ASSESSMENT OF SEPHARDIC INCLUSION IN LOS ANGELES JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS AND SUMMER CAMPS

Commissioned by

JIMENA: JEWS INDIGENOUS TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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JIMENA

in partnership with

JFEDLA

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Commissioned by JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, this assessment was funded by the Los Angeles Jewish Federation, along with individual donors who are dedicated to creating more inclusive Jewish educational environments, both in LA and nationally.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of JIMENA's needs assessment of Jewish day schools, religious schools, and residential camps serving Jews in Los Angeles. Using interviews and surveys, the study focused on the schools' and camps' inclusion of Sephardi/Mizrahi families and curricular content, as well as the experiences of Sephardi/Mizrahi parents and teachers in four of those schools. The camps and schools range from 4% to 85% Sephardi/Mizrahi campers/students, with a larger concentration in Jewish day schools. Most of the Sephardi/Mizrahi families that choose day schools are Persian and Israeli, with smaller populations who have ancestry in Morocco, Iraq, and elsewhere in North Africa and the Middle East.

Schools and camps take different approaches to inclusion, focusing to varying degrees on curricular content surrounding Sephardi halacha, holidays, history, and culture, and accommodating diverse political orientations. Prayer and Torah reading are major areas where Sephardi content is infused, often at the initiation of Sephardi students. Some schools have Persian and Moroccan clubs, and others offer travel experiences to Jewish communities around the world. Teachers and staff have been offered minimal professional development around Sephardi/Mizrahi inclusion, and many are interested in trainings and resources. Parents generally feel satisfied with the schools' curricula and social dynamics but offer suggestions for making the schools more inclusive.

Based on these findings, ten recommendations are offered:

For schools:

- Increase leadership and faculty/staff diversity
- Consider separate minyanim and halacha learning tracks
- Minimize Ashkenormativity and infuse Sephardi nusach, including through multi-nusach siddurim
- Teach Moroccan, Iraqi, and Persian te'amim before bnai mitzvah

For the LA Jewish community:

- Collect data on student ancestry and family religious traditions
- Coordinate a community-wide Persian recruitment initiative for summer camps

For JIMENA:

- Promote the speaker and consultant bureau
- Expand professional development and resources in collaboration with inclusion trainers
- Promote a "greatest hits" list of low-bar resources
- Cross-list resources on multiple educational platforms

BACKGROUND

In 2024, with partial funding from the Los Angeles Jewish Federation, JIMENA launched a needs assessment study of Jewish day schools, religious schools, and sleepaway camps serving Jews in Los Angeles to identify the interventions required to better integrate Sephardi/Mizrahi students, families, and content into these institutions. The research findings were envisioned to further enable JIMENA to "design impactful training cohorts and/or curricular content" tailored to the needs of these schools.

Sephardi students are increasing their enrollment in Jewish schools and camps and becoming a majority at some Jewish Day Schools in major cities across the United States, including in Los Angeles. Because these schools and camps were founded and initially populated by Ashkenazim, they tend to center Ashkenazi practice and culture as normative. This inquiry was launched with the goal of documenting what is happening in schools and camps and of understanding, as the grant application stated, "the specific needs and appetite for trainings and potentially other interventions to help schools become better equipped at welcoming, including, and meeting the educational and social-emotional needs of Sephardic students and their families."

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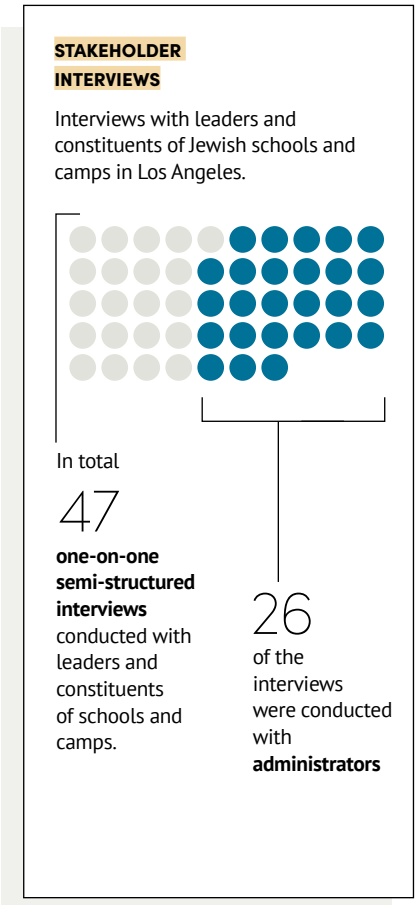
Research Methods

JIMENA commissioned me, a non-Orthodox Ashkenazi Jew, to conduct this study. I had prior knowledge of Sephardi/Mizrahi communities and traditions from teaching Jewish studies and linguistics at Hebrew Union College and University of Southern California and directing the HUC Jewish Language Project. I had prior knowledge of Orthodox communities from my book *Becoming Frum: How Newcomers Learn the Language and Culture of Orthodox Judaism*. I have lived in Los Angeles since 2004, and I sent my children to one of the day schools and two of the summer camps included in the study. Through my HUC teaching, my prior research on Hebrew education at religious schools and summer camps, and other communal involvements, I had contacts at several of the institutions included in the study.

The study concentrated on 13 Jewish day schools, seven religious schools, and six sleepaway/residential camps serving Los Angeles Jews. The schools are not identified by name since administrators agreed to participate in the study on the condition that no people or institutions would be identified. This was a requirement of the Institutional Review Board approval issued to protect the rights and welfare of research participants. Based on enrollment data provided by the institutions, the schools and camps included in this study enroll a total of 10,062 students/campers, and based on administrator estimates, approximately 3,000-3,400 of those students are Sephardi/Mizrahi.

Stakeholder interviews

I conducted 47 one-on-one semi-structured interviews with leaders and constituents of schools and camps. These included 26 interviews with administrators: at 13 day schools, seven religious schools, and six camps. The day schools were mostly K-8, with four high schools and one K-6 school. They represented diverse denominations – Community, Conservative, Modern Orthodox, and Reform – and geographic locations within Los Angeles City and the San Fernando Valley. Several of the day schools were invited



to participate in phase two of the study, and three of the schools agreed: interviews with Sephardi/Mizrahi parents (10 total) and teachers of diverse backgrounds (11 total). We came to the interviews with uniform guiding questions but let the conversations flow, and we often incorporated new topics that arose in previous interviews.

Teacher and parent surveys

Several day schools were invited to participate in phase three: teacher and parent surveys (see Appendix). Five of these – K-6 and K-8 schools – allowed the teacher surveys, and four allowed the parent surveys. The parent survey explored their family's Jewish culture and practices, their child(ren)'s and their own experiences at school, and their ideas for making their schools more inclusive of Sephardi/Mizrahi students and families. The teacher survey asked about their curricula, their comfort teaching Sephardi/Mizrahi students, their knowledge of Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and religious practice, and their desire for professional development. In K-8 schools, the research focused on the Middle School, and in the one K-6 school, it focused on grades 4-6. Survey invitations were sent to 1,048 parents (which included some duplicate email addresses and multiple parents for the same student) and 104 teachers. In total, 148 (112 complete) parent responses and 70 (59 complete) teacher responses were collected. Schools' response rates ranged from 9% to 29% (parents) and 33% to 94% (teachers), with overall response rates of 14% (parents) and 67% (teachers). It is possible that teachers and especially parents were more likely to respond if they had strong positive feelings about the school and the topic of the survey. 55% of the parent respondents identified their household as Sephardi/Mizrahi, 22% as Ashkenazi, and 8% as mixed Ashkenazi and Sephardi/Mizrahi. Within each school, the representation of Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews among survey respondents was somewhat higher than the administrators' estimates of students at their school, perhaps because of the advertised subject.

Data analysis

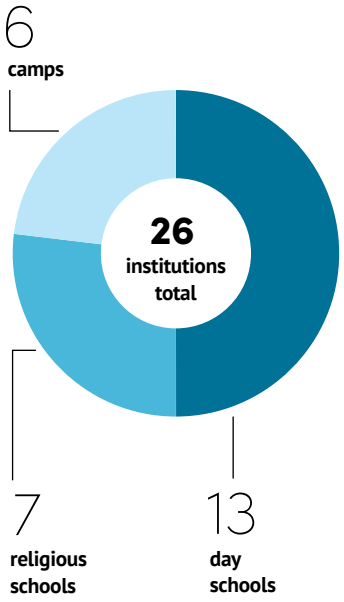
With the help of Rosov Consulting, we analyzed the survey data quantitatively and qualitatively, using Dedoose, SPSS, and R, and we analyzed the interview data qualitatively. The Dedoose interview coding involved 64 codes with 1,034 total applications. Quotes are presented verbatim, with the exclusion of hesitations and filler words like "like," and "you know."

Limitations

The richest data came from parent interviews, but only three day schools allowed us to conduct such interviews, and we did not request interviews at religious schools and summer camps. In addition, we did not interview or survey students because that would have involved a higher level of IRB approval and a more cumbersome consent process. Only one day school in the study – a school with a smaller Sephardi/Mizrahi population – mentioned having previously collected student data internally. This internal survey found that students who identified as "Middle Eastern" had lower satisfaction rates, especially on questions about social connection. Future research on this topic should include parent and student/camper interviews at several schools and camps.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND CAMPS

A total of 26 institutions participated in the study



Findings

ETHNIC CATEGORIES: TERMINOLOGY

People have a range of feelings about the terms Sephardi and Mizrahi (see similar finding in JIMENA's study *"Sephardic & Mizrahi Jews in the United States: Identities, Experiences, and Communities," pp. 42-49*). Most interviewees with ancestry in Iran, Iraq, Morocco, etc., identified with their particular ancestral groups – as Persian, Iraqi, Moroccan, etc. Many of them also identified with the label Sephardi because they pray with Sephardi nusach (liturgical variants and melodies). The term Mizrahi was less popular. A few Israelis said they reject it as an insulting overgeneralization, but they still used it in our interviews. Some interviewees of various backgrounds embraced the term Mizrahi. One Iraqi-ancestry respondent prefers that over the term Sephardi because his ancestors did not live in Spain. He also finds it useful as an umbrella term; for example, he used "Mizrahi klali" (general Eastern) to describe the population of a Sephardi-nusach synagogue that includes Moroccans, Iraqis, Persians, and Syrians. Others used the umbrella term Edut or Edot Hamizrach (groups of the East). A woman whose family escaped from Iran in 1979 rejected all ethnic labels beyond "Jewish." She explained, "Saying that there's a difference is what causes the difference. There's no difference. We're all Jews." Because of the diversity of opinion, this study uses the double term Sephardi/Mizrahi.

The label "Persian" refers to Jews with ancestry in Iran. While several Persian and non-Persian interviewees used both "Iranian" and "Persian," sometimes even in the same sentence, the label "Persian" was much more common. The discourse surrounding these two labels calls for further research, including with a focus on the history of Persia/Iran.

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COMPOSITION OF THE SCHOOLS AND CAMPS

All but one of the day schools and all of the religious schools and camps that participated in this study were founded by Ashkenazi Jews and were established as institutions aligned with Ashkenazi practice. Over the past few decades, these institutions, especially the day schools, have grown increasingly diverse as Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews have migrated to Los Angeles from Israel, Latin America, and directly from their countries of longstanding settlement, especially Iran, but also Iraq, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere. One Ashkenazi administrator who grew up in "homogenous" Orthodox communities in New York and New Jersey said that when his parents asked what is his favorite thing about LA – after the weather – he brings up the heterogeneity of the LA Orthodox community. At his school, a student might attend bnai mitzvah at different synagogues four weeks in a row – Moroccan, Persian, and two Ashkenazi. He also mentions students' conversations about different vegetables used for karpas on Passover.

Administrators at each school and camp were asked for the proportion of their students/campers and Jewish teachers/staff who are Sephardi or Mizrahi. Most of these institutions do not collect data about students' ancestral

DIVERSE DENOMINATIONS & GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

The days schools represented diverse denominations:

- Community
- Conservative
- Modern Orthodox
- Reform

The institutions are located in diverse geographic locations within Los Angeles City and the San Fernando Valley

groups – a glaring contrast with public schools, where the racial breakdown is public knowledge and widely discussed. Some interviewees reported not knowing whether certain students were Ashkenazi or Sephardi/Mizrahi; more salient were whether or not the family was American-born, as well as identities based on the locations from where more recent immigrants arrived, including Israeli, Persian, Russian, and Mexican. Often an administrator would not know if an Israeli or Mexican family is Ashkenazi or Sephardi. A few of the interviewees were Sephardi with ancestry in Greece, Turkey, or Rhodes, but those groups rarely came up in our conversations, in part because their migration mostly ended a century ago.

In the day schools where I interviewed administrators, teachers, and parents, the estimates varied widely, and many were reluctant to offer any numbers. Most administrators' estimates were based on general impressions, but some went through lists of students during the interview. One administrator looked at the school's past WASC accreditation reports but did not find demographic data there (in contrast to some other schools that did find that data there). He then said the percentage of Sephardi/Mizrahi students has increased over the years, and he eventually estimated Persian and Israeli students at 55% and teachers at 20%. However, when asked a few months later for the same demographic data, he offered 30-45% Persian and Israeli students and 35% teachers.

With the caveat that these estimates are not necessarily accurate, this report offers analysis based on ranges of density of Sephardi/Mizrahi students. We found that day schools tend to have higher density (20-85%) than religious schools (5-30%) and summer camps (4-25%). Nine of the 13 day schools in this sample have a large minority of Sephardi/Mizrahi students (20-40%), and the other four have a majority (50-85%). In fact, at the day school with 85% Sephardi/Mizrahi students, one Persian parent remarked, "Your study should be reversed, like, how can [the school] be more inclusive of Ashkenazi students?"

