JData Revealed
JEWISH EDUCATION DATA WHEN YOU WANT IT

Note from the Executive Director

I am not a research scientist. I am not a data analyst. I am not a web developer or a software engineer, nor am I an information technology specialist. (Although I do tweet, which counts for something, right?) What I am is a Jewish professional with 23 years of youth education experience. **And I believe in the power of data.**

That is why I jumped at the opportunity to join the JData Team as Executive Director. What JData has to offer the Jewish world— and already provides to a growing list of national and community partners—is a statistical picture of what is happening on the ground right now. This data informs important decisions about Jewish education today—decisions that impact the trajectory of institutions and communities and, most importantly, the experience of our young people.

Since coming on board at the beginning of September, I have been studying JData's present so I can do my part to guide its future. I have spent time reading and listening, talking and thinking. I have begun reaching out to our stakeholders and hope to expand the conversation even more to include the many others out there who care deeply about Jewish education. (We have launched spaces on both *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* to allow people to dialogue with us; and, of course, anyone is welcome to contact me directly: *thejc@brandeis.edu*.)

I am impressed with what JData has accomplished in its short history. What started as a "big idea" has evolved into a robust, dynamic resource that is making a real difference. Just ask our stakeholders: They will tell you how they have benefited from our analyses and reports, what they have learned about Jewish education in their community or nationally across the field, and how data has influenced their planning and decision-making.

One of my goals is to increase the number of communities and organizations submitting data and using information from our system. With more data being entered each year, we and others can delve even deeper and learn even more, and in doing so contribute to the national conversation about the future of Jewish education. We want to do what we can to help the Jewish community thrive; the data we gather, and the myriad ways that it can be studied and analyzed to draw out rich learnings, is our way of contributing to that conversation.

The new year provides each of us with the opportunity for a fresh start. For me, the weeks before the High Holy Days were filled with new experiences: a new town in a new part of the country, a new house and new routine, a new climate (thankfully it hasn't snowed... yet!), and starting my new position at Brandeis University. I am excited about what 5775 has in

store for JData. I hope each of you is looking with hope and excitement to the year ahead, too.

Jonathan "J.C." Cohen, MAJCS/MSW
Executive Director, JData

Day Camp—An Emerging Field

What is a day camp, and what makes a day camp Jewish? What can turn day camp work into a field of practice, and what data can support that effort?

Over the past year and a half, with grants from ***UJA-Federation of New York***, JData pursued these questions. We developed a pilot for day camps and tested it with the 22 JCCs in the UJA-Federation day camp system. Based on lessons learned from this test and the input of a working group of UJA-Federation, JCC Association, and local JCC day camp professionals, we re-envisioned JData for the day camp world. We are now ready to launch JData's newest sector—Jewish day camps.

Day camp profile forms will be available after October 27, 2014. If you would like your day camp to gain the benefit of JData, contact Allyson Cartter (***info@jdata.com***; 781-736-3941).

LOCATION OF JCCS IN THE NEW YORK DAY CAMP PILOT

Bronx	2
Brooklyn	5
Long Island	5
Manhattan	4
Queens	2
Staten Island	1
Westchester	3
TOTAL	**22**

To become a field of practice, Jewish day camp needs—among other structures—a standard definition, shared data, and a means to use the data to improve practice.

What's new in 2014-15? In designing the Summer 2014 day camp profile form, we started with practice and narrowed our sights to four principal tasks of day camp leadership:

1. Grow enrollment.
2. Build a strong staff team.
3. Improve the bottom line.
4. Enhance the camp's programs.

Key metrics followed: capacity utilization, retention rate, percentage of new campers, camper staff ratios, budget surplus (or deficit).

For each topic, we added *inventories of best practices* on the assumption that, over time, better practices will lead to improvements in core measures. We derived these practices from *The Complete Guide to JCC Day Camp*, published this year by the JCCs of North America.

Definition

In order to gather data from like entities, we had to define *day camp*. Surprisingly, no published definition exists, whether from camp associations, federations that support day camps, or local boards of health or other regulatory offices. Day camp obviously is a summer program, and it is not residential. But beyond that, what does day camp comprise?

With input from our advisory group, we arrived at the following working definition for day camp in general and Jewish day camp in specific.

Day camp refers to an entity that provides programs on a scheduled basis during the summer months with sessions that are minimally one week long. Campers may be of any age, from preschool through high school. Day camp programs may take place on a specified day camp property, in a host institution (e.g., a JCC or synagogue), and/or "on the road." Day camps are characterized by community building, group experiences, and activities that provide opportunity for personal development. Jewish day camps, in particular, are concerned not only with social, emotional, and physical development but also with Jewish identity development. Jewish day camps may serve both Jewish and non-Jewish children.

