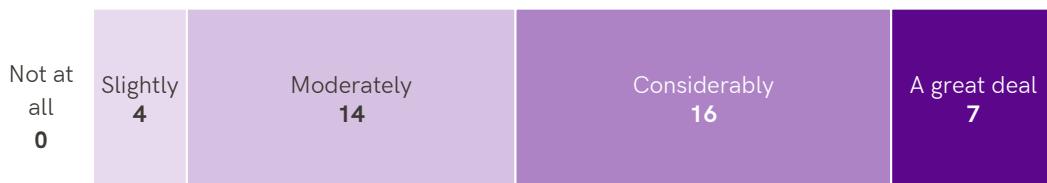
Comparing Israel Education Initiatives Across Summers

One of TIAC's primary goals was to have an impact on the quantity and quality of Israel education initiatives at summer camps in comparison to previous summers. Investigating this goal was challenging, because not every TIAC camp had participated in FJC's family and staff surveys prior to summer 2025. Further complicating matters is that many of the Israel-related questions included on the family and staff surveys were new to 2025. To resolve this issue, comparative data were collected in two ways. First, HIEs who had previously worked at their camp were asked to compare Israel education initiatives from summer 2025 against what they recalled from previous summers. Second, camp directors were asked to assess to what extent the grant enabled improvements in the quality of Israel education in comparison to previous summers.

Summer 2025 Differences According to HIEs

Forty-one (41) out of the 69 HIEs who submitted the end-of-summer HIE survey reported that summer 2025 was at least their second summer at their camp. These 41 HIEs were therefore able to provide insight into whether Israel education at camp in summer 2025 was different from previous summers. The majority of HIEs reported having made significant changes to Israel education programs and initiatives, and all the HIEs reported that Israel education was at least slightly different from the previous summer they worked at camp (Figure 7).

Figure 7: HIE responses about the extent to which Israel education programming and initiatives were different from their last summer at camp (n=41)



The HIEs' written explanations offer insight into the nature of these changes and reveal that change can be understood in different ways. For some HIEs, change had to do with shifting mindsets and helping camp staff and campers see Israel as an integral part of camp life:

I think that we had a mindset of how to include Israel in all of our planning. In years past, it was considered more of a bonus to our planning, but this year we thought of specific ways to include Israel or imagine how it could look in every program, whether it was implemented yet or not.

At other camps, change had to do with the quantity and range of programs and initiatives that were offered to campers:

This year, we offered multiple classes for an extended period of time. Israeli culture, Israeli cooking, Israeli music and drumming, and Big Idea tech programming and visiting artist Hanoch Piven. Campers had multiple Israeli activities each week throughout the summer. Last year, we offered Israeli cooking and a few weeks of Israeli culture.

Lastly, HIEs also identified changes in the quality of Israel education that emerged because of having a dedicated professional responsible for Israel programming and initiatives:

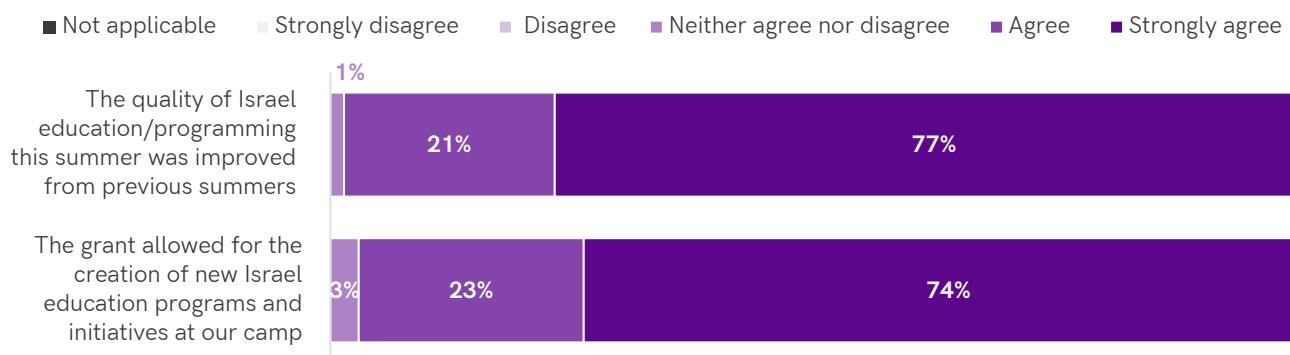
With a position whose main focus is Israel education, it allowed for more Israel-focused activities and reach. I was able to implement additional activities and reach a much broader range. I feel the education was much deeper this year.

Summer 2025 Differences According to Camp Directors

One of the requirements for camp directors at all 70 TIAC camps was to submit a post-summer grant evaluation. The directors were asked two quantitative questions about the extent to which the grant itself facilitated the creation of new initiatives and led to meaningful changes in Israel education initiatives in comparison to previous summers. The quantitative questions were followed by open-ended questions designed to better understand how the TIAC grant had an impact on Israel education at camp.