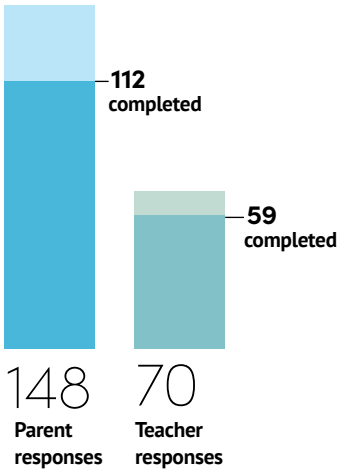
Most schools and camps have a larger percentage of Sephardi/Mizrahi students/campers than teachers/counselors, and for some, the gap is large. One camp reports having 24% Sephardi/Mizrahi campers and 48% Sephardi/Mizrahi counselors because many come from Israel (but it is possible that many of those Israelis are Ashkenazi). Two religious schools and one day school report slightly higher percentages of Sephardi/Mizrahi teachers than students. But all the rest of the institutions included in this study have significantly higher percentages of Sephardi/Mizrahi students than teachers. One day school reports 65% Sephardi/Mizrahi students (mostly Persian) and only 2% teachers, and another reports 50% and 5%. Most have closer ratios, such as 27% students and 10% teachers. Removing the outlier camp and religious school, the average difference in student and teacher ratios is 2% for religious schools, 7% for camps, and 23% for day schools. While we did not ask for estimates of administrators, we have data on the 26 administrators we interviewed: 20 were Ashkenazi, two Ottoman Sephardi, one Moroccan, one Iraqi, one Persian, and one Ashkenazi and Syrian.

Several administrators, parents, and teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the differential ratios; they wish their schools/camps had administrations and faculty that were more representative of the student body.

Most of these institutions do not collect data about students' ancestral groups – a glaring contrast with public schools, where the racial breakdown is public knowledge and widely discussed.

SURVEY PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

Over 200 survey responses helped shape an understanding of Sephardi/Mizrahi families



One North African parent at an Ashkenazi-majority school wrote, "We should have more Sephardi/Mizrahi in the administration with the actual power to make changes so there will be a balance." On the other hand, at two schools with a majority-Persian student body and few Persian teachers, parents said they were comfortable with that imbalance.

Admissions, recruitment, and population balance

Religious schools and summer camps tend to have lax admissions processes. As one religious school administrator said, "We don't have admissions … anyone who wants to can be a student." Several summer camps cultivate relationships with religious schools, day schools, and other communities to strengthen recruitment. One camp reached out to a particular day school because of its large Persian population. Because families had experienced their weekend retreats and felt comfortable at the camp, this camp succeeded in recruiting many Persian families. They also brought a Persian former staff member to recruitment events. He had aged out of the counselor stage and had a day job, but they continued to bring him along not only because he was "a wizard with the kids," but because they found he was better able to address the community's questions than the Ashkenazi staff.

At several day schools, administrators said they do not consider ethnicity in recruitment and admissions. One talked about prospective students' "character" and whether they can meet the school's academic rigor, and another said, "We really are only looking for mission-appropriate families, no matter the ethnicity." One Orthodox school reported that "boy-girl ratios" are more important than ethnicity, and another talked about finding the "hashkafic fit" (Jewish religious outlook): "are their family values and their spiritual, religious inclinations a match for our school culture?" That does correlate with ethnicity to some extent, as many Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews feel comfortable in the school's Modern Orthodox environment.

Other schools, however, do intentionally recruit populations they see as underrepresented. One day school with large Persian and Israeli populations consulted the recent Los Angeles Jewish population study and found they were "underperforming" in recruiting Jews of Color, Russian speakers, and LGBTQ+ families but not Israelis and Persians. They have boosted their recruitment efforts among the underrepresented populations. However, more important in admissions decisions are "student behavior and parent partnership." At the same time, the balance of Ashkenazi, Israeli, Persian, and other students does play an important role in their advisory group composition. Another school has been trying to recruit more Russians, Persians, and Jews of Color. Tapping into the efficacy of word-of-mouth publicity, they make parents from those communities "ambassadors of the school." Schools also reported using this method to increase attendance at family events; one administrator reached out to a Persian parent to encourage other Persian parents to attend a particular school celebration.

Another way that ethnicity comes up is in prospective families' questions. An administrator reports that some parents express concern about the large number of Persian students at the school. That is often their "lead question," "usually masked with … 'well, I just hear like the whole school is wealthy.'" This administrator characterizes these questions as a sign of "prejudice, racism,

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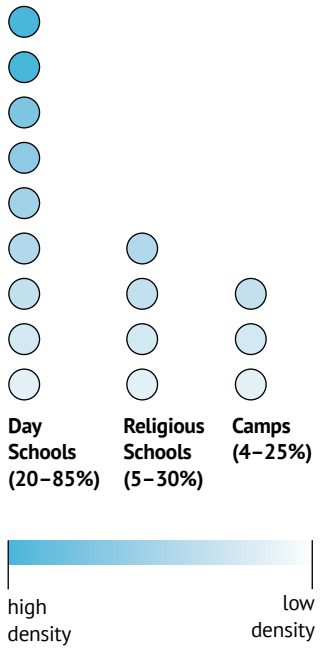
DENSITY OF SEPHARDI AND MIZRAHI STUDENTS BY INSTITUTION TYPE

Day schools show the broadest range of Sephardi/Mizrahi student representation, with smaller proportions in religious schools and camps



xenophobia, whatever you want to call it within the Jewish community."

At a different high Persian-density school, some Ashkenazi parents, including some who themselves attended the school, are reluctant to send their children because it is "too Persian." The administrator is critical of this stance: "You would never say, oh, that day school is an Ashkenazi day school. You'd just say they're a Jewish day school, right? But for some reason with the Persians, they say it's a Persian school." She responds to these Ashkenazi parents that the Persian families tend to be very committed to Jewish education. And she personally "leans into" the school's Persian dominance, embracing Persian culture, traditions, and food. She mentioned that other schools have quotas because "they don't want to be perceived as a school that is too Persian." She knows this based on conversations with other administrators and the fact that "they send us their Persian kids." At the same time, she highlights the diversity within her school in PR materials: "I make sure that every banner we have, every flyer, has Persian and non-Persian kids on it. Every Instagram post."

At another school, an administrator reports that it is not just Ashkenazi families who are uncomfortable with the school's large Persian population. "We have heard from some of the younger Persian families that they do not want their children in a Persian school, and they're very glad that we accept other kids."

To address such discourse, a decade before this study, Sinai Akiba Academy (mentioned here by name because of the public controversy) took out a full-page advertisement in the local Jewish newspaper: "'Too Persian.' Looks awful in print? It sounds worse in a whisper." As a Persian columnist explained, this ad was created by a mixed Persian-Ashkenazi committee to "combat a growing prejudice." But, as a contemporary administrator recalls, many Persian parents misunderstood the ad's intent, asking, "Is this even the school for me?" These contentious conversations call for professional development: how might administrators and parent ambassadors respond to such concerns, and how, if at all, should they be addressed in promotional materials?

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> **Some predominantly Ashkenazi schools and camps have found that hiring more Sephardim has helped attract more Sephardi families.**

Staff diversity

To what extent do schools and camps attempt to foster diversity among their administrators, teachers, and counselors? Summer camps often find this difficult, as their staff tends to come from the ranks of former campers, who have historically been Ashkenazi. However, many Jewish and non-Jewish staff come from abroad, and this is an opportunity to introduce diversity, including global Jewish communities, especially in Europe, Latin America, Australia, and, of course, Israel. One camp has staff from a dozen countries.

At most religious schools, there is such a dearth of applicants for teaching positions that they cannot afford to be picky about ethnicity. One administrator said he asks applicants about their experience working with people of different backgrounds. Another looks for teachers who can avoid microaggressions when speaking to mixed-faith families and non-binary madrichim (teaching assistants). Diverse Jewish ancestry, he said, would be "value added."

Day schools also tend to look for the most qualified staff of any ethnicity.

For teachers, that means, as one administrator explained, "how they relate to children, their philosophy of education … their openness to learning," their ability to address student learning needs, and their Jewish and Zionist values. Hebrew teachers should be fluent in Hebrew, which usually means they are Israeli (and often Sephardi/Mizrahi). Judaica teachers should have strong Judaic text skills, and general studies teachers are often not Jewish.

Some day schools expressed interest in ensuring a diverse faculty. An Orthodox day school is not concerned about ethnic diversity among teachers, but they attempt to keep a balance among their Ashkenazi and Sephardi rebeyim (rabbis). When there was a lack of Sephardi rabbis, they ignored the Ashkenazi candidates.

Ethnicity is only one facet of diversity; interviewees also mentioned sexual orientation, family structure, and political stance. Non-Orthodox schools that emphasize inclusiveness with regard to gender and sexual orientation seek out faculty who are open to that diversity. One school aims to diversify their liberal-leaning faculty with the goal of fostering debate, or "machloket." This often correlates with ethnicity, as Persian and other Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews tend to lean more to the right. At a majority Israeli school, hiring committees are less concerned about prospective faculty and staff's ancestral background and more concerned about their connection to Israel.

At another school, they ensure through the interview process that job applicants are aware of and accepting of the school's Persian majority. When a Persian teacher was hired here, the interviewing administrator was pleased that she was Persian, saying, "You're going to fit right in." Coming from a diverse non-Jewish school, this teacher was worried about being in a predominantly Persian environment, mostly because she had previously appreciated keeping her work and personal lives separate. However, it turned out to be a "very cool experience." In fact, some predominantly Ashkenazi schools and camps have found that hiring more Sephardim has helped attract more Sephardi families. One camp hired a Persian administrator, and that led to an influx of Persian counselors and campers because of her connections.

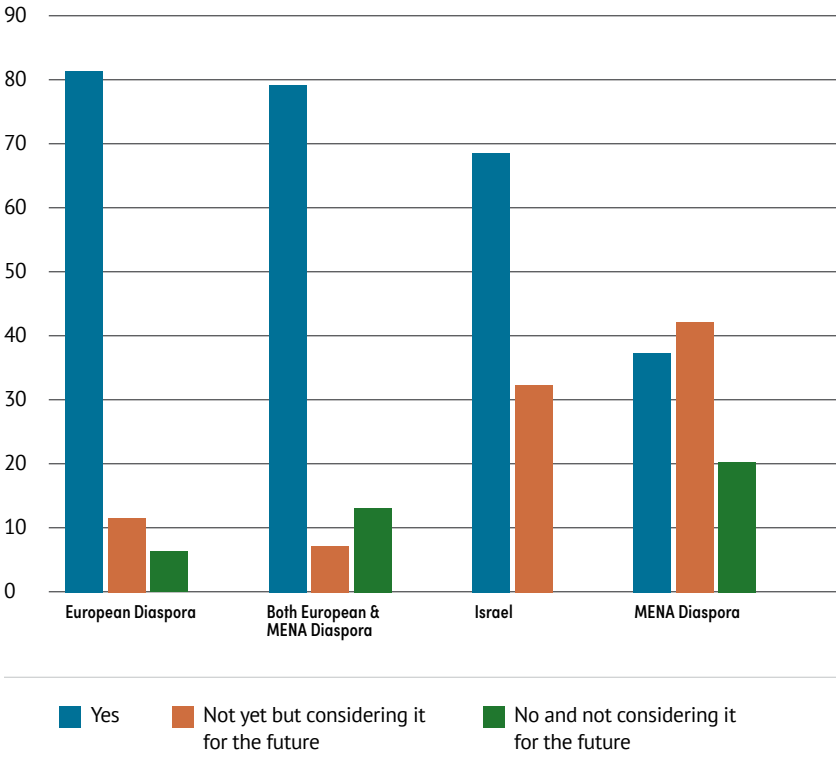
Hiring more Sephardi teachers can also lead to more Sephardi content. Several schools mentioned that they incorporated Sephardi content because of a particular teacher's initiative, usually but not always a Sephardi teacher. At one school, an administrator said that students learned about diverse Jewish traditions not because it was officially part of their curriculum but because of "the powerful connection to a charismatic rabbinic figure right in front of them." He feels the students no longer get that content because that Sephardi rabbi no longer works at the school.

When hiring with diversity as a goal, interviewees report varied experiences. One day school, when hiring for an administrative role, selected a candidate who was the strongest in some areas and not in others because of their Persian identity, and that person ended up being excellent. In contrast, a religious school administrator said she hired a Sephardi teacher in the interest of diversity, but in the teacher's first week it became clear that she was not up to the task. It made the administrator think about "how to balance all the different criteria that I have for teachers."

Sleepaway camp participation

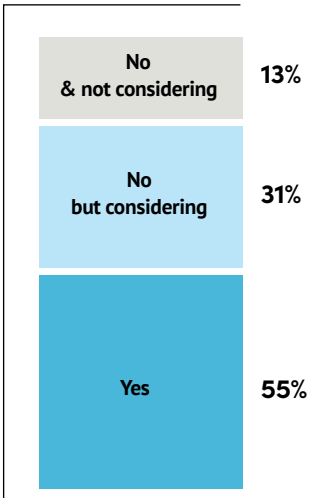
While we did not survey or interview parents at particular sleepaway camps, we did ask about camp on the parent survey, which went to middle school parents at one Orthodox school and three non-Orthodox schools: "Have you sent any of your children to Jewish sleepaway camp?" Of the 121 parents who answered this question, 55% replied, "Yes," 31% "Not yet but considering it for the future," and 13% "No and not considering it for the future." Sephardi and Ashkenazi families differed greatly on this question, as Figure 1 indicates.

