

IMPRINTING OUR VALUES

Nurturing Our Community in 2023–2024

Table of Contents



Introduction	3
About Us	4
Teacher Learning	6
Inclusive Community	8
Cultivating Resilience	14
Engaging Teens	16
Early Childhood Education	18
Gratitude	20
Your Imprint	21
Our Financials	22
Our Board of Directors	23

Last fall Jewish LearningWorks marked 125 years of training and supporting Jewish educators. Our work has taken many forms through the years — but what has remained constant is our belief that any child’s experience is only as good as the Jewish role models they encounter at school, at camp, in teen programs, and in other Jewish spaces and places. Whether times are easy or hard, whether our community is unified or divided, Jewish LearningWorks looks for the helpers, as Mr. Rogers once famously suggested, and empowers them to tend to the rest of us. In 2023–2024, the resilience of our clergy and educators was the glue that held our community together.

We believe that Jewish education matters more than ever. At its best, engagement in Jewish life and learning offers children and teens a critical sense of belonging, and shared purpose. It nurtures curiosity, provokes and explores challenging questions, and develops *menschlichkeit* — goodness. The mission of Jewish LearningWorks is nothing less than to ensure that every teacher, and every learner has what they need to live a life of meaning.

Those who know me well know that I am fond of a text from Psalm 118 that we read in the recitation of Hallel “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” After nearly thirty years in this field, I have seen again and again the many ways that Jewish learning is the cornerstone that can help us rediscover purpose and meaning, and sustain a vibrant community.

Irina joins me in thanking each of our partners — participants, donors and other stakeholders — for your commitment to the Jewish future.



Dana Sheanin

Dana Sheanin
Chief Executive Officer



Irina Kovriga

Irina Kovriga
Board President

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About Us

Our mission is to elevate the field of Jewish education by nurturing educators, inspiring innovation, and building Jewish literacy.

Our work is grounded in our organizational **values**:



מנהיגות We are fearless in our pursuit of continuous improvement, experimentation, and thought leadership that expands the intellectual horizons of those with whom we work.



סקרנות We are lifelong learners who delight in discovery, and strive to spark imaginative inquiry among those we serve.



קשר We believe in the power of belonging, and seek to equip Jewish educators not only with the tools and practices they need to thrive alongside their learners, but also to foster a strong community of support.



אחריות We believe in the shared responsibility of learners and educators to bring their best selves to the experience of vibrant Jewish learning, and to the pursuit of a more just and perfect world.



הגשמה עצמית We recognize every Jewish educator and learner as a whole, creative and resourceful person, worthy of finding joy and meaning in Jewish life.



Jenni Mangel
Director, Educational Leadership



Liora Brosbe
Senior Educator



Ellen Lekowitz
Senior Educator



Alisha Pedowitz
Senior Educator



Magna Elmendorf
Director of Operations



Liliana Peliks
Director of Marketing

Get to know
our team

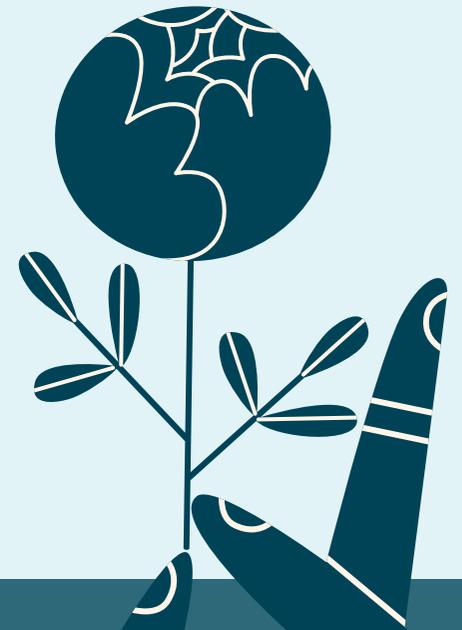




***“Make for yourself a teacher,
acquire for yourself a friend,
and judge every person favorably.”***

-Pirkei Avot 1:6

Teacher Learning



Increasing teacher learning increases student learning. Last year we:

