

Why Jewish Day School? Making the Case Using Propositions to Suit Specific Rationales

When you ask day school parents and supporters about their motivation for choosing day schools, answers vary. These six rationales cover the most frequently heard responses. Customize your message to its targeted audience, and create your own data points and quotes to demonstrate the value of day school education.

Educational Excellence—the quality of the product itself

Day schools offer a challenging dual or integrated curriculum and usually have small class size allowing for individual attention from creative, knowledgeable teachers. The use of Hebrew as a living language develops children's capacity for learning. Most graduates of day schools find that their rigorous curriculum prepares them well for advanced study.

Data point: College matriculation of day school graduates. Visit www.peje.org for an annual listing of college matriculation data from Jewish high schools.

Sample alumni quote: “The combination of a Jewish and general studies curriculum that I got at my day school really grounded me in the kinds of organizational and critical thinking skills that I need in college.”

Values

Parents choose day school education because it fosters a values system and identity development they seek for their children. By living Jewish concepts such as tikun olam and gemilut hasadim, day school students become ethical and moral individuals.

Data point: The social action activities your day school sponsors.

Sample parent quote: “With all the challenges kids face today, we were so glad that we could choose an education for our children that supported the values we taught at home and created a nurturing environment where the peer group itself reinforces the things we think are important.”

The Internal Day School Community

For some families, day school is a “gateway institution” that brings them in contact with the Jewish community for the first time or in the most meaningful way. The support network of peer families and the sense of community at the school is appreciated by families who seek to preserve that connection even after their children graduate.

Sample parent quote: “Day school is much more than just classrooms and homework. The support we've found from school staff and the friends we've made among other parents have made our day school the warmest Jewish community we've been a part of.”

Vibrant Jewish Community

A Jewish neighborhood is incomplete without a vibrant day school. As the institution most dedicated to growing future knowledgeable Jews, day schools represent the vision for the future Jewish community. Through expression of values such as Klal Yisrael (Jewish unity) and

diversity within the Jewish community, denominational and community schools represent a range of Jewish ideology and practice. As a hub of Jewish learning, day schools connect the larger community with a cadre of Jewish teachers and a full-service facility for Jewish living.

Data point: “In general, attendance at a day school seven years or more exerts the most powerful positive impact on Jewish identity:

Being Jewish Very Important:	Day School 7-12 years	64%
	Day School 1-6 years	58%
	Supplementary School 7-12 years	51%
	Supplementary School 1-6 years	40%
	Sunday School 7-12 years	40%
	Sunday School 1-6 years	39%
	No Jewish Education	36%

Source: “The Impact of Childhood Jewish Education on Adults’ Jewish Identity: Schooling, Israel Travel, Camping, and Youth Groups” by Steven M. Cohen & Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, UJC Report Series on the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-2001.

Sample federation leader quote: “When I talk about the future of our community, I know that I stand on firm ground because of the strength of the day schools in our area. More than any other institution, it is our day schools that ensure a vibrant future.”

Leadership

Day schools foster leadership skills and traits within their students. At the same time, day schools themselves depend on dedicated volunteer and professional leaders to oversee and implement the vision of the school. Connecting leadership with Jewish literacy is a key for Jewish survival.

Data point: Twenty-eight percent of the 2003 Young Leadership Division of the Jewish United Fund-Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago attended Jewish day school, and they credit their day school education as part of their motivation for volunteering. Ninety percent of the 1964-1992 graduates of Buffalo, NY’s Kadimah School contribute to federation and other Jewish charitable organizations. Find out the leadership roles your school’s graduates are playing.

Sample alumni quote: “Taking action to make a difference, knowing the sources of Jewish tradition, envisioning the best possible future, and working with kids from different backgrounds, these are all the kinds of leadership skills I learned from a very early age in my day school.”

Judaic Literacy

By providing serious educational connections to Jewish history and texts and the Hebrew language, and by nurturing relationships to Jewish tradition, beliefs, and practices, day schools make Judaism second nature, instead of second best.

Data point: Sixty-five percent of the 1964-1992 graduates of Buffalo, NY's Kadimah School reported that they frequently observe the laws of kashrut.

Sample parent quote: "I wanted my children to feel at home with Jewish texts and traditions. My own Jewish education was more limited, and I wanted my kids to have the advantage of knowledge in making their own decisions."

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