Figure 1: Have sent any of their children to Jewish sleepaway camp, plans for future, by child's ancestral origin



JEWISH SLEEPAWAY CAMP PARTICIPATION AND INTEREST

Among 121 surveyed parents, over half have already sent a child to a Jewish sleepaway camp, while a third are considering it for the future.



121 **total responses to the question:**

"Have you sent any of your children to Jewish sleepaway camp?"

A large majority of European Diaspora and mixed families have sent their children to camp, as have 2/3 of Israeli families. MENA Diaspora families (non-Israeli Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, mostly Persian) are much less likely to have sent their children to camp. However, both Israeli and MENA Diaspora Jews express an interest in camp in the future – only 21% of MENA Diaspora Jews and no Israeli Jews say they are not considering camp for the future.

We also asked parents which Jewish sleepaway camps they have sent their children to. Jews of all ancestries listed camps across the board, including pluralistic, Zionist, secular, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. Persian respondents, for example, mentioned seven California camps (Ramah Ojai, Ramah Galim, Newman, Wilshire Blvd Temple

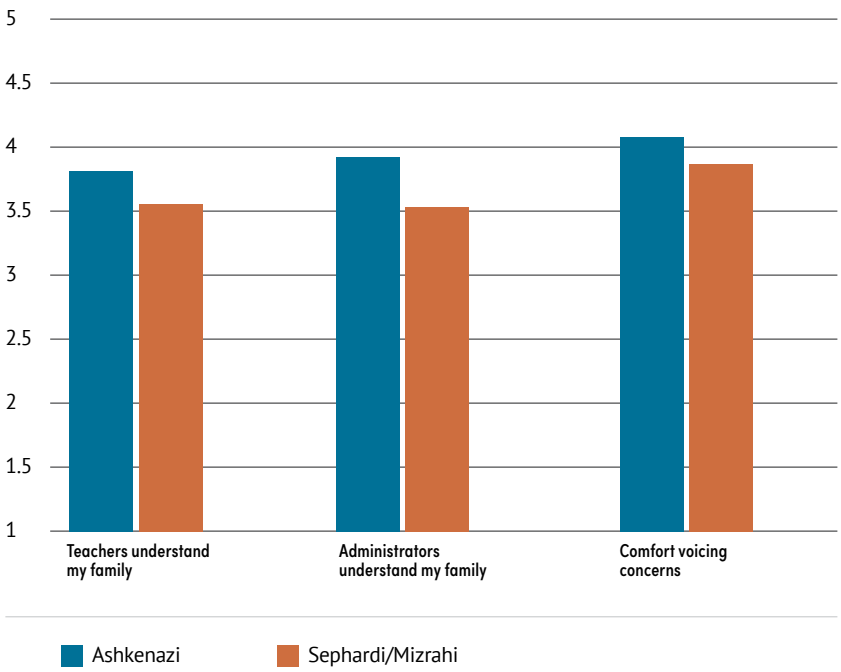
[including Hess Kramer], JCA Shalom, Alonim, Moshava Alevy); and five camps elsewhere (Sephardic Adventure Camp, Camp Dina, Mach Hach, Hatikva, and Modin). Other groups mentioned these, plus Ramah in the Rockies, Judea, Lavi, Moshava, Stone, Kayitz, 6 Points, Gilboa, Bob Waldorf, Kimama, Tamakwa, and Ramah Berkshires. Two of the camps that participated in this study were not mentioned, likely because they attract few day school families and attract more families from other parts of California.

While Sephardi/Mizrahi families have not embraced summer camps at the same rates as Ashkenazim, those who have demonstrate an interest in a diverse array of camps. Those who have not are mostly considering camp for the future. There is clearly an opportunity for targeted recruitment of Israeli and especially Persian campers.

INCLUSIVITY RATINGS

In general, parents were quite satisfied with their schools' inclusiveness. One parent said her school "has done a beautiful job embracing the Persian community." We created an inclusion index that combined responses to 21 questions on the parent survey (see Appendix; scale of 1-5: 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). With a minimum score of 21 and a maximum score of 105, the mean scores for parents tended to be high: Ashkenazi parents 81, Sephardi/Mizrahi parents 75. The differences between the groups for each item were small, as can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Select questions from parents' inclusion index, by respondent's ethnic identity



Most of the write-in responses also emphasized the schools' inclusiveness, but some offered suggestions for improvement. One Ashkenazi parent used the survey to complain that his children's school "allows Persians to do whatever they want and make everyone else's lives miserable." He asked, "Is this survey meant to imply the school is going to become MORE inclusive of the community that has terrorized the school for 30 years?" At this same school, a Persian parent wrote:

> *The school favors Ashkenazi students and has been discriminatory in many ways to the Persian families who are the majority of the school. This has been the case for many, many years unfortunately, and that is why they lost so many great families and enrollment has dropped. Persian families do not feel welcome.*

In general, parents were quite satisfied with their schools' inclusiveness. One parent said her school "has done a beautiful job embracing the Persian community."

MOST PARENTS FEEL INCLUDED

Average inclusion scores remain high across backgrounds, with minor differences.

Ashkenazi Families
Sephardi/Mizrahi Families

Parents from all backgrounds expressed high satisfaction with school inclusiveness. On a 21–105 scale, Ashkenazi families averaged 81 and Sephardi/Mizrahi families 75.

However, these were among the few exceptions to the generally positive responses about inclusiveness.

Among the 60 teachers surveyed, there was great diversity in their responses. On an index we created (similar to the parents' inclusion index but with different ranges), teachers' characterizations ranged from 3 to 26 at one school and 5 to 17 at another. However, most teachers gave positive evaluations of their schools' inclusiveness. The vast majority (88-95%) of teachers report that they are aware of their students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds, that their students feel comfortable bringing up their ethnic and cultural backgrounds in their classes, that they easily communicate with parents and families from different backgrounds, and that they feel comfortable teaching about cultures that are not their own. And most (80%) agree that they have a lot of freedom over the content of their curriculum and can easily make changes. Most teachers interviewed report that they feel comfortable expressing concerns to the administration.

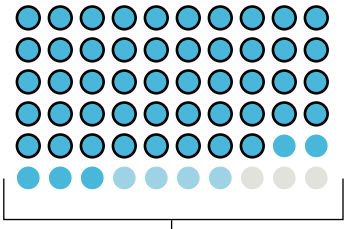
Some teachers' write-in responses praise the schools. For example:

> *At our school, we approach inclusivity with thought and care by intentionally getting to know each student and their family through regular communication, conferences, and ongoing relationships. We honor the diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds of our students by incorporating their stories, traditions, and experiences into the classroom and school community. This personalized approach helps every student feel seen, valued, and respected as an individual.*

Other teachers offer criticism, such as, "On paper, the school sounds very inclusive, but that's not always reflected in practice," And "There are no public acknowledgements of Mizrachi celebrations/commemorations… Many Yiddish words and terms (davening, shabbos, mensch) are accepted as 'Jewish' and thus the norm at our school. T'fillah is only done with Ashkenazi nusach." The sections below delve into these questions through survey and interview data.

INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

Teachers overwhelmingly reported that they value and recognize students' diverse backgrounds.



60

teachers surveyed

88–95%

Affirmed awareness, comfort, and communication across cultures

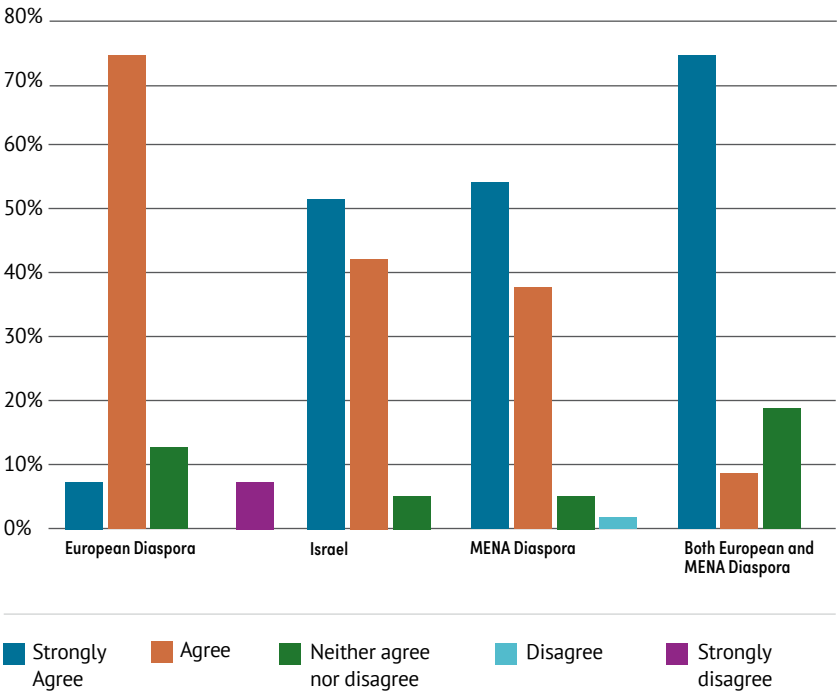
80%

Feel they have the freedom to shape their curriculum

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

In general, interviewees reported that Sephardi/Mizrahi and Ashkenazi students are friendly with each other. The survey asked for parents' agreement with this statement: "In school, my child is friendly with peers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds." The vast majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed, but Ashkenazi parents tended to agree, while Sephardi/Mizrahi parents were more likely to strongly agree. Figure 3 shows the data divided by child's ancestral origin (European Diaspora aligns to some extent but not completely with Ashkenazim, MENA Diaspora aligns to some extent but not completely with Sephardim/Mizrahim, and Israel and Both include a mix of Ashkenazim, Sephardim, and those of mixed heritage).

Figure 3: "In school, my child is friendly with peers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds" by Child's Ancestral Origin



This finding might indicate that Sephardi/Mizrahi parents think their children have more close friends who are Ashkenazi than vice versa. Despite the difference, it is notable that few parents disagree with this statement. That was not always the case. At one high school and one middle school, interviewees recall groupings according to ethnicity a generation ago but say that is no longer the case. And several interviewees report that parents are more likely than children to group socially according to ethnicity today. One Persian mother described the social groupings at holiday functions at the school:

> **"All the Ashkenaz moms are sitting together, Persian moms are sitting together, Israeli moms are sitting together. We make small talk, but it ends there.**

All the Ashkenaz[1] moms are sitting together, Persian moms are sitting together, Israeli moms are sitting together because that's just how it is. These are the people we know. These are the people we hang out with. These are the people we carpool with. These are the people from our shuls… Everyone knows each other. Everyone is very respectful of one another. We make small talk, but it ends there.

The social groupings among parents sometimes lead to children becoming more friendly with children who share their background, based on seeing them outside of school at their families' social gatherings. As an administrator explains, the Persian community is "close knit" and gets together outside of school; many are even cousins. Another factor, as one Persian teacher explained, is that parents make "play dates" for their children, "and usually they will try to do it with the people that they feel more comfortable with culturally."

Ethnic social groupings tend to emerge later in the school years, especially in high school. Several parents said ethnicity is not a salient category among their elementary or even middle school children. At a K-6 school with a large Persian population, a Persian parent says the children have friends of diverse backgrounds and often are not aware of each other's ancestry. When her son talks about another student, he does not mention their ethnicity, and she guesses by asking what they brought for lunch.

However, some interviewees and survey respondents did discuss social grouping according to ethnicity, especially among middle schoolers. A Persian mother wrote that "Israelis hate Persians… They refuse to hang out or hav[e] playdates with Persians." An Iraqi mother said her daughter tends to gravitate toward other Sephardi children for her closest friendships because of "a deeper mutual understanding of background." Even so, she does have many Ashkenazi friends. A Persian mother said the majority of her son's friends are Persian or Israeli because they:

Somehow match his vibes more. It's not because they're purposely trying not to be with each other. I think that the Ashkenaz boys are more reserved, … quieter, maybe more religious, … politer, … and the Israelis and the Persians are more outspoken, more assertive, more dominant, … way more opinionated.

Even when social groups are dominated by a particular ethnicity, there are often exceptions, such as one Ashkenazi child in a Persian clique, one Israeli in an Ashkenazi clique.

While Ashkenazi parents were not interviewed for this study, some did complete the survey. One Ashkenazi parent at a Persian-dominant school wrote, "I feel shut out. Other than [one mom], I can't get a Sephardic/Mizrahi parent to say more than 'hi' to me." This mom said her daughter has the same problem: She "has girls in her grade that she wants to be friends with but feels shut out b/c she isn't Persian … she feels isolated."

"

Ethnic social groupings tend to emerge later in the school years, especially in high school

1 In Orthodox communities, "Ashkenaz" is often used as an adjective, while non-Orthodox Jews tend to say "Ashkenazi" or "Ashkenazic."

Several interviewees said that students group socially based on interest and orientation toward academics rather than ancestry. One administrator joked, "It's probably divided by who likes the Lakers and who likes the Clippers." In some cases, ethnic-based groupings are influenced by student interests (beyond basketball). At one high school, Persian students are well represented in all activities and clubs except for the performing arts, which are dominated by Ashkenazi students.