- **Hosted 33 professional development workshops, engaging just under 1,000 participants (39% increase).** We strengthened the toolbox of educators with sessions on responding to the war in Israel, supporting teens, reaching neurodivergent learners, engaging multi-ethnic families, and more.
- **Provided 219 hours of coaching to 29 professionals.** “The support of coaching has been a critical part of my professional fulfillment. The sessions are so meaningful that I have continued them past the initial series from Jewish LearningWorks, and have referred the opportunity to friends and colleagues.” -Myla Marks, Associate Director at Camp Tawonga
- **Expanded from 9 to 45 customized training sessions since 2020.** “You have helped me be a better Jewish educator, and positively impact lives at Shalom School.” -Denise Crevin, Director of Jewish Life and Learning at Shalom School
- **Mentored 16 new educators.** “Having a mentor was very beneficial, particularly during a time when my manager and other members in my organization were working at the top of their capacity.” -Sierra Meszaros, Mentee
- **Served 142 organizations (70% located in the Bay Area)**

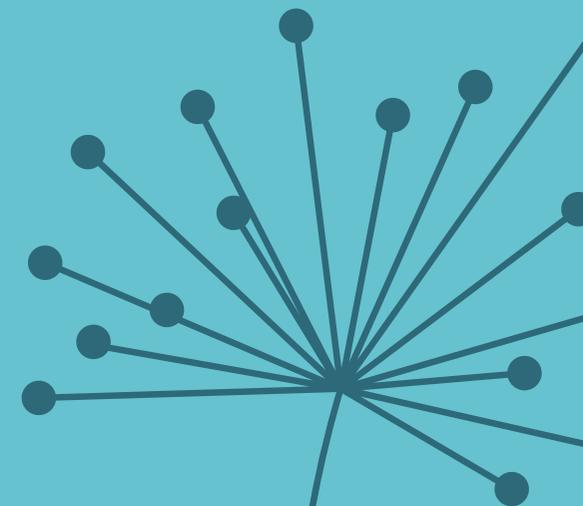


“That workshop was incredible — I learned so much and had some of the most fruitful discussions with peers that I’ve ever had in Jewish professional development spaces. Thank you for providing the opportunity!”

-Alex Lyon, Participant of the workshop series “Intersections: Latin Jewish and Multiethnic Family Engagement”



Inclusive Community



Deepened our inclusion programming to embrace the whole community

Last year we partnered with educational consultants, Alison Sorscher and Amy Freedman to help educators:

- **Learn the language of inclusion** to advocate for all children, and understand Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- **Model social thinking for preschoolers** to foster social and emotional awareness, and support the development of critical social competencies

We also provided:

- **24 grants to help schools purchase sensory tools** to increase student focus, and support diverse learning needs.
- **14 customized inclusion trainings** for family engagement professionals, educators working with preschoolers, congregational schools, day schools and teen programs.

Additionally, we partnered with Ariela Ronay-Jinich of Olamim on a two part series, Intersections. This workshop **introduced 23 educators to methodologies and best practices that address the needs of our multi-ethnic Jewish community**, expanding their understanding of the intersectional nature of diversity.





“By equipping educators with these essential sensory tools and the knowledge to use them effectively, we’ve been able to implement innovative strategies that support diverse learning needs.”

-Bridget Wellerstein,
Director of Student Support, Gan Ilan Preschool
Temple Isaiah, Lafayette, CA

Selected the 3rd Cohort of Voices for Good Fellowship

Jewish LearningWorks proudly launched its third cohort of the Voices for Good Fellowship in 2024. **This two-year leadership development program for women leaders in Jewish communal organizations** creates an affinity space for participants to build collegial relationships and explore Jewish values in leadership. The fellowship advances our strategic commitment to enhance equity in the Jewish community and has supported more than 150 women leaders in Jewish communal organizations since 2017.

