

Jewish High Schools Virtual Roundtable

Rebecca Egolf, Facilitator

PEJE Admission Community of Practice

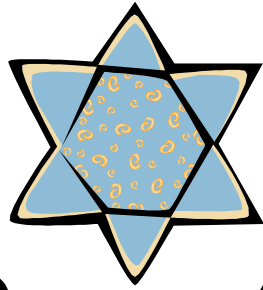
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Jewish Day Schools עתידנו Our Future



happy
hanukkah





Pull up a chair and join the circle!



Challenge:
**Recruiting Public School Students
or Those Who Have Not Attended
Jewish Day School Previously**





Tips

- Your own current and past families with this same background are your best resources to find more students like this
 - Hold focus groups.
 - Train them as ambassadors.
 - Regularly ask them for referrals and suggestions.
- Make sure you understand your current families' motivation for coming to a Jewish school after a secular school beginning.
 - What made them switch?
 - What were the challenges and obstacles?
 - What was their transition like?
 - What are the similarities and differences between their previous school and the day school?
 - What was their experience integrating into the day school?



Tips

- Match prospective public school students with current students who previously attended public schools so they can talk at length about their commonalities.
- A great person to use on a panel or as a speaker is a student who started at a public school and didn't like it, then transferred into Jewish day school later. They can talk from experience about the differences between the types of schools.



Messages

- (If this is true) Send the message clearly that Hebrew fluency is not a requirement for admission.
- Clearly describe any *mechinah* or other program designed to help these students move forward quickly in their studies.
 - Check out description of “New Stream” program at Tanenbaum CHAT in Toronto for an excellent description of program requirements and what kind of student is right for it
- Describe multiple levels of Jewish studies courses available – something for everyone from beginning to most advanced.
- Focus on VALUE, not COST. Why are you worth it?
- Never speak negatively about another school. Use the small amount of time you get with a prospective family to talk about YOUR school.



Places to Find Prospects

- Summer camps
 - Ann Van Prooyen, Admission Director at Frankel Jewish Academy in Detroit, surveys all the students in May during English class (“What Are You Doing This Summer?”) about their summer camp plans. Many students have been attending the same camp for many years and look forward to being counselors.
 - Ann does a special ambassador training about how to promote the school while they are at camp and identify mission-appropriate kids from their campers. They are asked to consider which kids they would want to see at Frankel, then they talk to them while at camp and contact them through email or Facebook and stay in touch after camp is over. Many kids later come to visit and request their camp counselor to be their visit host.
 - Frankel Jewish Academy’s head of school spends time visiting at their major regional summer camps each year, during both first and second sessions. He introduces Frankel students who are at the camp and the kids do the show and tell about school. The Frankel kids are so impressive and persuasive about their school that the Head doesn’t have to do much. The Frankel students identify mission-appropriate kids at the camp and invite them to this special presentation.
 - The school has a relationship with key camp directors. They share lists and names. It is of mutual benefit. The camps love having Frankel students on their staff and want to maintain good will and attract future staff, so they are willing to be cooperative. One camp director is a parent in the school.
 - Question: Do others get a negative response from parents about these presentations, that the school is “dangling” this enticing option out to the kids that the parent can’t make happen? Despite some complaints, most schools are able to continue making these presentations. Push messages about affordability.