To encourage mingling among social groups, including across ethnic differences, some schools curate ethnically and socially diverse advisory groups and offer occasional ice breakers and social programs like shabbatonim (retreats over Shabbat). Elementary and middle schools tend to have rules about inviting all girls or boys in the grade to out-of-school birthday parties, unless the family is inviting less than half of them. This is intended not only to encourage mingling of Sephardi and Ashkenazi children but also to minimize hurt feelings. One administrator reports that his school has "done a really good job … over the past decade to eliminate that 'them versus us' mentality."

One school with a large Persian population addresses "cliquiness" according to Ashkenazi and Persian ancestry by curating the classes based not only on gender and academic ability but also on ethnicity. Despite these efforts, one middle school grade ended up majority Persian after two Ashkenazi girls left for another school and their friends followed suit. "There was a lot of fear around … what would it be like socially for their kids" in the smaller grade. In extreme cases like this, the tendency of social groupings can lead to attrition.

Despite the interventions, a few interviewees talked about Persian social groups, sometimes self-named, such as the "Persian posse" or the "Persian FBI." Sometimes group names are imposed by others, such as "the Persian mafia" and, for French (mostly North African ancestry) students, "the Frenchies."

At summer camps, ethnic groupings seem to be less prevalent. At one camp, an Ashkenazi administrator reports that some Persian campers "blend in," but others "have a harder time embracing camp" because they "come in with a large group of friends and … don't branch out to make new friends." Some summer camps have "affinity groups" – designated gatherings for campers and/or staff of a particular identity category, such as Queer, Black, or People of Color. Two high schools have Persian student clubs, and one has a Moroccan student club, but none of the camps included in this study have Persian or Sephardi/Mizrahi affinity groups.

Ethnic/racial teasing

Most interviewees reported that there is no bullying or teasing at their school based on ethnicity. On the parent survey, only 10% of Ashkenazim and 20% of Sephardim/Mizrahim agreed with this statement: "I have heard about students being bullied, harassed, or teased because of their ethnic or cultural background." The numbers on the teacher survey are slightly higher: 29% have observed such bullying, harassment, or teasing. 85% of teachers say they're aware of the policy for addressing such behavior.

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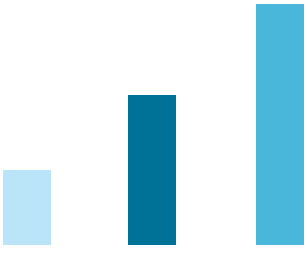
Most interviewees reported that there is no bullying or teasing at their school based on ethnicity.

PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING BY ETHNICITY AND ROLE

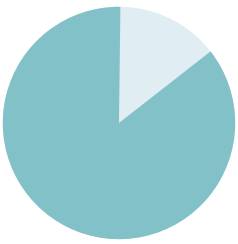
Reports or observations of bullying:



10% Ashkenazi parents heard of bullying

20% Sephardi/ Mizrahi parents heard of bullying

29% Teachers observed bullying



85% Teachers report awareness of their school's policy for handling bullying

Most of the instances of teasing that came up in interviews were minor. At one school, a teacher said Persian and Ashkenazi students sometimes make jokes about each other's lunches, or a Persian student complains about being hairy, and "everyone laughs about it." At a summer camp, a non-Persian camper said to his Persian friend, "Look, I'm Persian," pointing to his outfit, which he associated with a Persian look, and the Persian boy was offended. At a day school, a parent said a classmate called her preteen son "Persian this or Persian that." The administration disciplined the child and brought in his parents after repeated episodes.

A few interviewees at a day school with a smaller Sephardi/Mizrahi population reported some interactions they considered offensive or racist. An Ashkenazi child repeatedly teased a Sephardi child about having dark skin, and the administration disciplined the student, involving his parents. A parent recalled walking into the school with her young daughter, and a kindergarten boy saw them and ran the other direction, yelling, "Persians should be fired from the school!" She did not report the incident to the administration; "if tolerance and respect hasn't been taught in a family, I don't think school can do anything about it." A teacher at this school says, "I think in general we do a good job of trying to navigate those things and not allowing those things to get out of hand and using them as tools for learning and more sensitivity."

At another school, an administrator relayed an incident where middle schoolers were playfully trading insults on the playground, and an Ashkenazi student said to a Sephardi student, "You're black." A teacher heard this, and the student was suspended for a week with an assignment to research racism and the power of words.

Racial teasing can also be directed toward Ashkenazi students. At a school with a Persian majority, a teacher relayed an incident where Persian students teased an Ashkenazi student about his pale skin, saying "You're so white." She also mentioned problems with students using the N-word on a group chat and calling particular students gay on a group chat. Students were disciplined for these comments.

Some of the racism mentioned in interviews involved Persian students speaking negatively about Black or Hispanic people. One administrator said a Persian student made derogatory comments to a classmate who was half Persian, half Mexican, like "your grandmother's my housekeeper" and "your mother cuts up fruit on the corner." This student was disciplined.

Despite incidents like these, most interviewees minimized the presence of ethnic-based bullying at their schools. One parent said her family had never experienced teasing and only wished the students would not talk so much about who is Ashkenazi or Sephardi. However, parents, teachers, and administrators only know about incidents that are escalated. It is likely that interviews with students would yield more data about teasing and bullying involving race and ethnicity.

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Two high schools have Persian student clubs, and one has a Moroccan student club, but none of the camps included in this study have Persian or Sephardi/Mizrahi affinity groups.

BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION

Most of the parents we interviewed felt that teachers and administrators at their schools treated them with respect. A few parents, however, reported that an administrator spoke to them in a way that any anti-bias trainer would condemn as stereotyping, essentialize, microaggression, or racism. Examples included, "You Persians, you always know someone, you always know a doctor" and "Oh my God, you Persians" when she brought up concerns about gender and sexuality.

A few Persian parents at one school complained about favoritism. One felt that Israeli teachers favored Israeli students and gave an example of her daughter not being allowed to go to the bathroom, while Israeli students were. Another Persian mom said her son complained about a particular rabbi favoring "the Ashkenaz goody-two-shoes" students over Persian and Israeli students. Her son reported incidents like this: "I'll come late to class, and he'll make a comment and make me feel bad in front of all the kids. But then, my friend that's Ashkenaz will come in 5 minutes after, and he wouldn't tell him anything. He would just, 'OK, sit down, get out your siddur [prayerbook].'" She thinks this favoring is based in part on the rabbi knowing some students from his Ashkenazi synagogue or favoring more religious students or students who attend his optional after-school classes and summer camp, but she also points to cultural differences:

Maybe [the Ashkenaz kids are] more disciplined. Maybe they're better listeners. Maybe they're more into the Torah studies… And maybe the Israeli kids or the Persian kids are not connecting on the same level as the Ashkenaz kids do, or maybe they … know how to stand up for themselves more. They don't just follow all the rules all the time, because we're just culturally brought up differently, like, if you don't like something, you just say, "No, I don't like it."

She has also noticed ethnic favoring that benefited her son. If he forgot his lunch, a Persian assistant teacher would find food for him, while she would not, the mom believes, do the same for Ashkenazi students.

To further explore bias, the survey asked teachers for their agreement with this statement: "I have a rapport with students from ethnic and cultural backgrounds different from my own." The vast majority agreed. However, teachers of all backgrounds were divided on this question: "I have a greater rapport with students whose backgrounds are similar to mine than with students whose backgrounds are different from mine." We did not ask explicitly about stereotypes and bias, but it is clear from interviews that many people of all backgrounds hold stereotypes about their own and others' groups.

At one religious school, an administrator reported that Ashkenazi members and staff expressed stereotypes of Persians as "politically rigid," dishonest about their finances to avoid paying full price, and having children with poor behavior and denying it. When a new clergy member joined the staff, some Persian families followed from his previous congregation. Ashkenazi members and staff realized that these stereotypes were not always accurate, and the institutions began to more actively recruit

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Most of the parents interviewed felt that teachers and administrators… treated them with respect. A few parents, however, reported that an administrator spoke to them in a way that any anti-bias trainer would condemn as stereotyping, essentializing, microaggression, or racism.

Persian families, including advertising in Persian neighborhoods. People still hold these stereotypes to varying degrees, but this administrator is glad that the unstated policy has changed.

To address stereotypes and discrimination, one school brought in a Persian psychologist for a professional development training. An administrator evaluated this session negatively, saying it "reinforced a lot of stereotypes and didn't in any way help our teachers or our admin do a better job serving the needs of all of our kids." She contrasts this one-time training with more successful sessions led by Matthew Nouriel from JIMENA and Keshet, a Jewish LGBTQ+ inclusion organization. A structural intervention to address stereotypes has been to create divisions where students are with a cohort of faculty and administrators for two years. "You're less likely to be categorized by the way you look or the culture you come from if you're known well." An administrator feels this intervention was successful but says, "I'm not sure we're doing enough."

Day school teachers also mentioned bias and discrimination directed toward them. At one school, a Persian parent complained to an Israeli teacher that her son was not happy. The teacher was offended by this comment in the parent's email: "I know sometimes Israelis could be a little rough around the edges." The head of school intervened, and the parent apologized.

One Persian-Israeli teacher feels excluded or uncomfortable at her school not because she is Sephardi but because she is an immigrant. This manifests in people speaking slowly when they hear her accent and feeling left out of activities that expect knowledge of American popular culture.

For a few Mizrahi teachers who had spent time in Israel, the discrimination they experienced there influenced their self-understanding as minoritized in the US. One woman of mixed Mizrahi ancestry reported feeling less pressure to suppress her Mizrahi cultural practices in the US than in Israel, like ululation at joyous events.

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You're less likely to be categorized by the way you look or the culture you come from if you're known well.

REPRESENTATION IN CURRICULUM AND RITUALS

Among the lowest ratings on the parent survey were whether, in school, their children learn about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and religious practice; and whether they learn these as often as Ashkenazi history, culture, and religious practice. For the latter, on a scale of 1-5, the average score for Ashkenazi parents was 2.93 and for Sephardi/Mizrahi parents was 2.27.

Among the school and camp administrators interviewed, most pointed to elements of their curriculum and programming about Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews, but several also expressed an interest in infusing more of this content. Among the 22 day school teachers surveyed who teach Judaic subjects or history, 63% report that their "curriculum includes content about Sephardi/Mizrachi history, culture, and/or religious practice," but only 18% strongly agree, suggesting that this curricular content may be minimal. 57% agree that "I want to include more content about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and/or religious practice."

To give some examples from interviews, a camp administrator requested a resource delineating differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi holiday traditions. Another camp administrator suggested, "If we can bring targeted programming to camp that would appeal to [Persian] communities, that might help them feel more comfortable sending their kids to our camp." And a religious school director expressed a desire for more content: "I'd like to find more ways to help highlight the diversity even within our own community… I'd like to have every kid feel like their ancestry matters and be able to point to things that we do in the school and like, hey, we do that in our house."

Most of the Sephardi/Mizrahi parents interviewed for this study were comfortable with the degree of representation of their ancestral communities in their school's curriculum and rituals. In some cases, this may reflect a lack of knowledge about their ancestral traditions, due to a rupture in cultural transmission. For instance, one parent at a Reform school did not attend a Persian synagogue growing up and did not celebrate Nowruz in her home. She does not feel the school should add content about Persian culture or history to the curriculum, and she believes the primary differences between her Persian community and the school are in religious observance. She reports that, following an increase in Persian enrollment, the school accommodated the community by requiring all food on campus to be kosher. Also based on parent feedback, she feels they increased the emphasis on Israel and deemphasized "the gender stuff," like asking young students for their pronouns. The only incident she complained about was when a teacher brought up Jewish atheism in her daughter's classroom. Similarly, several interviewees relayed stories of families transferring from one school to another in search of a better religious or political fit but never to find more content about Sephardi halacha, culture, or history. Those who want an immersive Sephardi environment select a Sephardi day school.

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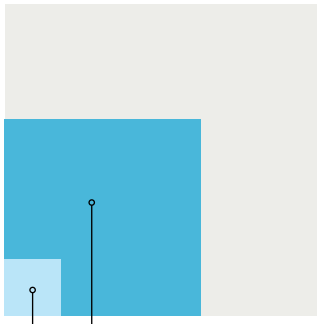
Among the lowest ratings on the parent survey were whether, in school, their children learn about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and religious practice

On the other hand, several parents, especially those who grew up attending Moroccan, Iraqi, or other Sephardi synagogues, did express a desire for more Sephardi religious and cultural content at their children's schools. One mother said teaching about Mizrahi culture, including trope and traditions, would strengthen her children's pride in their Iraqi and Libyan Jewish heritage and identity. Another feels there is appropriate content in the middle school but that it should begin in earlier grades. A parent of mixed ancestry, including Iraqi, feels that her school teaches sufficient content about Ashkenazi and Persian cultures but little about other Sephardi cultures: "I don't think my kids have learned about Jewish life in Iraq and why the Jewish community left in the late 40s and why they were exiled. I'd love for them to learn about the richness and Jewish cultures all over the world and customs." This section explains how the schools are already incorporating Sephardi content in the curriculum and in holiday celebrations and other events, and it highlights teachers' and parents' additional ideas for increasing representation.

INCLUSION EXISTS — BUT TEACHERS WANT MORE

Most teachers surveyed who teach Judaic subjects or history include Sephardi/Mizrahi topics, but responses also suggest limited depth. More than half of teachers want to add additional material in the future.