The dynamic Voices for Good Fellowship supports leaders to respond to pressing topics in their professional lives and creates immediate and lasting impact on participants, their organizations and the Jewish community. **Cohort 3 is the first to include participants from the Pacific Northwest and Mountain states and is cultivating relationships between these distinctive, yet aligned, Western regions.**

Voices for Good fellows and alumni serve as leaders and change makers in Jewish life. They approach our community and organizations with a loving and critical lens, identify what is working well and build on it. And, they also look at what could be improved and work within existing newly created systems to affect change. **Our fellows represent the diversity of the Jewish communal experience and the Jewish future.**



“In addition to the collaborative partnerships forged, creative and deep thinking inspired, and Jewish wisdom imparted, the Voices for Good Fellowship provided me with meaningful professional development that has elevated my practice. Both the group and individualized learning opportunities allowed me to, in turn, proactively support various levels of leadership within my own organization, encouraging new dialogue and growth.”



-Nicole Francis, Senior Director of Early Childhood Education, Youth, & Family Engagement, Peninsula JCC, Foster City, CA; Voices for Good Fellowship Alumna

Meet the New Voices for Good Fellows →



“I really try to walk alongside the people who I work with, be their partner, have each other for support, and really bring each of us to a high level where we’re really giving the most that we can to the teens and students that we’re learning with.”

-Devra Aarons, Contra Costa Midrasha Executive Director, Walnut Creek, CA; Jewish LearningWorks Mentor

“I have this idea that one day, one of the teenagers that I teach will want to be a Jewish educator.”

-Natalie Connell, Contra Costa Midrasha Retreats Manager, Walnut Creek, CA; Jewish LearningWorks Mentee





Learn more about how Devra and Natalie met, and how they view Jewish education and youth engagement.



Cultivating Resilience



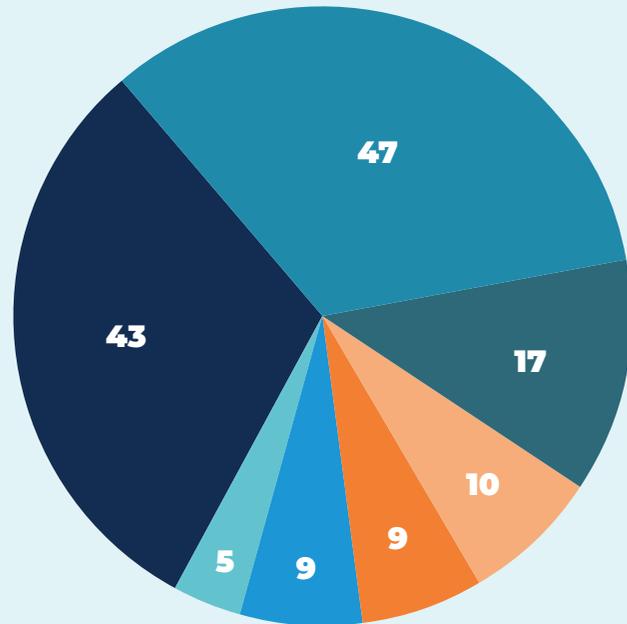
The year since the October 7 Hamas attack has been very difficult for Jewish educators and engagement professionals. The need to create space for divergent viewpoints among parents, colleagues and students while **staying grounded, and responding to rising antisemitism** has left many feeling depleted.

In this context, we also experience record-high rates of depression, loneliness and anxiety in teens and young adults at home. We desperately need what a shared community offers, yet **building community requires the commitment and skilled presence of teachers, youth directors, camp counselors and mental health professionals.**

Last year we provided high-touch, personalized support to educators, leaders and administrators:

- In **October**, we curated educational resources with an inclusive and learner-centered approach to Israel education.
- In **November**, we hosted a series with Israeli-American educator, Dasee Berkowitz, that offered communication strategies for staying grounded during hard conversations about the war.
- In **December**, our team:
 - Followed the series with drop-in sessions to help educators navigate their own response to the war.
 - Partnered with BaMidbar Therapy on a workshop exploring the protective factors, and risk factors, in the context of Jewish values to expand our understanding of teen mental health and wellness.
- Between **January** and **March**, we spoke or met individually with 140 communal professionals.
- Also in **March**, we partnered with Dr. Betsy Stone to consider how youth professionals can help adolescents focus on strengths rather than deficits during challenging times.