The directors' responses reveal that the grant both allowed for the creation of new Israel education initiatives and that the quality of the initiatives improved from previous summers. Nearly every director "agreed" or "strongly agreed" to the statements "the grant allowed for the creation of new Israel education programming and initiatives at our camp" and "the quality of Israel education/programming this summer was improved from previous summers."

Figure 8: Camp directors' responses to questions about the extent to which the TIAC grant led to new programs and initiatives and enhanced the quality of Israel education (n=70)



The open-ended questions reveal the many ways that the HIEs had a positive impact on Israel education. The responses document myriad creative arts, culinary, athletic, and music programs that were created for summer 2025. They spotlight the importance of Yom Israel (Israel Day) as a day when Israel was celebrated. They show that new summer-long electives were created, and that the daily camp schedule at some camps

was changed to accommodate a set time for Israel programming. Guest speakers were hired who brought fresh programs and perspectives to camp. Creative Israel-themed art installations were erected at camps across North America.

The directors' responses make clear that the HIEs did more than just create programs and new initiatives. They served as cultural bridges that onboarded Israeli staff into camp culture, and they helped Israeli staff tell their stories. The HIEs facilitated training programs about Israel for all staff. At some camps, the HIEs created new curricula that were tied into a new philosophy of Israel education that the HIE developed for the camp. They made Hebrew a living language for campers through daily programs and fun activities. They brought Israel into Jewish prayers, rituals, and ceremonies in ways that had not been seen at some camps in previous summers. At other camps, the HIE role and the work the HIE did impressed upon campers the importance of Israel. As one director shared:

By establishing Israel education as a stand-alone program, our head gave it new prominence, making it clear to campers that this was a core part of their camp experience. The head tailored learning activities to be interactive and age-appropriate, ensuring that campers not only learned about Israel but also personally connected to its meaning and relevance in their own Jewish identity.

At some camps, the HIE was able to ensure that Israel programming was mission aligned and tied to a larger vision for the summer. One director explained:

Having a dedicated head of Israel education meant that one person had a comprehensive view of all Israel-related programming across camp. Unlike in previous years, when efforts were more fragmented, this allowed for a cohesive, intentional approach to Israel education, ensuring continuity and consistency across *edot* (divisions) and sessions.

All directors indicated that it is their desire to have an HIE in place for summer 2026. Financial considerations will play a determining factor for 45 of the camps, as they tied their ability to hire an HIE to securing external funding for the role.

Conclusion

Foundation for Jewish Camp's Teaching Israel at Camp grant was an ambitious and innovative initiative. It was built on a premise that if a dedicated Israel education professional worked to enhance Israel education programming and initiatives, campers and staff would deepen their connections with Israel. The data paints a powerful portrait of a granted initiative that was successful in elevating the quality of Israel education, resulting in more meaningful and strengthened connections to Israel among both staff and campers.

Recommendations for the Future

- 1. Access to funding is imperative in order to allow for camps to continue employing HIEs.** HIEs played an important role in shaping the Israel experience at summer camps in 2025, and the end-of-summer grant reports show that all directors want an HIE at their camp in 2026. To ensure that this happens, funding needs to be secured, because those same grant reports also show that most camps require external funding to hire an HIE. Extending the funding for multiple summers will allow the HIE role to expand and become a fixture at day and overnight camps.
- 2. Expand the parameters for the HIE role to include onboarding and integrating Israelis into camp life and provide the HIE with tools for developing practical strategies to effectively carry out this work.** Parent and staff survey results show the importance of camp for strengthening campers' relationships with Israelis, but the HIEs' evaluation of their coaching work shows that developing an approach to work with Israelis was a less-developed area of pre-summer training. Given the success and significant value that the coaches provided the HIEs and how they helped the HIEs develop an approach to Israel education for the summer, having the coaches allocate time with the HIEs for discussing onboarding and integrating Israelis would be of great benefit.
- 3. Develop resources and supports designed to account for the practical differences between day and overnight camps.** Day and overnight camps do Israel education differently, and the parent and staff survey responses about Israel education demonstrate these differences. HIEs would benefit from Israel education resources and supports that take into account the diversity of families who send their children to Jewish day camps or that account for the fewer hours spent at camp every day.
- 4. Help staff learn skills and approaches for talking to others about their Israel education experiences.** Staff surveys show that though camp staff were not the targets of Israel education, they still benefited from it. Their responses also show that they would benefit from sessions designed to help them learn how to talk about Israel and about their Israel experiences with others outside of camp. Expanding the role of the HIE for working directly with staff would help concretize staff members' Israel connections and extend their summer Israel experiences into the school year and beyond.

About Foundation for Jewish Camp

Foundation for Jewish Camp grows, supports, and strengthens the Jewish camp movement, so camps can deliver exceptional experiences for their campers, staff, families, and communities—engaging them in lifelong, joyful Judaism. Leveraging more than \$20 million of philanthropic giving annually, FJC scales programs and resources to benefit more than 300 Jewish day and overnight camps across North America.

Learn more at jewishcamp.org.



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