Distinguishing "Program" from "Camp"

A single day camp (whether part of a JCC, synagogue, day school, movement, or overnight camp) might offer ten, fifteen, or even twenty day camp programs, and the list of programs can change from year to year. Day camps differ from overnight camps in this regard and thus require a unique structure for their data.

All totaled, the 22 New York JCCs in our pilot test reported on 64 different camp programs in Summer 2013. Eight JCCs offer only one program; the others offer two to nine programs.

The programs are vastly diverse in terms of the size of their enrollments, staff, and budgets. The largest program, for example, serves 80 times more participants than the smallest. As well, the various programs offer different experiences: 44 are traditional camps; 20 are a rich set of specialty or travel camps. Programs also differ in terms of their setting, whether at the JCC, off-site, and/or on the road.

LOCATION OF NEW YORK DAY CAMP PROGRAMS

	Number of camps	Percent of camps
At the JCC only	26	41%
Off-site only	19	30%
On the road only	2	3%
Off-site and on the road	5	8%
JCC and off-site	1	2%
JCC and on the road	4	6%
JCC, off-site, and on the road	7	11%

n=64 programs

Seven of the 64 programs opened in the past four summers (2010-2013), suggesting a slow but steady rate of innovation.

What's new in 2014-15? The design of JData is based on the premise that the various day camp programs in each JCC should be branded, promoted and managed as the overall entity that offers them (i.e., "[Name of JCC] Day Camp"). JData thus provides a single profile form for each day camp, with adequate space for data on each of the camp's individual programs.

Enrollment

Growing enrollment is one of the principal tasks of camp leadership. Relevant data include numbers on recruitment, retention, and financial aid. In New York, for example, we can see that the peak audience for day camp is children entering Grades 1 to 4. We learned that 70% of eligible campers return the following year. We also learned that camp staff do not know where most of the other 30% go. The camps are rarely at full capacity, which suggests a need not only for expanded recruitment but also for increased attention to the retention of individual campers.

All totaled, some $4.4M in financial assistance was disbursed in Summer 2013. On average, 20% of campers received some type of financial assistance. Financial aid is critical for enrollment, but it is not always sufficient or determinant. Based on 60 reporting programs, almost 400 children requested and were offered financial assistance but did not enroll at camp. Camps might want to seek out additional information about these potential campers in the future.

What's new in 2014-15? The 2014-15 day camp profile form includes an inventory of best practices in recruitment and retention. Over time, the impact of improved practices should be seen in numbers such as total enrollment capacity utilization, retention rate, and the like.

Profit and Loss

Aggregated data show where the day camp sits within its agency. New York's pilot results, for example, suggest that the day camps are financially important to their JCCs although their importance is not always seen in the agencies' governance, strategic planning, or fundraising.

- Day camp accounts for a significant portion of the JCCs' total budget. In the 18 reporting JCCs, day camp budgets were, on average, 12% of the total JCC budget. Overall within the community, day camps generate significant revenue for their sponsoring agencies.

- Eight of the 22 JCCs have both a strategic plan and a development plan that includes day camp. Seven JCCs have either a strategic or a development plan that includes day camp, but not both. The remaining six JCCs do not have such plans or the plans they have do not explicitly include their day camp.

- 15 of the 22 JCCs have an annual campaign, but only four have a special appeal or fund designated for their day camp. The numbers for endowment funds are smaller but show a similar pattern.

- 12 of the 22 JCCs have some form of lay leadership for their day camp, either a camp committee of the board or a trustee who holds a day camp portfolio or serves as a representative of or liaison to the day camp.

What's new in 2014-15? JData provides a forum for tracking these numbers in local communities and in the field more broadly. The numbers can be used to monitor profit and loss and to advocate for the day camp within its particular agency.

Program

Enhancing the camp's programs is another principal task of day camp leadership. In a Jewish context this refers to the quality of the Jewish experiences provided.

The New York day camp programs generally serve a mixed population. The majority of programs estimate that fewer than 70% of their campers are Jewish. At the extremes, 13 of the 64 programs report fewer than half of their campers are Jewish; 9 report that 90% or more are Jewish. There appears to be ample opportunity to grow the camps' capacity to help children of all backgrounds to experience and appreciate Jewish life.