140 One-on-One Support Calls with Jewish Professionals (January – March)



- 47 Synagogue pros
- 17 JCC pros
- 10 Teen pros
- 9 Day school pros
- 9 Philanthropy pros
- 5 Camping and Hillel pros
- 43 from start ups, social service, outdoor and other organizations

“When my world turned upside down in October, I found myself charting new territory working for a central agency addressing dual crises: war in Israel and growing antisemitism here at home. I was able to turn to the exceptional staff at Jewish LearningWorks as thought partners who provided insight and guidance when I felt rudderless.”



-Rebecca Goodman, JCRC
Director of Jewish Community
Engagement, San Francisco, CA

Jewish LearningWorks also continued to advocate for increased philanthropic support to local communal organizations since October 7, as many struggle to fill open staff positions — especially in preschool and day schools.

Engaging Teens

In 2023–2024, we provided a menu of opportunities for youth professionals to engage in meaningful professional development; to dive deeply into issues relevant to adolescent wellbeing and resiliency — and tangible ways to apply this to their work with teens. Last year our work included:

- **BaMidbar’s Mental, Emotional, Social Health Training for Experiential Educators:** With this in-depth training, we offered 9 communal educators new and helpful language to understand the difference between mental health and wellness, languishing versus flourishing, and empowered them to proactively impact youth in Jewish education programs.
- **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA):** In 2023–2024 we trained another 16 individuals who joined the 338 others we have certified over the past four years.
- **Building for Strength with Dr. Betsy Stone:** This training offered 12 educators a strengths-based approach to supporting Jewish adolescents in a time of so much pain and division within the community.

We also celebrated the **4th presentation of the Ruby Award, honoring Adam Lowy from Congregation Beth Sholom.** At this gathering we learned with Yehuda Webster from Kirva, who offered us a belonging and well-being framework to keep our communities safe, whole, and holy in the face of rising antisemitism, racism and islamophobia.





“I have gained so much from the professional development of Jewish LearningWorks... I am working with teens, and it has never been harder to be a teenager, for new reasons! No matter how many skills I have, I am outmatched for the challenges they are facing. Getting up-to-date training, and being in conversation with other educators has been essential.”

-Brady Gill, Assistant Camp Director of Teen Programs at Camp Tawonga, Tuolumne County, CA

Hear more from Brady  here



Early childhood

In this inaugural year of supporting the Jewish Early Childhood Education (ECE) community, Jewish LearningWorks was able to create meaningful touchpoints for many educators across the region.

- **The East Bay was one of five pioneering communities of ElevatEd**, a national initiative to train 12 emerging educators and their mentors, and to recruit newish educators to the field.
- **We gathered 230 educators from 18 different preschools for a day of learning** on a variety of topics including documentation, teaching Jewish holidays, and strengthening teams.
- **We convened 20 early childhood educational leaders** on a monthly basis to connect, network, and brainstorm with their colleagues.
- **We hosted a Directors' Retreat** that provided time and space for leaders to assess their vision for their school and identify a specific area of focus for their work.

Finally, through our mentoring program **we offered customized support for associate early childhood directors**. These up and coming leaders were able to define the scope of this professional support, and receive concrete skills and tools to use in their work.



“The work we did with Jane Simon, early childhood consultant, gave us a chance to think about our indoor and outdoor environments with a thoughtful lens as we focused on sensory, visual and safety considerations. We are so grateful for the support Jewish LearningWorks provides to work with amazing consultants like Jane.”

-Katherine Barboni, Director of Early Childhood Education at The Grove Preschool at Kol Shofar, Tiburon, CA

Listen to Katherine here



Gratitude

Todah Rabah

This year, more than ever, we are grateful to our individual and foundation partners. Your financial support makes our work possible. The rich professional network and deep well of learning you have helped us build over the last 125 years will enrich our community for generations to come.

