

## **Summary**

### **Exploring Day School Pathways: Reanalysis of Day School Alumni Data**

The recent study, *The Impact of Day School: A Comparative Analysis of Jewish College Students* (Chertok, Saxe, Kadushin, Wright, Klein, & Koren, 2007) conducted for PEJE by the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis concluded that, overall, day schools were successful in launching students into “trajectories of secular academic success and Jewish communal engagement.” Questions remained, however, about the experiences of college students from diverse day school backgrounds, especially for the growing population of non-Orthodox students who spend part but not all of their education in day schools.

In 2008, PEJE commissioned the Brandeis researchers to reanalyze the original data and examine the educational mastery, social integration and Jewish engagement of non-Orthodox students who have taken a variety of educational pathways, including some time in a day school.

Of the approximately 4,000 Jewish undergraduates in the 2007 study, data from more than 2,000 non-Orthodox students were reanalyzed and categorized into six educational pathways: day school for twelve years, day school 1-8 and private high school, day school 1-8 and public high school, day high school only, public school for twelve years and private school for twelve years.

The full report of *Exploring Day School Pathways: Reanalysis of Day School Alumni Data* (Chertok, Wright and Saxe, 2008) is available on the PEJE website [http://www.peje.org/knowledge/research/alumni\\_study.php](http://www.peje.org/knowledge/research/alumni_study.php). The report’s major findings are summarized below.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

**General Academic Confidence and Aspirations:** While the best predictors of academic self-confidence are gender (males) and GPA (self-reported), only non-significant differences were observed among students in the six different educational paths.

**Math Confidence:** Non-Orthodox students who attended Jewish high schools, regardless of their prior academic pathway, experience lower confidence in their ability to master college level math than peers who attended public high schools. (There were too few cases to demonstrate statistical differences between graduates of Jewish high schools and those from private high schools). However, no significant differences are observed among students from each of the six pathways in their likelihood of enrolling in physical science majors that are heavily dependent on math proficiency, or in plans to attain graduate degrees. The Brandeis researchers advise that greater attention be paid both to the quality of math educators in Jewish high schools and to the challenge of

implementing national standards for math education. Although many of the factors that contribute to the problems of math instruction are “beyond the control of Jewish high schools” there are important professional development actions that should be taken. The researchers remind the Jewish day school leadership that in choosing a Jewish high school, non-Orthodox parents are looking for value added in the form of Jewish identity and learning, not a value trade-off where math confidence is sacrificed for Jewish confidence.

**Jewish Identity and Engagement:** Attending a day school whether in grades 1-8 or in high school predicts involvement in Jewish campus life, but attending a Jewish high school is associated with the highest level of Jewish identity and engagement during the college years, regardless of what kind of school was attended at the middle or elementary level.

**Campus Social Integration:** There is no evidence to support the suggestion that undergraduates with a day school history, including those who attended Jewish high school, experience any social disadvantage once they reach college; day school graduates become involved in all aspects of campus life.

**Resistance to Risky Behavior:** Regardless of the educational pathway to college, non-Orthodox undergraduates with day school history succeed in avoiding binge drinking, the gateway to a variety of risky and dangerous behaviors. The reanalysis indicates that membership in Greek organizations is the most powerful predictor of binge drinking, and regardless of the educational pathway in grades 1-8, non-Orthodox undergraduates who attended Jewish high schools are the least likely to join these organizations and therefore significantly less likely to binge drink than those who went to public school all twelve years. Undergraduates who went from day school in eighth grade to public high school are also less likely to engage in risky use of alcohol as compared with peers did all their schooling in a public school.

**Conclusions:** The message to potential day school parents is clear; a day school education through eighth grade is valuable regardless of where students plan to attend high school. But even more importantly, it is not too late to start in high school.

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