- 14 of the 64 programs have a curriculum for the Jewish learning experiences they provide, and 15 have space dedicated to Jewish-related activities.

- Over one-third of the programs have no Jewish specialists on staff (including Jewish song leader, Israel educator, Hebrew language educator, prayer leader, or Judaic specialist). The others have between one and five of these staff positions.

- The most common Jewish activities in the New York day camp programs are related to Jewish values, Shabbat, and Israeli dancing.

What's new in 2014-15? The best practices inventory on the Program tab in the day camp profile form offers 18 ways that a camp might enhance its programming, including the Jewish component. The inventory is intended not only as a self-assessment but also as an inspiration for new thinking.

The View from the Community

Jill Mendelson
Interim Managing Director, Jewish Communal Network Commission
UJA-Federation of New York

Good data is one of the keys to measuring the success of Jewish day camps, and to discovering where programs and business practices may fall short and need strengthening. As a funder, UJA-Federation is working with its network of affiliated Jewish community centers to collect and organize data on day camp services and utilization through JData. The next stage of work will be to analyze the information—for individual JCCs and for the network of 23 JCCs with day camp programs. This communal effort to take a critical look at day camp programs and operations, and to benchmark with others in the field, will lead to stronger and more effective JCCs and Jewish day camps. UJA-Federation is in a unique position to provide leadership to this effort and to convene network agencies in pursuit of this common cause.

News from JData

- ***New support enables JData's continuing growth.*** JData is pleased to announce new grants that generously support the work of maintaining and growing the continental data system for Jewish education. ***The AVI CHAI Foundation*** has awarded a three-year grant aimed at increasing the number of day schools using JData. ***UJA-Federation of New York*** awarded a follow-up grant to refine and build out the day camp section of JData in 2014-15. (Read more in this issue of JData Revealed.) Over the next year, the ***Jim Joseph Foundation*** will match, dollar for dollar, grants and gifts received in support of JData.

- ***JData welcomes new partners.*** JData currently serves 15 Jewish communities and 10 national Jewish education networks and agencies. This year, we are joined by two large city federations. ***JUF/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago*** adopted JData for use with its broad array of educational institutions. ***UJA-Federation of New York*** is using JData for the schools in its new ***Day School Challenge Fund***. We also welcome ***Yeshiva University-School Partnership***, which joins the other day school networks in using JData as a service to their schools and a means to develop an ongoing statistical portrait of their networks overall.

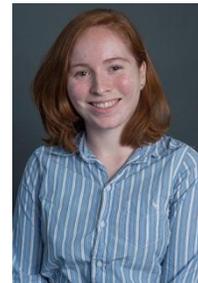 A shared database makes it possible to bring quality data services to all agencies

regardless of their size. This possibility was realized this year when ***Habonim Dror Camp Association***, with its seven camps in North America, joined with ***Foundation for Jewish Camp*** and the other camp movements in adopting JData.

Click here to see the complete list of JData's partner communities and agencies.

- ***JData's Stakeholders will meet at the JFNA General Assembly in November.*** JData's Stakeholders Group is comprised of the national agencies and networks, and local Jewish federations and central agencies that partner with JData in the collection and usage of data. It also includes federations, foundations, and philanthropists whose grants and gifts support the work of JData. This year's annual meeting takes place on November 10 at Washington, D.C.'s Gaylord Conference Center.

- ***JData sets new policy and practices to improve data quality.*** Curious data occasionally appear in JData—the camp with a 150% retention rate or the school whose total enrollment exceeds the sum of students in each grade. A new ***validation policy*** will maximize the accuracy of the data housed in JData. The policy includes steps to identify questionable data; correct or validate such data; and, where necessary, remove them from the system. The purpose of the policy is to assure that users can rely on the data (including their own) and trust the analyses and reports they retrieve from JData.

  We have also created **data dictionaries** for the 2014-15 day school and overnight camp profile forms. The dictionaries intend to standardize how different schools and camps interpret and respond to items in JData. Dictionaries include definitions, hint text, and examples for each item in the profile forms. We hope the dictionaries will assist users in entering and reading their data. They are works in progress, so your feedback is most welcomed at **info@jdata.com**.

- ***Meet JData's new Communications Coordinator.*** The newest member of the JData team is Allyson Cartter. When you email us at ***info@jdata.com*** or call our help line at 781-736-3941, you will likely reach Allyson. In addition to answering questions and guiding users on the JData system, Allyson manages JData communications, including *JData Revealed*. We are delighted to have Allyson on board.