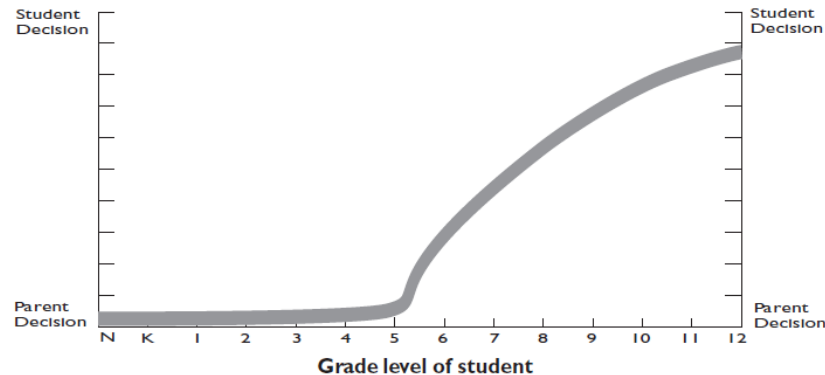
Places to Find Prospects

- Junior and senior youth groups at synagogues, BBYO
- Supplementary Hebrew school programs for post-b'nai mitzvah kids (Hebrew high school, etc.)
- Relationships with synagogue youth/teen directors
- Coaches from Jewish sports leagues (JCC, Maccabi Games)
Make sure you check your athletic association's rules before using your coaches to help in recruitment of athletes.
- Parents in the school who are public school teachers.
Often they can identify students in their schools who are good fits for the day school and make introductions without going through official school channels.

Tips

- Find the students who are opinion leaders in 7th grade and they will help bring along their friends.
- Remember to look farther than your own city. What other cities within a reasonable distance have possibilities? Can you get a parlor meeting together in another community?
- Who is the decision maker? Remember to talk to both students and parents about their decision. Different audiences need to hear different messages. Consider this graph from ISM about who makes the decision. It shows that as you get to high school, teen is very much in the “driver’s seat” of decision making:

**Criteria for Selecting a School
(and Remaining)**





Tips

- Invite a social services professional to speak about the transition from middle school to high school. This is very similar event to the kindergarten readiness workshops that many elementary schools host. Promote the event to the public; host at your own school.
- Many students go to day school through 8th grade then choose public high schools. Many would be interested in coming back to Jewish high school for 10th grade if their public school experience isn't as good as they wanted. Send them a letter around January letting them know the door is still open. (This worked to bring back 11 students this year at Frankel.) Is it okay to recruit them? If a student was previously an inquiry or applicant for you, and chose to go elsewhere, it isn't overstepping the boundaries to contact them again ONCE and see if any interest remains. The admission director has a previous relationship with the student from before. If they were a previous applicant you can simplify the admission process by using their previous year's application. A few schools contact the parents, most contact the student.



Tips

- The challenge of talking about cost is the elephant in the room. In Atlanta there is a special fund for families coming from public schools. Barrack has a rabbi's scholarship and rabbis can nominate a student for funding to start JDS for high school.
- There is a pushback against merit-based aid in some communities. Measure success of a merit program by reaching students you wouldn't have gotten before.
- Ramaz has a merit-based program called [Ramaz Scholars](#). It includes special mentoring, projects, other extra features. Many show interest in program because of special benefits it provides.

Challenge:
**Planning Student Visit/Shadow
Experiences That Leave Teens
Convinced Your School Is The Best
High School Around!**





Tips

- Match visitors to a current student ambassador with as many similarities as possible (e.g., academic or athletic interests, from the same feeder school or synagogue, etc.)
- Give visitors the chance to request a specific student as their host if they want to. Maximize existing relationships.
- Expose them to a little bit of everything, classes, tefillah, clubs, lunch, etc. – so they get a true sense of a regular school day.
- If you don't have *tefillah* every day, make sure you schedule visitors who are more interested in religious observance on days when they can participate in this. Schedule students who are less interested in religious observance on non-*tefillah* days.



Tips

- Put clear information about your visit days on your website; e.g., what to expect, when to come, and how to schedule it. Check out JCHS of the Bay's website pages "Your JCHS Visit" and "Shadow Calendar".
- Consider whether your visit experience needs to be a half or a full day. Consider the energy level of your students in the afternoon. Does your campus start looking messy and chaotic after lunch? What do they really need to see that can't be accomplished in half the day? You want visitor to leave wanting more, not tired and over-saturated. Some schools reported that students complained if they didn't get to stay for a whole day. Is it that they really need to experience a whole day with you or that they don't want to go back to their middle school for the afternoon?



Tips

- Ambassadors should share their email address (or Facebook name, etc.) with the visitors so they can stay in touch. Consider printing up blank business cards for your ambassadors to fill in their information.
- Have the ambassador call or email the student they will be hosting on the night before the visit to introduce themselves, answer any questions, arrange where to meet, etc.
- Have the ambassador(s) who hosted the visitor do follow-up by writing a postcard or sending email **ON THE SAME DAY AS THE VISIT**. Make sure they pass on any feedback onto the admission office.