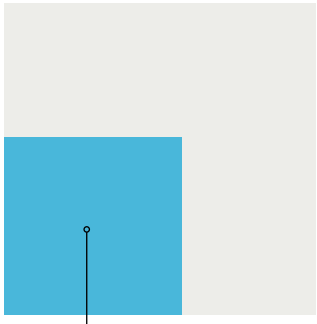


63%

of teachers include Sephardi/Mizrahi content

18%

of teachers strongly agree on the depth of inclusion



57%

of teachers want to "include more content about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and/or religious practice."

HALACHA AND MINHAGIM

The Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Chabad traditions differ in halacha, the Jewish legal norms for daily life and religious observance, as well as in minhagim, other practices, especially around prayer and holidays. Many interviewees said these differences come up in their curriculum and in interactions among students. A day school teacher mentioned differences "based on our ancestry" that he discusses in the classroom and said, "That's the beauty of Judaism – that we have different customs." However, several interviewees felt their schools were not teaching enough about differences among Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Chabad halacha, especially in Orthodox schools, where halacha is a subject of instruction.

Historically Ashkenazi schools tend to teach Ashkenazi halacha, which sometimes leads to dissonance for Sephardi students who considered their families observant. When Ashkenazi halacha is taught as the default, they may assume their parents are doing things wrong. Halachic differences mentioned in interviews include who is required to light Shabbat candles, how many Chanukah menorahs a family lights, engaging a Shabbos goy, bishul akum (foods cooked by non-Jews) requirements for mishloach manot (two items or items that call for two separate brachot), how many days the Selichot prayers are recited, and different wordings in prayers and blessings, including Kiddush, Asher Yatsar, and Chanukah candle lighting.

Sometimes differences in halacha and minhag arise organically. For example, in discussion of netilat yadayim (washing hands), a teacher mentioned that some Jews wash three times on each hand, while others wash twice. A Yemenite student raised his hand and said that some Yemenite Jews wash only once on each side. This kind of difference also surfaces when students observe each other's practices, such as students washing their hands before lunch or, at "Poteach et yadecha" in the Ashrei prayer, opening their hands, then kissing them and touching their eyes. One Ashkenazi teacher leans in to this student-driven learning: "I definitely don't pretend to be the expert at all." He encourages his students to share about their ancestral traditions, especially surrounding holidays.

One teacher in an Orthodox school said the school has improved its halacha education since she was a student there. She remembers learning that glass dishes must be separated for meat and milk products and then avoiding the glass dishes in her home. When she eventually learned that Sephardi halacha allows the same glass dishes to be used for meat and milk, she recalls thinking, "I wish that rabbi knew that. I wish I had known that more confidently, so I wouldn't have been so scared." What changed since she was a student? The increasing number of Sephardi students in the school led Ashkenazi teachers to be more aware of halachic differences. If a student asks about differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi halacha and the teacher does not know, there are also now more Sephardi rabbis and teachers to ask. A Persian rabbi who was trained in Ashkenazi yeshivot answers questions about Sephardi halacha using a Sephardi halachic book and answers questions about Chabad halacha by consulting chabad.org. Despite these improvements, the alumna/teacher still sees room for growth.

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Several interviewees felt their schools were not teaching enough about differences among Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Chabad halacha.

She recommends that the school offer the halacha class on separate Sephardi and Ashkenazi tracks in sixth and seventh grades and then a joint class in eighth grade where students would learn about each other's traditions. See more on separate tracks below.

Another option is to align the curriculum with the students. One day school originally taught Ashkenazi halacha, but after Sephardi Israeli families became the majority, they switched to Sephardi halacha as the default, with occasional mentions of how Ashkenazi halacha differs.

Multiple teachers and administrators expressed a desire for more education about differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardi halacha. One Ashkenazi rabbi-administrator said the school hoped to incorporate more about this topic when the school revises its curricular standards. He said one of the roadblocks is his lack of knowledge.

At a few Reform religious schools, interviewees mentioned that Persian parents are looking for more traditional religious orientation. At one school, this resulted in minor conflict between Ashkenazi and Persian parents about level of kashrut. At another school, the director said, "If a Mizrahi family came in and said, 'Hey, we want to do more of this,' there would not be a problem with it – unless it was more observant and more traditional and didn't fit with progressive Reform Judaism."

"

One day school's lifecycle module covers diverse Jewish communities, teaching about pre-wedding henna ceremonies, Shabbat hattan, zeved habat, and hilula.

Minhagim across the lifecycle

Sephardi/Mizrahi minhagim come up in the curricula at several schools. Two religious school directors mentioned that their schools teach about the difference in naming practices: Sephardim tend to name babies after living relatives, while Ashkenazim prefer deceased honorees.

One day school has a middle-school lifecycle module. They cover diverse Jewish communities, teaching about pre-wedding henna ceremonies, Shabbat hattan (when the groom has an aliyah the Shabbat after the wedding, in contrast to the Ashkenazi aufruf, which happens before the wedding), zeved habat (girl's birth ceremony, lit. 'gift of the daughter'), and hilula (joyful celebration on the anniversary of a tzadik's death). The Ashkenazi teacher is able to incorporate this content not only because she has learned about diverse Jewish communities but also because she invites parents who grew up with these traditions to present to the class. One parent spoke to her son's class about Libyan and Tunisian Jewish traditions, including Eid Al-Banat, a girls' celebration on Rosh Chodesh Tevet, which falls during Chanukah; and Seudat Yitro, a pre-Purim feast for boys involving quail. Because of a rupture in cultural transmission, she learned about these traditions not from her home growing up but from her research. A fifth-grade class at this school also ritualizes the parent visit: all parents are invited to sign up for a date at the beginning of the year and speak to the class about their family's history and culture, often bringing in a ritual object or other heirloom.

The teacher of the lifecycle module says Sephardi/Mizrahi traditions come up not only as part of the curriculum but also when students make "dedications" at the beginning of a class, mentioning a family event they attended. Similarly, at a religious school that meets only once a week, they

do not incorporate diverse Jewish communities into the curriculum. But lifecycle differences sometimes arise organically in classroom conversations, such as when a student mentioned that her parents, born in Iran, had an arranged marriage, and the teacher led a conversation about that.

Learning about diverse cultures also happens outside of school. For example, when an Ashkenazi administrator in a predominantly Sephardi/Mizrahi school visited Persian homes for meals, he noticed that forks are rarely used because most meals center around stews, eaten with spoons. A religious school administrator said that her students and their parents learned about each other's cultural norms when families were matched for home-hosted Shabbat dinners. Persian families were surprised at how early Ashkenazi families eat, while they put out the first course only around 9pm.

Another opportunity is guest speakers. As a religious school director said, "Speakers can be tough, like sometimes they're really great and engaging, and sometimes they're not. And it's harder to control what the kids are learning." Even so, speakers are common, especially for older students in day schools, and these speakers sometimes include Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews. One day school hosted Rav David Yosef, son of Ovadiah Yosef, when he was visiting from Israel, but they have not brought in any Persian Jews, despite the school's large Persian population. An administrator said they select speakers based on opportunities presented to the school, especially when speakers are visiting LA, rather than seeking out speakers from particular communities. Therefore, the impact of JIMENA's speaker's bureau could potentially be multiplied by coordinating a speaking tour for a particular speaker, reaching out directly to several schools (or camps) in a particular region.

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Persian families were surprised at how early Ashkenazi families eat Shabbat dinner, while they put out the first course only around 9pm.

TEFILLAH, BNAI MITZVAH, AND MINYANIM

While Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Chabad siddurim (prayerbooks) have much overlap, there are several differences, such as in the Kaddish, the Amidah, and whether certain prayers are included. Some aspects differ from one Sephardi group to another, such as Moroccans but not Persians saying a bracha for Hallel. Do schools and camps use one nusach or have multiple options? When they teach tefillah (prayer), do they point out differences among Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Chabad nusach? Tensions arise around this issue in Orthodox and Conservative schools and camps, where tefillah is frequent, less so in Reform and Community ones.

Ashkenormative tefillah

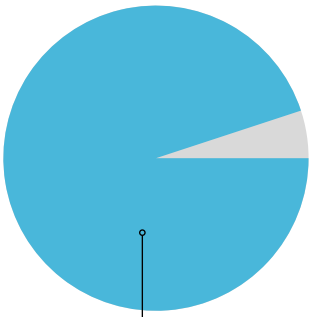
With a few exceptions, the schools and camps that participated in this study teach and conduct tefillah according to Ashkenazi nusach, using Ashkenazi siddurim. At a day school with a Persian majority, an administrator described the prayers as "100% Ashkenazi, led by Ashkenazi clergy, Ashkenazi music leaders." Most of the institutions do not explicitly acknowledge this orientation. As one camp leader said, "We're not naming like this is Ashkenazi, this is Sephardic, this is Mizrahi … that's not a piece of how we do things at camp."

The absence of Sephardi nusach – and the lack of meta discourse naming that absence – leads some school and camp leaders to characterize their own institutions as "Ashkenormative," treating Ashkenazi practices as the default. That word came up in a few administrator and teacher interviews, but rarely by Persian or Orthodox respondents. An Ashkenazi teacher at a predominantly Ashkenazi day school wrote, "I still feel we default to Ashkenaz-normative. Example: We have a 'Sephardic Havdallah' for a grade; does that imply all other events are Ashkenazic?" At a different mostly Ashkenazi day school, an Ashkenazi teacher said, the Sephardi families that choose that school "have already kind of accepted this kind of Ashkenormative attitude a little bit." At a majority-Ashkenazi high school, a Sephardi administrator used this term to highlight the school's inclusion of Sephardi/Mizrahi content: "The idea that Judaism is not just Ashkenormative is central to the school's mission." Education about Jews around the world is prominent; they have a Sephardi music ensemble and a program where students interact with and even visit Jewish communities in Mexico, Turkey, Uganda, and other countries. Students read Torah, deciding which trope (cantillation system – a Yiddish-origin word) to use. As the administrator reports, "sometimes we get some nice Sephardic trope, which is beautiful, so much more expressive than what I usually hear." Even so, tefillah at this school is solely Ashkenazi.

At another school, much of the content has shifted to accommodate the influx of Israeli Mizrahi families over the last decade. An Ashkenazi administrator characterizes the school's tefillah education as "our Achilles heel when it comes to our Mizrahi identity." He said he is the "only plausible tefillah educator" and does not feel comfortable teaching Sephardi nusach. Their siddurim are Ashkenazi but not marked as such. However, the school does incorporate Mizrahi elements, such as Israeli

TEFILLAH PRACTICES ARE PREDOMINANTLY ASHKENAZI

Tefillah across schools and camps follows Ashkenazi patterns, often without recognition.



Predominately Ashkenazi nusach and siddurim

Yet most institutions do not explicitly identify this orientation — as one camp leader explained, "We're not naming like this is Ashkenazi, this is Sephardic, this is Mizrahi."

Sephardi blessings, zemirot, and melodies in their Friday Shabbat rituals. "Where possible," he said, "the Kabbalat Shabbat experience is supposed to be something that the kids can transport with them home and their parents will be happy … because it will feel like something that they can get behind."

How do Sephardi parents feel about their children learning Ashkenazi nusach? Some are fine with it. As one Persian mother said, "My kids are not in public school anymore. They're learning Torah. Who cares what kind of siddur they're learning it from." Other parents want their children to learn their ancestral prayer traditions, either in school or elsewhere. At an Orthodox school, two parents talked about their children learning Moroccan tefillah in a pre-bar mitzvah class at their synagogue, and one suggested that the school create an after-school Sephardic tefillah elective or chorus.

The issue of nusach learning also comes up among the Ashkenazi minority in the one historically Sephardi school included in this study. An Ashkenazi administrator there says that Ashkenazi parents ask when their child will learn to daven (pray) in the Ashkenazi way, and his response is that a smart kid will pick up on the differences at shul and at home. About the different prayer traditions and words like "leyning" versus "teamei hamikra," he said, "There's cross-pollination – the Ashkenazim are picking up a lot of Sephardi stuff, and the Sephardim are picking up a lot of Ashkenazi stuff when they're in school."

In some cases, Sephardi students teach Ashkenazi teachers about their prayer traditions. At a non-Orthodox school, an Ashkenazi teacher assigned the students to record themselves saying the Amidah prayer. A Sephardi student said she had different words in the Kedusha part, which she had learned at her previous school, which was Sephardi Orthodox. A teacher questioned this but then asked Sephardi friends and learned that the student was correct. She reported, "I apologized profusely, and I told her that she taught me something nice."

Sephardi infusion

Several schools and camps with varying Sephardi densities have incorporated elements of Sephardi nusach into their predominantly Ashkenazi communal tefillah. Some do this by making Sephardi siddurim available. One Orthodox day school offers "siddurim of every nusach that our students daven" – Artscroll's Ashkenazi and Sephardi siddurim, Nusach HaAri, and Temani (Yemeni). A few schools mention incorporating some Sephardi traditions for Selichot, and one school includes the Sephardi "Adon Haselichot" in their tashlich ritual. At a predominantly Ashkenazi Conservative school, a Moroccan teacher taught young children a Moroccan melody for Havdalah, which they sing on Monday mornings. At this same school, the middle school recites the second paragraph of the Sh'ma using a Sephardi melody (the first and third are Ashkenazi). This practice came about when an Ashkenazi teacher asked two Sephardi students to lead the Sh'ma, knowing they had learned the Baghdadi melody in preparation for their bnai mitzvah. The melody was a hit, and it became the norm at this school. An Ashkenazi parent says he has picked up this Baghdadi melody from his son from their nightly chanting of the Sh'ma.

