

March 2015

JData Revealed

JEWISH EDUCATION DATA WHEN YOU WANT IT

Note from the Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

5776/2016 is a leap year in both the Gregorian and Hebrew calendars. With each passing year, our calendars and the astronomical year diverge more and more from each other. But in the leap year, they are once again aligned. The year as we live it as a community resyncs with astronomical calculations. To play with this a bit metaphorically, I would say that at JData we periodically measure the field of Jewish education and publish the results in order to realign beliefs and perceptions with measurements and calculations.



In that spirit, we are pleased to present the most recent overnight camp census based on Summer 2015 data. A summary of its contents is below and the full report is [here](#). As you will see, the field is vital and its growth both palpable and measurable. At the same time, you are cautioned to look at the data carefully, for overall trends often mask significant and important variation within.

Our colleagues at National Ramah Commission, Rabbi Mitchell Cohen and Amy Skopp Cooper, [offer insight](#) into how they have been using data. Ramah is model of a data-informed organization, both at the level of the individual camps and for the system overall. They clearly understand that the work is not data *lishma* (for its own sake) but data for planning and evaluation.

A prevalent question across the field of Jewish education concerns salaries. In this issue, you will find the [results](#) of the JData 2015-16 management salary survey for the overnight camps. If you seek comparable information for day schools, you can find the 2014-15 report [here](#). The 2015-16 results will be available shortly, so stay tuned.

As always, we bring you updates on our activities and publications. And we thank you for subscribing to *JData Revealed*. It is our pleasure to share our work with you. If there is other material you would like us to make available through the newsletter, please do be in touch (info@jdata.com; 781-736-3941).

With warmest regards,
Amy

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Variations on the Theme of Growth: Jewish Overnight Camps in Summer 2015

Overall, the field of Jewish nonprofit overnight camps is strong, healthy, and growing. Most camps have seen increases in their performance, but others have not. The Summer 2015 data from 160 Jewish nonprofit overnight camps put numbers to this complex picture. [Learn more.](#)

JData in Action: Using Data to Support Our Camps and Our Movement

Over the last decade, Ramah has dramatically increased the usage of both quantitative and qualitative data in our movement, both at the individual camp level and across our camps. Our directors have found that data adds great value to decision-making and planning, complementing the “gut feel” that is based on anecdotal evidence and historical experience. We continually look to find new ways to use existing data and to identify additional data that will be useful. Recruitment and program evaluation are two key areas in which data has proven to be particularly valuable.



For recruiting campers, we analyze not only the data we collect from our individual camper management systems but also the data that is collected and aggregated across our camps by JData. What are the trends in our camper demographics: gender, age groups, geographic areas, synagogues, schools? Where are our campers coming from, and, when compared with the total universe of communities, are there gaps? If yes, what strategies might we use to increase the number of campers in a certain area? What is the explanation for a sudden spike or decrease in enrollment? Does an increase or decrease in camper applications from certain communities indicate a change in demographics—are Jewish families moving into or out of certain areas or sending their children to different schools? Has a particularly supportive youth director or rabbi left the area? Is there an opportunity to place a Ramah Service Corps Fellow in specific areas to enhance current recruitment efforts and/or expand into new areas?

To supplement data collection and improve recruitment strategies, some of our camps have developed tracking systems using a Google spreadsheet to drill down to the next level and investigate retention rates by *edah* (division), gender, and bunk. This has enabled our staff members to target follow-up communications and phone calls to specific families. As a result, we have scheduled a movement-wide conference to share these best practices so that all of our camps can benefit.

Evaluating and analyzing the data that comes from end-of-summer surveys of our camper families has been critical to our efforts to develop and innovate new programs and to improve our current programs. What programs seem to be the most and least successful? Is this consistent over time or has it changed? How can we best use our staff resources to enhance programming? Again, it is useful for our camp leaders not only to look at their own data but also to share data and examine trends that occur broadly across the movement. For example, there was a clear movement-wide trend that camper families were increasingly indicating a desire for specialty programming. At our existing overnight and day camps, this led to the implementation of specialty tracks and recruitment of expert instructors in areas such as the arts and sports.

Our Reshet Ramah alumni programming also benefits from the availability of increasingly rich data. Our movement-wide alumni database enables our camps to reach out to all alumni within a given geographic area, regardless of their camp of “origin.” After identifying occupations that are of common interest to many alumni, we use our virtual networking platform to convene sessions for those interested in exploring career opportunities. We gather data to see where our staff members are in college and use this information to pinpoint the campuses on which we should focus our Ramah College Network efforts.

Rabbi Mitchell Cohen is the National Director of [National Ramah Commission](#). Amy Skopp Cooper is the National Associate Director of [National Ramah Commission](#).

Overnight Camp Top Management Salary Report

JData conducts a management salary study as part of annual data collection in Jewish nonprofit overnight camps. In 2015-16, 96 camps provided information on the salaries of their top professional and 70 camps provided information on the salaries of the next professional in charge of camp.

[Click here](#) to access the full report.

News from the Field

- Amy Sales's article, “[Benchmarking Is Not a Solo Sport](#),” appeared in eJewish Philanthropy (Jan. 11). The article discusses the value of JData's benchmarking project and how it can help Jewish day schools assess their areas of financial strength and potential improvement.
- [FJC Leaders Assembly](#) (March 6-8) is a time for camp professionals, lay leaders, and supporters to learn, share, and network. Nicole Samuel, Senior Research Associate and the JData team member responsible for camp, will be there and happy to speak with you about this year's data and beyond. [Contact Nicole](#) to schedule a time to connect.
- JData's newest sector, Jewish day camp, expanded to national data collection for Summer 2015. The full Summer 2015 report will be available in the coming weeks. The report presents data on the size and shape of the field from across different movements, including [JCC Association](#), [National Ramah Commission](#), and [Young Judeaea](#).

JData Day School Benchmarking: Year 2

JData has embarked on the second year of our day school financial sustainability benchmarking project. The [Year 1 results](#) showed schools where they stand vis-à-vis other day schools on key measures related to enrollment, budget, and fundraising.

Year 2 will help schools assess their rate of change on these measures in comparison with that of other schools. To find out about joining the benchmarking project, [click here](#).

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