Tips

- If you have a day with many students visiting at the same time, make an extra effort. Have greeters and hot chocolate and donuts in the lobby before school, or host a pizza party at lunch.
- Have parents schedule a 30-minute interview appointment during their child's visit day, either at the beginning or end. Send the parent their own thank you note and try to get feedback about their impressions and reactions of the school. One comment was that you are more likely to get a response with feedback if you send a thank-you email than a written note.
- Go ahead and do the student's interview and/or get the writing sample during their visit, even if they haven't applied for admission yet. That way they don't have to come back again to do this. Most students who visit will apply.



Tips

- Most schools use 9th graders to host 8th graders, except right at the start of the year when they use 10th graders. Sitting in on a class that is too advanced for them can be intimidating and a turn off.
- Honor host requests, but also look at the host's schedule to make sure they will get a balanced schedule of subjects (not just gym, art, etc.). Sometimes splitting up between two hosts is better to get a realistic picture of the school.



Tips

- Have special lunch in separate place for visitors and hosts, lots of great discussions and positive energy. Pizza can be provided by the school.
- Do schools offer visits every day or just special days? Some do Tues-Wed-Thurs only, others do Monday only, others schedule anytime that student requests to come.
- How many visitors on one day are allowed? At Weber some students visit for a large group visit (herd mentality, fun to come with all their friends) and then come again by themselves. At JCHS of the Bay, 5-6 coming at one time is typical. At Frankel, 10 at a time works, each with their own host.



Tips

- Public school families are on a later timeline, since they are not thinking about admission till winter. Do schools do some later events to reach this market? YES! January open houses, parlor meetings, etc. are held. To the extent that space is available after your priority admission deadline, it is okay to do late promotion.
- Are schools creating supplemental print materials with different messages for this audience? Some are, others are considering it.

Challenge:
Using Social Media
in the Admission Process





Tips from JCHS of the Bay

- JCHS of the Bay has an extensive social media strategy:
 - Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/jchsofthebay>
 - Twitter <http://twitter.com/jchsofthebay>
 - YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/jchsofthebay>
 - Weekly e-newsletter for current families called “Connect”
 - Monthly admission e-newsletter for prospective families called “The Connection”
 - The student ambassadors blog for the admission office (click on Admission from home page, then Student Blog)
 - An extensive website, including faculty, alumni and parent testimonials and profiles
- A question about social media: Who administers/runs it? JCHS of the Bay is under 200 students, one admission director plus one marketing director do all social media. It is do-able!



Starting an Admission Blog

- Create a place for it on your website. Promote it.
- Create a schedule of upcoming posts, topics, and who will write them. Try to post something new at least every 2-3 weeks. More frequent posting results in more readers. Spread the responsibility of writing posts amongst many people so it isn't too much work for any one person.
- Choose your bloggers—student ambassadors, admission director, head of school, faculty, alumni, and parents-can all do this. Choose one type of writer or rotate between many authors.
- Create policies for editing what students write, approving their posts, etc.
- Choose topics that will present a deeper look at the life of your school and be of interest to prospective families.
- Remember not all bloggers have to be great writers. They have to be confident enough to tell their story and point-of-view as to why they chose your school and be willing to talk about their daily lives.
- Use your other social media tools to announce each new blog posting with a link to it.
- After today's call you'll get several articles on this topic to help you get started.



School Blogs

- Shoshana S. Cardin High School has a school blog that changes daily. All different kinds of people write for it—teachers, principals, coaches, college counselor, admission, students, parents, head, etc. They get their assignments way ahead of time to make it easier. They have a schedule of blog assignments. Time sensitive posts are “stuck in” where appropriate. Otherwise most posts can be posted any time. Families are reading it!
- Consider audience for your blog. Is it targeted at current families or prospective families? Their needs and interests are different.
- PEJE has a new blog – check it out at www.peje.org/blog. It also lists links to other day school blogs, so see if your blog is listed or request to have it added so PEJE can help promote you.



Resources

- After this call we'll email a roster of all the Jewish high schools in the PEJE CoP. Please feel free to use your colleagues as resources!
- Use the Admission CoP Google Group to discuss this topic and share what is working in your school. Include “High Schools” in the subject line to identify it as a posting for this group. Ask questions and share answers!