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At a summer camp, a Sephardi administrator said that most prayers are Ashkenazi, but every once in a while Mizrahi Israeli shlichim (emissaries) lead Kabbalat Shabbat with a Mizrahi melody. He called this "Sephardi infusion," referencing my book Hebrew Infusion: Language and Community at American Jewish Summer Camps. He contrasted this infusion with the day schools in Seattle, where the prayers are either Ashkenazi or Sephardi depending who is leading, and students learn both traditions. "My sense is we've never really had a critical mass of any of those populations to be able to change the culture in a way that would feel organic and authentic."

At a Conservative day school, a Persian teacher said she has been nudging the Ashkenazi school rabbi to incorporate more Sephardi nusach and minhagim into tefillah "so that our Mizrahi kids will feel pride about their heritage." She reports that he asked her to help with that, and she responded, "No, it's not my job." She did try to engage her rabbi to help, but he was not comfortable with the egalitarian prayer and mixed seating. There is an opportunity for JIMENA to offer online resources and egalitarian-friendly consultants who can help schools infuse more Sephardi content into tefillah.

The tension between egalitarianism and Sephardi culture arises at several institutions. One Israeli Mizrahi parent at a Conservative school wrote, "I feel like the school needs to be more conservative. It is difficult for Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews to see females wrap tefillin." As an Ashkenazi teacher wrote, "in an egalitarian setting it can be challenging to address the needs of students who come from a more traditional background. We work hard to set the expectations in a way that is not exclusive, but it is hard to always satisfy all stakeholders."

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Bnai mitzvah

If a day school, religious school, or camp has even a few Sephardi students, bnai mitzvah are an opportunity for infusion of Sephardi traditions. A few interviewees talked about schools bringing in families of bnai mitzvah students for tefillah the Thursday before their bnai mitzvah. Some of the relatives read Torah or say blessings with Persian, Moroccan, and other Sephardi melodies and pronunciation. One administrator said she learned the Sephardi tradition of saying "Hashem imachem" ("May God be with you") before reciting the Torah aliyah blessings; the congregation responds, "Yevarechecha Hashem" ("May God bless you").

The main opportunity for Sephardi infusion is allowing each student to select which trope/te'amim (cantillation systems) to learn and use when they read Torah at their bnai mitzvah and beyond. Currently, when students learn to read Torah at a historically Ashkenazi religious school or day school, they generally learn Ashkenazi trope. At several schools, select children, especially from Moroccan and Iraqi backgrounds, have learned te'amim from their ancestral traditions outside of school, and the schools have celebrated that diversity, often commenting on it explicitly. A few school directors expressed a desire for students to learn other systems, like Moroccan or Persian, but pointed to a lack of qualified instructors, including, for one Conservative school, someone willing to teach Sephardi

te'amim to girls. This is an opportunity for JIMENA or another organization to offer not only online resources to learn the te'amim (such as bar-mitzva.com), but also a list of recommended bnai mitzvah tutors who can teach particular traditions, either in particular cities or online – including whether they are willing to teach girls.

In most Sephardi communities, girls do not read Torah or lead prayers, and the bat mitzvah is celebrated at age 12. At Ashkenazi non-Orthodox schools, the norm is for girls to read Torah and celebrate at age 13. When Sephardi families select such schools, the progressive and traditional values often compete. The schools and their associated synagogues prioritize gender equality and Reform or Conservative conventions, and the Sephardi families prefer the more traditional customs they have inherited from their ancestral groups. For example, at a non-Orthodox school, a Mizrahi Israeli parent asked the administration to not require her daughter to wear a kippah or read from the Torah. They agreed, but the daughter still wanted to do these things because her friends were. She felt her daughter would have had a different experience if there were more Israeli families in the school. At a different non-Orthodox school, a Persian parent recalls the conflict around this issue: "It's very difficult when you sound like you're diverse, but then at the same time you're not diverse."

One school transformed itself from an egalitarian Conservative school to a non-egalitarian Community school because of shifting demographics and parent requests. Enough Mizrahi Israeli families joined the school and wanted a "masorti" prayer experience – masorti in the Mizrahi sense of "traditional," where girls would not read Torah or lead prayers (a stark contrast to the Israeli Conservative movement, which is also called "Masorti"). A commission was formed, and they proposed a compromise that would include a women's tefillah option, but the board rejected it. Instead, they removed the Torah service from the school day, and now only boys are allowed to lead prayers. These changes led to an exodus of Ashkenazi families. "Not that their children complained about it, but it felt inimical to the to their Jewish commitments," an administrator explained.

Minyanim

The two Orthodox high schools included in this study have Sephardi minyan options. One has twelve options for minyanim, including "Sephardic, Ashkenaz, classic, shira (singing), explanatory, Chabad." Most of the Sephardi students opt for the Sephardi minyan, which uses Sephardi siddurim. At another high school, the Sephardi minyan allows students to select and teach their own melodies (Moroccan, Iraqi, Persian, etc.) when they are shaliach tsibur (service leader). At these schools, students tend to select the minyan of their ancestral group, but, as one parent put it, "there's back and forth, which is a lovely way to cross pollinate." Sephardi services tend to be longer because of more communal singing, which might attract some students and deter others. However, the default continues to be Ashkenazi: at the rare school-wide events with tefillah, nusach Ashkenaz is used.

At some other schools and camps, there is some talk about whether to create separate minyanim. At a Conservative K-8 school, some

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students wanted to start a Sephardi minyan, but, as a parent pointed out, this would not be sustainable without a change in the tefillah curriculum. Her children learn Iraqi tefillah and traditions at home, at their Sephardi synagogue, and through private tutors, but other families rely on the school for such education. As long as they only teach Ashkenazi nusach, separate minyanim would not be feasible. Another parent at this school agrees that the school should teach different prayer traditions, not primarily in the interest of representation, but because "it's a beautiful education into Jewish peoplehood. And I think Jews become stronger in their Jewish identity when they're exposed to different Jewish communities… But at the end of the day, we're all one people, am echad, and I think that's a very powerful lesson."

At a K-8 Orthodox school, they are considering starting a Sephardi minyan because there is now a critical mass of post-bar mitzvah Sephardi boys who are interested in that. They allow each shaliach tsibur to select his own nusach, and at a recent Shabbaton, it happened that the four services were led in different nusachs: Edot Hamizrach (which several interviewees pronounce as Edut Hamizrach), Ashkenaz, Sepharad, and Ha'ari (used by Chabad).

A different K-8 Orthodox school tried out separate Ashkenazi and Sephardi minyanim, but they switched back to just an Ashkenazi minyan because of their value of "achdut" (unity). In the parent survey, all 25 Sephardi/Mizrahi and mixed-heritage respondents agreed with the statement, "[This school] should offer a Sephardi minyan," while only two of the five Ashkenazi parents agreed. One parent suggested keeping all students together but alternating Ashkenazi and Sephardi nusach on different days. In interviews, while a few Sephardi parents expressed some desire for Sephardi minyanim, they appreciated the school's unified approach. A Persian teacher is also comfortable with the unified approach. He said:

> *Báruch Hashém,*[2] *it's a very diverse crowd that we have here, and they do their utmost to accommodate various minhágim… Although the mínyan is Ashkenázi, [Sephardi students are] able to use their own sídders, they're able to come up and daven shaliach tsíbur, be cházen for the whole student body.*

This teacher used to give siddurim as a gift – Sephardi siddurim for Sephardi students and Ashkenazi ones for Ashkenazi students – but Sephardi students were confused trying to follow the Ashkenazi service, and they were expected to use Ashkenazi nusach when davening as shaliach tsibur. Eventually he decided to give Ashkenazi Artscroll siddurim to all students.

Another locus for debates about minyanim is the synagogues connected to the day schools. At a day school that is part of a Conservative synagogue, a parent suggests that the synagogue could offer a Sephardi minyan for the High Holidays so her children can "share those days with their peers."

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2 Accent marks are included to indicate this teacher's Ashkenazi stress patterns, influenced by his training in predominantly Ashkenazi yeshivot and working in a historically Ashkenazi school

HOLIDAYS

Passover was the most common holiday mentioned regarding holiday-related curricular content. Many schools discuss diversity in Passover traditions, such as whether or not different groups eat kitniyot (rice, beans, and other legumes), what vegetable they use for karpas (a symbolic seder food), and hitting each other with green onions during the Dayenu song, common among Persian Jews but also increasingly popular in other communities, especially in Los Angeles. A few interviewees mentioned that their schools do something about Mimouna, the Moroccan post-Passover chametz-fest. The most popular Passover-related program, found at several day schools and religious schools, is a charoset tasting. One religious school leader pointed out that this event aligns with the multicultural fairs students are accustomed to from their public and private schools. Events like this are a great opportunity to engage parents of diverse backgrounds to share their traditions and recipes. One religious school did a "Passover around the world" program, where parents and community members from Syria, Mexico, Ethiopia, and elsewhere brought their recipes and samples of charoset and other Passover foods. Schools did not mention teaching about the different words for charoset – another opportunity for the future.

A few school directors also mentioned incorporating content about Rosh Hashanah simanim (symbolic foods) into their curriculum, including one school that does a "Chopped"-style food preparation challenge. One school has taught about "Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Ari z"l" (Chabad) variants in tying and shaking the lulav on Sukkot. A high school did a Moroccan-themed event around Chanukah, with a Moroccan tent and homemade sfenj (Moroccan donuts). Moroccan-ancestry students were involved in planning and running the event.

Some schools and their associated synagogues have thematic Shabbatot, incorporating piyyutim, nusach, musical instruments, and foods from a particular Jewish tradition (Persian, Moroccan, Ugandan, etc.). One non-Orthodox synagogue did Persian Shabbat as one of many musically thematic Shabbatot led by their creative Ashkenazi cantor, including Bluegrass, Broadway, and Country themes. Feedback from the Persian families was uniformly positive.

These named events contrast with schools and camps infusing content from various traditions without explaining their origin. At one high school, which incorporates Jewish traditions from around the world into their holiday celebrations, an administrator feels that these practices could be accompanied with more meta commentary: "I think it comes out as a mishmash to most people … I don't think that they really are appreciating the diversity that they're engaging in. I think that most people walk away with 'that's just Jewish' without the appreciation for like, 'wow, that is a really cool Syrian tradition.'"

A common locus for explicit Persian infusion is Nowruz, the Persian new year, celebrated in March. At a few day schools, Persian parents are invited to a morning Persian tefillah followed by a Persian breakfast.

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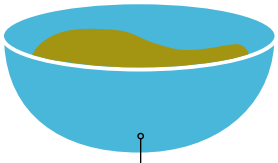
CHAROSET TASTING IS POPULAR



Charoset tasting

is the most popular Passover-related program found at several day schools and religious schools.

At one of them, "all the children of Persian background who want to participate in the program do, and they're very proud of it." At a religious school, one of the Persian teachers set up a haft sin, a decorated table with symbolic foods and other items, and explained it during the school's tefillah. "A few of the Persian kids … were so excited to be able to see all of that and answer questions for the rest of the kids [about] how they did it at their own homes." At one day school with a large Persian population, the Nowruz celebration includes some Persian dancing. At another, there is a banner that says, "Happy Nowruz," but the administration has so far said no to parents' repeated requests to teach about it and have an official school celebration. The rationale: "It's one more way of separating instead of uniting." One Persian parent felt the school should not celebrate Nowruz "because it's a Jewish school," and Nowruz is not a Jewish holiday. Also, if they did, they would also have to celebrate Chinese New Year, given the school's Chinese population. However, another Persian parent wished the school would celebrate both Nowruz and Chinese New Year.

HISTORY

While halacha, tefillah, and holidays are common points of Sephardi infusion, history is less common. On the parent survey, only 3% strongly agreed, and 30% agreed, with the statement, "In school, my child learns about Sephardi/Mizrahi history." These results suggest that Sephardi/Mizrahi historical content at the four schools in the study may be minimal.

When asked whether she teaches anything about Persian Jews, a social studies teacher at a majority-Persian school said, "No, because I don't think that would be fair to the students that aren't Persian." She does not feel that way about the units she offers on Native Americans. She does sometimes bring up her family's Iranian Revolution migration story in classroom conversations about immigration, but, she said, "I'm not just going to randomly talk about me being Persian."

One day school leader said there is no content in the history curriculum about diverse Jewish communities, but it comes up organically in the classroom when students, parents, and teachers bring it up. "The good teachers hopefully try to bring it up." However, some parents feel this is not enough. One parent says, "They just say, oh, your family's from Iraq. Cool, right? There's no, like, wait, how did you get there? Why did you leave?" She says the Israel education touches on Moroccan and Iraqi Jews but does not go into enough depth, such as which regions within Morocco and Iraq they came from and the historical events that led to their migrations.

The lack of Sephardi/Mizrahi history is part of a broader trend at Jewish schools – little education about Jewish history. At one Orthodox school, when asked "What history do you cover?" a teacher talked about the "matriarchs and patriarchs through Moshe Rabenu." A few administrators said their schools cover Jewish history in ancient and modern times but nothing between the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) and the First Aliyah (1880s). The modern history covered tends to include only the Holocaust, Zionism, and Israel. Within Israel units, students often learn about the aliyot to Israel, including Jews from Iraq, North Africa, and Ethiopia. Other historical events in these and other Sephardi/Mizrahi communities are rarely mentioned. Even schools with large Persian populations tend not to cover Persian Jewish history, not even the 1979 Iranian Revolution that sparked the immigration of most of the Persian students' parents and grandparents.