“Hodu l’Adonai ki tov - Give thanks to Adonai, for Adonai is good.” Psalm 118

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב כִּי לַעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ:

“I am heartsick over the war in Israel, but with the little bit that I had to donate, it mattered to me to give to Jewish LearningWorks as I am one of the teachers in Jewish education that has benefited from what you’ve offered for professional development and education locally.”



-Heather Howe, Teacher at Temple Isaiah (Lafayette, CA)

“As Jews, educating ourselves and our children is central to who we are. We need more and better Jewish educators. Investing in Jewish LearningWorks ensures that we are going to create a future generation of Jewish educators in the Bay Area that will be better connected to both Jewish literacy and ritual. We are proud to be partners in this endeavor.”

-Alina and Jason Friend, Donors (Jerusalem)

“Jewish LearningWorks has poured into me, personally and professionally. The Voices for Good program allowed me to build a community, learn from movement leaders, and perfect my skills as a Jewish educator. I was grateful to be in this community, which is why I felt called to serve on the board and lend my time, talent, and financial support to the organization that continues to support the Jewish community and its backbone — educators.”



-Sasha Joseph, Board Member (Alameda, CA)

Your Imprint

Please give generously so that we can strengthen our community today, and sustain the next generation.

Text to Give

Text JEWISHLEARNING to 44321, and donate via Google Pay, credit card or your bank account.

Scan to Give



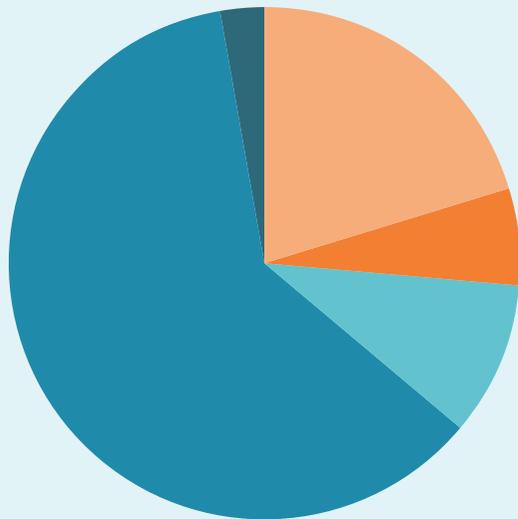
Legacy Gifts & Planned Giving

Naming Jewish LearningWorks as a beneficiary in your estate plan is a powerful way to sustain our impact. If you would like to explore investing in the future of Jewish education by leaving a legacy gift, please contact Dana Sheanin at dana@jewishlearning.works.



Our Financials

Revenue

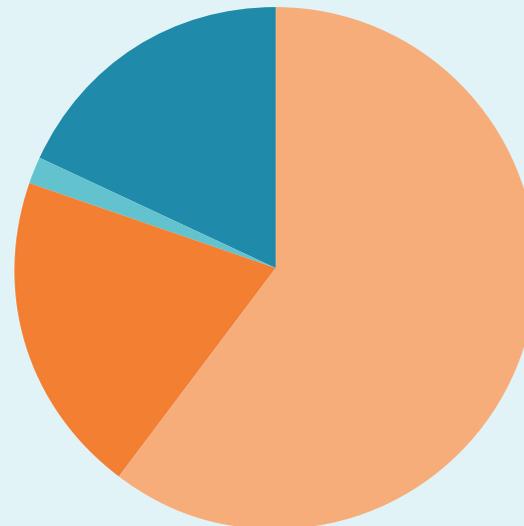


- Grant Income \$452,473
- Contributions & Gifts \$137,876
- Earned Income \$216,830
- Rental Income \$1,362,086
- Other Income \$57,333

Total \$2,226,597*

**Includes grant awards restricted for use in 2024–2025.*

Expenses



- Personnel Expenses \$1,177,642
- Educational Programs \$392,248
- Marketing & Promotion \$29,933
- Occupancy & Administration \$351,738

Total \$1,951,561



Our Board of Directors



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*“To defend a country
you need an army, but
to defend a civilization
you need education.”*

-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



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