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Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative ElevatEd Launches in North America

14 communities to pilot groundbreaking and collaborative initiative addressing critical teacher shortage in early childhood Jewish education

NEW YORK (September 5, 2023) - [JCC Association of North America](#), [Jewish Federations of North America](#), and the [Union for Reform Judaism](#) proudly announce the launch of [ElevatEd](#), the groundbreaking collaborative initiative intended to transform the field of early childhood Jewish education (ECJE). Formerly known as [Project-412](#), the new expansive initiative will address the prohibitive early childhood educator shortage.

In total, the JCC Movement and Reform Movement operate 475 early childhood centers serving more than 65,000 young children and their families across the country. Tens of thousands more remain on long waiting lists or simply choose not to even try due to the shortage of educators. ElevatEd brings together three prominent Jewish organizations to collaborate with funders, practitioners, educators, and community leaders in addressing the critical shortage of qualified early childhood educators, working together to expand the field of early childhood Jewish education in North America.

“We must have a far-reaching strategy to address systemic challenges in the early childhood Jewish landscape, which is why we are excited to launch ElevatEd, a groundbreaking partnership to address these issues in the Jewish community across North America,” said ElevatEd executive director **Orna Siegel**, a two-decades long Jewish education leader who has witnessed the impact of these issues first-hand.

The three-year ElevatEd pilot will focus on 14 pioneer communities across 14 U. S. states, with a goal of recruiting, training, and credentialing up to 30 educators in each community, amounting to more than 400 emerging early childhood educators in total. ElevatEd launched in the summer of 2023 with five initial communities: Boston, Massachusetts; Denver-Boulder, Colorado; East Bay, California; Houston, Texas; and Long Island, New York; nine additional communities will launch in early 2024. Each pioneer community will pair their own funding alongside a substantial initial

investment from philanthropic foundations, which will build a long-term financial model for improvement and growth.

When the school year begins this fall, participating emerging educators will enter a year of learning, 18 months of mentorship support, and will receive funds to support their work toward a credential in early childhood education. Equally important, mid-career educators in each ElevatEd school will participate in a research-based mentor training program to support the emerging educators in their schools.

“Each pioneer community will include early childhood centers in JCCs, Reform synagogues, and a diverse collection of other Jewish educational settings to reflect the unique demographic makeup of each geographic area,” says **Sasha Kopp**, senior director of ElevatEd education and engagement, who brings a decade of classroom and assistant director leadership experience to the project. “The new website, ElevatEdTogether.org, will serve as a central hub for ECJE best practices and resources, reflecting the purpose of the initiative—to elevate the field and bring the entire early childhood Jewish community together.”

The initiative will increase the opportunity for families to participate in high-quality ECJE, professionalize the field, and exponentially expand the engagement of Jewish families in Jewish communal life through this expansive effort focused on teacher recruitment, training, credentialing, mentoring, and teacher-family engagement in the early childhood setting. It will also explore how deep and thoughtful collaboration in each local community and across North America can move the Jewish community toward a powerful, shared vision.

ElevatEd’s investment of \$12 million comes primarily from funding partners, including the Jim Joseph Foundation, Crown Family Philanthropies, and the Samuels Family Foundation. “The launch of ElevatEd is an important and timely development for ECJE that reflects the urgent, large-scale needs of the field,” says **Dawne Bear Novicoff**, chief operating officer of the Jim Joseph Foundation, “ECJE is an opportunity for the Jewish community to support young families and to welcome them into meaningful Jewish life.”

Wendy Newberger, director at Crown Family Philanthropies adds, “Crown Family Philanthropies believes in the power of early childhood Jewish education and its role in the engagement of Jewish families. We’re proud to partner with other national and local funders in this exciting collaboration to address the shortage of qualified, trained educators, and to improve the long-term engagement of young Jewish families in communal life.”

“CJP is incredibly proud to join several other Federations in supporting ElevatEd on a local level. In Boston, we believe that a focus on families with young children has the potential to transform our communities and a critical component of this work is support for early childhood education and educators. Together with our early childhood education partners, we are working to identify and tackle challenges and make the most of important opportunities such as this one,” shares **Marc Baker**, President and CEO of Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP), Boston’s Jewish Federation.

The scope and scale of ElevatEd is exemplified in the updated branding and website, elevating the field of early childhood education and the educators who nurture the infinite potential of

children, their families, and the Jewish community. ElevatEd's new logo symbolizes both the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life, as well as the project's commitment to create an environment in which children and families will root deeply and grow as part of a strong, connected, diverse Jewish ecosystem.

Learn more at ElevatEdTogether.org or on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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About JCC Association of North America

JCC Association of North America leads the JCC Movement, the most expansive platform for Jewish life in the U.S. and Canada, welcoming 1.5 million visitors weekly to 170+ Jewish Community Centers and Jewish Community Camps (JCCs). An innovator in early childhood Jewish and family engagement, the movement employs 6,000 early childhood Jewish educators who touch the lives of 35,000 children and their families in 170 JCC schools. Learn more at JCCA.org or on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

About Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)

Jewish Federations of North America ([JFNA](#)) are the backbone of the organized Jewish community in the U.S. and Canada, representing over 400 Jewish communities. They raise and distribute more than \$2 billion annually and through planned giving and endowment programs to support Jewish communities domestically and in Israel.

About the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)

The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) represents a vibrant network of nearly 850 Reform synagogues across North America, which foster serious Jewish learning, sacred community, and prophetic justice. As the central address for this congregational network, the URJ speaks on behalf of the entire Reform Movement on a wide range of topics ranging from Jewish observance and ritual, community relations, social justice, and much more. Visit www.URJ.org for more.