One reason for this lack of history education is teachers' limited knowledge. Several teachers and administrators mentioned their personal lack of familiarity with Sephardi/Mizrahi history, and others demonstrated it in their interview responses. One religious school director talked about a "Persian" man who spoke to the students about his experiences surviving "something that happened in the 1940s." This turned out to be an Iraqi man speaking about the Farhud, mob violence against Jews in Baghdad over Shavuot in 1941.

A surprising finding is that many of the Sephardi/Mizrahi parents interviewed are not interested in their schools offering more content on

> **"They just say, oh, your family's from Iraq. Cool, right? There's no, like, wait, how did you get there? Why did you leave?"**

A MISSING PIECE

Parents report that Sephardi/Mizrahi history receives the least classroom attention.

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30% agreed

with the statement,

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These results suggest that Sephardi/Mizrahi historical content at the four schools in the study may be minimal.

the history of their own communities. They are satisfied with the schools' focus on Israel. As one Persian parent explained, "It's not a Persian school. It's a Jewish school." Some might interpret this as Persian Jews' desire to acculturate to the Ashkenazi mainstream, but that does not seem to be the orientation of the interviewees in this study. Another possible factor in parents' lack of interest in Persian Jewish history is that they received little education on this topic themselves. Another factor may be the broader disinterest in history, which is increasingly associated with right-wing ideologies, common among Persian Jews.

One Moroccan parent does not think the curriculum should be expanded, but, inspired by Columbus Day and Black History Month, she suggested that her child's school might offer some calendar-based acknowledgement of historical events, like an anniversary to commemorate the expulsion from Spain. She could not offer suggestions of appropriate dates, but one option would be March 31, which in 1492 was the date of the Alhambra Decree. Another relevant option is November 30, which the Israeli government designated in 2014 as the Day to Commemorate the Expulsion and Departure of Jews from Arab Lands and Iran.

Some schools offer a bit more historical content about diverse Jewish communities. A few interviewees talked about brief mentions in their curriculum of the Golden Age of Spain and the Spanish Inquisition. A predominantly Ashkenazi Orthodox school has portraits of rabbis on various classroom and office walls, including the Baba Sale, Rav Yitzhak Kaduri, and Rav Ovadiah Yosef. A Sephardi Orthodox school used to have a monthly hilula for 4th and 5th grades, where they learned about a different Sephardi rabbi each month around the anniversary of his death, such as the Baba Sale, Ovadiah Yosef, the Ben Ish Hai, and Elazar Abuhatzeira. At the event, which included parents, a picture of the rabbi would be shown, they would hear one of his divrei torah, and they would sing Sephardi songs. The school no longer does this event because the rabbi who organized it left.

One day school recently adapted its curriculum as its population shifted to majority Israeli families. They removed the classes on American Jewish history and Holocaust, and now they focus on Israeli history, using the Center for Israel Education's materials. Sephardi/Mizrahi immigrations are included in that curriculum, but it focuses only on the modern era.

The Holocaust is another opportunity for education about Sephardi/Mizrahi history. While one school has a unit in 11th grade about Sephardi Jews and the Holocaust, several schools' Holocaust education focuses only on Ashkenazi experiences. At one school, the only Jewish history offered is a unit called "Names, Not Numbers," where students interview Holocaust survivors. An administrator there said, "Obviously that only really affected Ashkenaz." There is room for educating not only students but also teachers and administrators about how the Holocaust affected Sephardi Jews in the Balkans, as well as in North Africa and the Middle East. One idea is for JIMENA to partner with "Names, Not Numbers" and other Holocaust education initiatives to incorporate relevant curricular resources.

Another opportunity is guest speakers, including parents. Several Sephardi/Mizrahi parents talked about visiting their children's classrooms to talk about their own historical experiences, including in the 1979 Iranian

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A surprising finding is that many of the Sephardi/Mizrahi parents interviewed are not interested in their schools offering more content on the history of their own communities. They are satisfied with the schools' focus on Israel.

Revolution. At one school, a Persian parent spoke about the situation of Jews in Iran today, based on family connections. At another school, a parent recalls speaking about the history of Iraqi Jewry from the Babylonian captivity to the present. He was thrilled when an Ashkenazi student contacted him afterwards to ask for book recommendations.

One high school has done an audit of the literature they use in their classes, and they tweaked the list to better represent the diversity of the Jewish people. This school also has four divisions of students, named after historical Jewish figures: Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon, Persian Jewish educational reformer Shamsi Hekmat, Ashkenazi American Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, and Sephardi American poet Emma Lazarus. The group of administrators, teachers, and students who selected these figures intentionally sought diversity – two men and two women, two Ashkenazi Jews and two Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews. They considered a Persian man, but they ultimately did not include him due to his opposition to homosexuality – another instance of values in conflict.

In several schools, history is taught through project-based learning. Some schools assign family history projects, where students interview relatives and present to the class. These include ANU Museum's "My Family Story" and the HUC Jewish Language Project's "Beyond the Family Tree: Jewish History and Diversity Through Family Languages and Names," which is displayed on JIMENA's website. An Ashkenazi-majority day school included in this study had recently implemented Beyond the Family Tree. An eighth-grade Jewish history class included lessons from this curriculum about the students' diverse family stories, historical migrations, and languages and names. The teacher said the curriculum "added a lot more substance to the lessons that we do about Jewish life in diverse places."

Project-based learning extends beyond the family. At one school, each student selects a country and researches it, including its Jewish history, and several students have worked on Sephardi/Mizrahi communities. In another school's Israel class, students research personalities and then present them at a festival. One Mizrahi Israeli parent was impressed that several of the students researched Mizrahi Jews, such as a member of the Israeli Black Panthers, a Mizrahi Knesset member, and Gina Waldman, founder of JIMENA.

At a different school, students research Jewish heroes and write reports about them and their historical context. The teacher feels there is a lack of age-appropriate research material about Sephardi heroes, so the list of heroes she provides is primarily Ashkenazi, such as Theodore Herzl, Anne Frank, and Elie Weisel. One Sephardi woman is included, Doña Gracia Nasi. The interviewee would like to include more Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews. There is an opportunity for JIMENA, perhaps in conjunction with a publisher or PJ Library – to provide children's biographies of Sephardi/Mizrahi historical figures.

Summer camps also incorporate historical content in their experiential education. At one camp, the four color war teams represent different countries, and campers learn about the countries and eat foods associated with them. If the country has a contemporary or historical Jewish presence,

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like Czech Republic and Argentina, they also learn about the Jewish history (but some recent teams have not allowed this, like Bhutan and South Korea). Another summer camp has high-level conversations with older campers about history and current events. This sometimes includes content about Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews. For example, they read and discussed an article about "the dilemmas of the Mizrahi left in the Israeli protest movement." Campers of all ages attended a model Moroccan wedding, and "Aliyah Bet," an activity that was historically about Jews escaping the Holocaust in Europe and arriving in Israel, was reframed as Jews from Morocco and Algeria escaping to France. An Israeli counselor led a program about the Yemenite children affair. Finally, a Algerian-Brazilian counselor led an educational program about her family's experience. Having a diverse staff that is empowered to bring their family stories can lead to more diverse educational programming.

CULTURE: MUSIC, LANGUAGE, FOOD

Music

Some schools talked about teaching the students a few Yiddish and Ladino songs. Yiddish is the predominant ancestral language in Ashkenazi-majority schools. Why Ladino? As one religious school director explained, "If you think of Yiddish as the quintessential Ashkenazi language, Ladino is sort of the quintessential Sephardi language … a good simple analog for people." It also feels more familiar because many Angelenos have some knowledge of Spanish, which overlaps significantly with Ladino. One high school has a Sephardic music ensemble, thanks to outside funding and a "really great musical director." Two of the administrators interviewed do have Ladino as an ancestral language, as do some of the teachers, students, and campers. However, more common ancestral languages among LA Jews are Persian/Farsi and several varieties of Arabic, including those of Iraqi, Moroccan, and Yemeni Jews. Even so, most schools and camps do not teach songs in those languages. Only one school – an Orthodox high school – mentioned regularly playing Persian music, and the administrator said the students love it.

On the other hand, Israeli music, including from several immigrant groups, is ubiquitous. Many schools and camps report playing Israeli music at festive events and teaching Israeli songs, which students perform at assemblies and events that include families. One religious school does a fair for Yom Haatzmaut, with stations run by parents and teachers, and some Moroccan- and Yemeni-origin parents bring music and foods from their ancestral cultures. At a day school, the most recent "generations day," when grandparents visit, included a student performance about diversity in Israel, including songs and dances representing Ladino, Yiddish, Yemeni, and Greek Jewish cultures.

At a religious school with a sizeable Persian population, the director said they sometimes play Middle Eastern music at services and holiday celebrations: "If things have a Middle Eastern vibe, even if they're just Israeli, people do feel heard." However, this school does not include such music in the curriculum because of the difficulty in teaching the microtones and embellishments. Despite this concern, schools and camps might incorporate more Persian music and dance into their curricula and celebrations. One of the Persian parents mentioned that her daughter takes a Persian dance class outside of school – a sign that there would be at least some interest and relevant local expertise in bringing Persian dance to school. One religious school director touched on this idea when he expressed a desire for simple, repetitive songs in Farsi and Judeo-Arabic, similar to the Ladino Chanukah song they sing, "Ocho Kandelikas."

A prime example of a simple, repetitive song is "Happy Birthday." At most Jewish schools, birthday rituals include this song in English and Hebrew ("Yom Huledet Sameach" or, with a different tune, ("Hayom Yom Huledet"), and several schools add the Persian birthday song, "Tavalod." At one school with a mid-sized Persian population, the trilingual approach has been ritualized and taught by a Persian staff member, and at a similar school, the Hispanic music teacher has added a fourth language, Spanish.

> **"If you think of Yiddish as the quintessential Ashkenazi language, Ladino is sort of the quintessential Sephardi language … a good simple analog for people**

MUSIC AS EVERYDAY INCLUSION

Educators see songs as a natural way to include heritage languages in daily life. Simple repetitive songs like "Ocho Kandelikas" help connect students to their linguistic roots.

At most Jewish schools, birthday rituals include the "Happy Birthday" song in English and Hebrew. Several schools add the Persian version, and at one school a Hispanic music teacher has added a fourth language, Spanish.

- "Happy Birthday to You" — English
- "Yom Huledet Sameach/ Hayom Yom Huledet" — Hebrew
- "Tavalodet Mobarak" — Farsi
- "Feliz Cumpleaños" — Spanish

In contrast, at one majority-Persian day school, the official policy is only to sing in English and Hebrew and to save the Persian version for home celebrations.

Another simple, repetitive song is "Everybody Loves Saturday Night," a song with verses in multiple languages. A few summer camp administrators mentioned that they include this as part of their Havdalah ritual. Anyone present can start a verse in a language they know, and others repeat their words. One camp leader pointed to this as an opportunity to teach about diversity, including diversity of Jews. If counselors had translations of this song in several Sephardi/Mizrahi languages, they could incorporate them into this Saturday-night ritual.

Language

Beyond music, language came up in interviews in several ways. Most families reportedly speak English at home, but many speak Farsi or Hebrew. A few speak Spanish, French, or Russian, and fewer speak Mandarin, Urdu, or another language. One camp asks about "languages spoken at home" in the camper application, giving these options: English, Hebrew, Russian, Farsi, Spanish, Yiddish, and American Sign Language. A Persian day school parent says she speaks English to her children, but they learn Hebrew at school, some Spanish from the housekeeper, and a bit of Farsi from a weekly class, because "I'm proud of my culture and my traditions, and I have always told them to never be embarrassed about being Jewish or Persian." One teacher expressed concern that bilingual students are sometimes assessed as having learning issues, which she attributes to "lack of teacher understanding." However, in general, teachers seem to embrace their students' bilingualism.

A few Persian teachers said they use Farsi to connect with students who share their background. One rabbi reports doing this "if I want to say, 'Spend more time on your work' or 'I know you can do this,' perhaps if I don't want everyone to understand it." Another Persian teacher reports using some Persian words in her Tanakh class. For example, she used the word "khejalat" (hesitancy) to describe Saul's initial response to Samuel's invitation to his home and insinuation that Saul would become king. "The Persian students all laughed. They were like, 'Oh, that makes a lot of sense.' And then I translated it for the other girls, and they were like, 'Oh, okay, we understand how he was feeling.' But you could see the light bulb go off in the Persian students' minds." She also throws in cultural references, like saying that the meal Samuel and Saul shared included horesh and sabzi. Because of this ethnolinguistic infusion, she says, Persian students "gravitate towards me, and even those who aren't Persian – they love asking questions or saying like, 'Oh, you have that. Well, we have this,' and it sparks an interesting conversation between two different cultures."

Another way that language came up in interviews was Hebrew pronunciation. Ashkenazim of various denominations (e.g., non-Orthodox, Yeshivish, Chabad), Persian, and North African Jews use different liturgical Hebrew pronunciations in their homes and synagogues, and these all differ from spoken Israeli Hebrew. The Ashkenazi system used by many Orthodox Jews is most distinct, using penultimate rather than ultimate

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In general, teachers seem to embrace their students' bilingualism.

stress in many words and – the most commonly discussed variable – saf [s] rather than taf [t] for the Hebrew letter ת. In Orthodox schools, teachers sometimes discuss these differences in the classroom. One Moroccan-ancestry teacher recalled explaining to her Persian and Israeli students that "mishloach manos," which the students encountered on a worksheet, was an Ashkenazi pronunciation of "mishloach manot," the treat packages distributed on Purim.

In general, when students chant Torah, they are invited to use their preferred pronunciation system, but, in Orthodox schools, there is often debate about which system to use in the classroom. Conversational Hebrew ("Ivrit") is generally taught by Israeli teachers with Modern Hebrew pronunciation, but many Judaic studies teachers (some, but not all, Ashkenazi) use Ashkenazi pronunciation when reading aloud in Textual Hebrew (Tanakh, rabbinic literature, prayers). At one Orthodox school, texts are, by policy, taught with Ashkenazi pronunciation, even by Sephardi teachers. A Moroccan parent there wishes there were separate tracks within each classroom for Sephardi and Ashkenazi children to learn different pronunciation systems. She points out the logistical and psychological challenges of this approach and recognizes that a parent that wants their child to learn the Sephardi system could select a Sephardi school. An Israeli parent at the same school was initially uncomfortable with the Ashkenazi pronunciation but came to accept it because her son was also learning conversational Israeli Hebrew and could easily code switch – alternate between the systems for prayer or texts versus conversation.

At several Orthodox schools, Hebrew pronunciation is in flux because of the diverse population of students and teachers. Some Ashkenazi teachers report that they try to use one system but find themselves mixing forms, especially "Shabbos" and "Shabbat," because they hear different forms from their students and colleagues. At one school, the policy was that each teacher could teach Hebrew in whatever system felt most natural, "and let's let the kids figure that out." The administrator said this became too complicated because some teachers were using multiple variants to make Ashkenazi, Persian, and other students feel comfortable. And some parents were complaining about tafs and others about safs. "We can't please anybody," he said. The school's policy is now in flux, leaning toward using only the Israeli pronunciation (taf). However, in emails and worksheets, administrators and teachers continue to use different systems for different words (e.g., "Shabbos" and "talmidot"), or they offer multiple variants together, e.g., "mitzvot/mitzvos."

Tensions around Hebrew pronunciation came up at only one non-Orthodox school. An Ashkenazi teacher at a school with a large Persian population wrote:

> *We have had a problem with Ashkenazic students not feeling included. Students frequently complain that teachers get angry with them for saying "shul," "Shabbos" or "Shavuos." I understand the need for [Israeli] pronunciation within a Hebrew language class. Outside of that environment, I wish students did not feel belittled for using their Ashkenazic pronunciations.*

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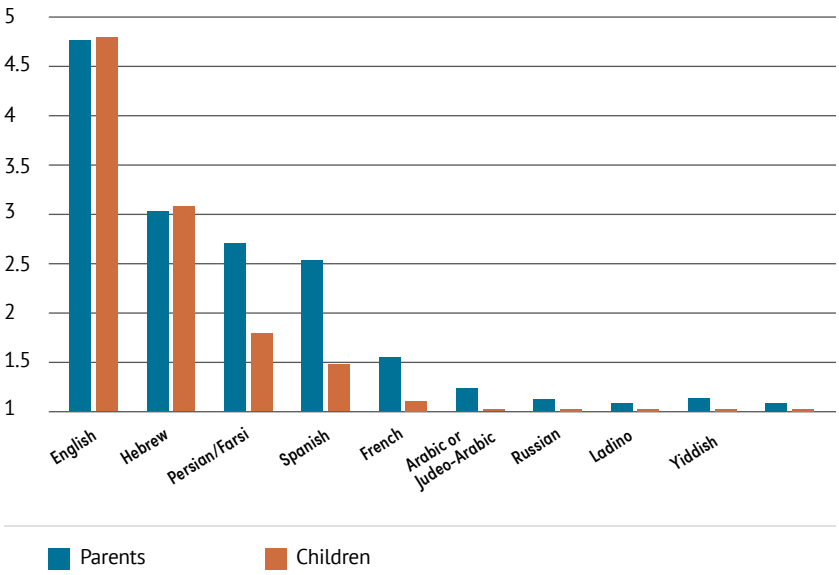
When students chant Torah, they are invited to use their preferred pronunciation system, but, in Orthodox schools, there is often debate about which system to use in the classroom.

Another issue related to language is when people feel excluded when they hear others speak a non-English language. One Persian parent felt that a Hebrew teacher favored Israeli students and parents, hugging and laughing with some and not others. She found it off-putting that the teacher would speak Hebrew when parents like her were present, knowing they did not understand. This is not specifically an issue among Sephardi/Mizrahi parents – some Ashkenazi parents who do not understand Hebrew feel left out at Hebrew performances.

The main locus for linguistic division is in social interactions among parents. Because the parents include many immigrants and children of immigrants, some are more proficient in their immigrant languages, especially Persian and Hebrew, than in English. Naturally, they may speak to each other in their preferred language. At one majority Israeli school, there are only a few families that do not speak Hebrew. This leads to uncomfortable social dynamics, such as on WhatsApp groups, where Hebrew dominates and some American parents do not understand the text chains. At a "moms' night out," an administrator explained, "either the non-Hebrew speakers in the parent community of that class are invited but then feel excluded because they're all talking Hebrew among themselves, or, in a misplaced attempt to be sensitive to the discomfort of that social situation, they're not even told about it."

This social dynamic does not extend to the students, as they tend to be fluent in English and have little knowledge of their heritage languages. The parent survey data offers evidence of this language shift, as reported by parents. While ratings for English and Hebrew are, on average, slightly higher for children than parents, for all of the other languages, the trend is reversed. For example, 41% of parents report being fluent or proficient in Persian/Farsi, compared to 9% of children. Two parents report being fluent or proficient in Arabic/Judeo-Arabic, and 16 report some ability or a few words, but only three children are reported as having any Arabic/Judeo-Arabic knowledge, all just a few words. Figure 4 presents the means for parents and children, where 1 is no reported ability in the language and 5 is fluent.

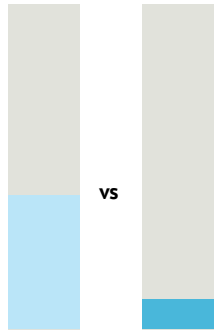
Figure 4: Parents' and children's mean language ability (1=no ability reported, 2=a few words, 3=some ability, 4=proficient, 5=fluent)



> **Because parents include many immigrants and children of immigrants, some are more proficient in their immigrant languages, especially Persian and Hebrew, than in English.**

LANGUAGE RETENTION BY GENERATION

Across generations, Persian and Arabic language knowledge declines sharply. Parents often maintain fluency or proficiency, while most children retain only minimal or symbolic familiarity.



41%
of parents report being fluent or proficient in Persian/Farsi,

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In some cases, students use their heritage languages to speak secretively, especially Russian and Persian students. A teacher says she addresses with her students: "If you're going to speak in a different language, at least translate. Make sure to include everyone." A few interviewees mentioned that Israeli students sometimes speak Hebrew, excluding non-Israelis with less Hebrew proficiency. One administrator says, "You can't tell them they can't talk that way, but you could open up their eyes that what they're doing could be disrespectful because no one knows what you're talking about." At another school, which has recently become majority Israeli, social interactions among students are mostly in Hebrew. While English is used in general studies classes, Judaic studies classes are conducted primarily in Hebrew. At this school, there is a rule that students must switch to English if there is a student nearby who does not understand Hebrew. However, an administrator says this is rarely enforced as even most non-Israeli students understand enough Hebrew to participate.

Students also share non-English words across ethnic boundaries. Several Ashkenazi students and alumni report knowing and using some Persian words, especially "joon," a term of endearment used after someone's name, "taarof," a Persian politeness ritual, and various food words like "gondi," meat dumplings often eaten in soup on Shabbat, and "tahdig," the crispy rice that forms at the bottom of the pot in Persian cuisine. One alum reports that he learned several Persian curse words from his Persian friends. This aligns with an administrator's comment that they had to reprimand students for using Persian curse words, such as when they called a teacher fat.

Ashkenazim are also exposed to Persian Jewish ways of speaking English. One administrator at a densely Persian school says Persian students call their bar mitzvah "reading," referring to the Torah reading. They might say, "My party is the Sunday after my reading." In general, the transmission goes in the opposite direction, with Sephardi/Mizrahi students acquiring Yiddish-influenced Jewish English from Ashkenazim, including words like "mensch," "shul," "daven," and "leyn." In fact, most of the Sephardi interviewees used words like these, as did an Ashkenazi administrator at a Sephardi school.

A few schools accommodate immigrant parents by welcoming guests at family assemblies not only in English and Hebrew but also in Farsi, generally by a Persian student. One school offers parent surveys and a summary of the parent handbook in Farsi (translated using ChatGPT). Another school used to offer communications in Farsi about 20 years ago, but now most Persian parents are proficient in English. Instead, they offer promotional materials in English and Hebrew, both to recruit Israeli families and as "almost a PR piece to let people know that this is a Jewish school and that Hebrew is taught." Another school's newsletter has a section about Ivrit that is sometimes in Hebrew.

Food

Sephardi/Mizrahi food is of great interest to families of all backgrounds; most tend to be happy when a catered event features Persian food. At a school with a large Persian population, a tradition is a parent night where a Persian mom teaches the other moms how to make tahdig. However, an

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Several Ashkenazi students and alumni report knowing and using some Persian words, especially "joon," a term of endearment used after someone's name, "taarof," a Persian politeness ritual, and various food words.

administrator reports, the cultural exchange does not go the other way: "No one's teaching anyone how to make gefilte fish and cholent." Students learn about each other's culinary practices based on the leftovers students bring for lunch. A mostly untapped opportunity is hot lunches, which tend to be standard hot lunch fare like chicken, rice, and salad. Schools could work with hot lunch providers to offer more diverse cuisine, representative of the ancestral origins and preferences of the students.

Israeli food is common at school events, and it is often used in educational activities. At summer camps, a common activity is cooking Israeli foods, like pita and hummus. Some Hebrew teachers in day schools and religious schools cook simple Sephardi/Mizrahi foods in their Hebrew classes, such as shakshuka, as a way to expose students to the diverse Jewish cultures of Israel.

Another way that schools incorporate food from around the world is through designated days. One high school offers "Moroccan culture day" and "Persian culture day," focusing on the halachot, music, food, and cultures of those communities. Students and parents from those communities plan and lead the events, and rabbis are invited to speak. In addition, holidays beyond those mentioned above are an opportunity for culinary education. As part of a sustainability lesson around Tu Bishvat, one religious school with a significant Persian population taught pickling recipes from Ashkenazi (Cantor's Deli) and Persian traditions.

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Students learn about each other's culinary practices based on the leftovers students bring for lunch.

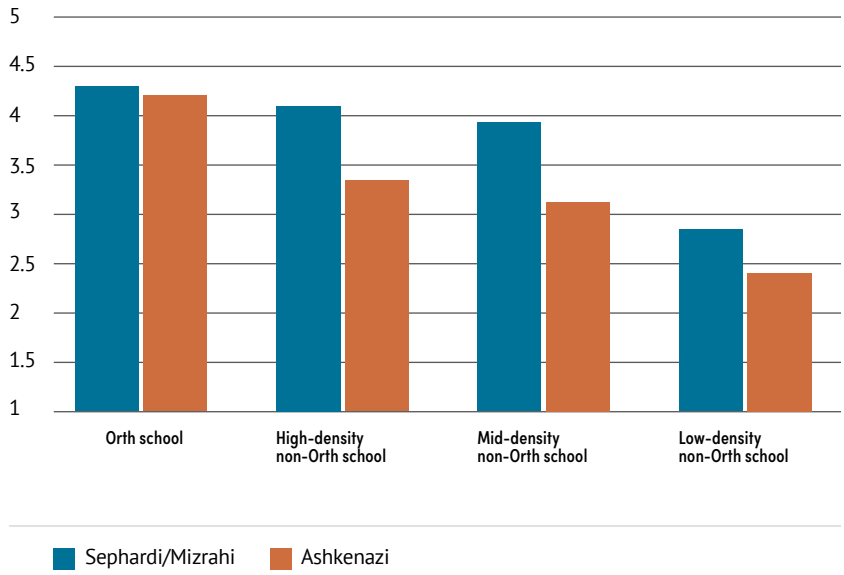
POLITICAL AND VALUES-BASED TENSIONS

> **“Diversity of political opinion … is harder for us than the diversity of race and ethnicity.**

An issue that was not in my original interview guide turned out to be the most salient for interviewees: differences in values and political orientation. As one religious school administrator put it, “Diversity of political opinion … is harder for us than the diversity of race and ethnicity.” However, the two cannot be fully separated. As JIMENA’s recent study of Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews in America found, “many Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews demonstrate strong commitments to traditional family structures, religious values, and support for Israel, often aligning them with more conservative political and social positions than the broader American Jewish population.” Indeed, as our teacher and parent survey data found, our Sephardi respondents are much more likely than our Ashkenazi respondents to identify their political orientation as conservative. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very liberal and 5 is very conservative, Sephardi/Mizrahi teachers’ mean self-rating is 3.8, and Ashkenazi teachers’ is 2.6.

Among parents, we see political differences not only based on ancestry but also based on school (figure 5). Among the four schools that participated in the parent survey, parents at the Orthodox school were most likely to identify as conservative, and parents at the non-Orthodox school with few Sephardi/Mizrahi students (“low-density”) were most likely to identify as liberal. At the non-Orthodox schools with many Persian students (mid- and high-density), Ashkenazi parents were less conservative than the Sephardi/Mizrahi parents but still above the mid-point of 3. Sephardi/Mizrahi parents at the low-density school were more liberal than Ashkenazi parents at the other schools. This suggests that families may select day schools in part based on their political orientation.

Figure 5: Parent political orientation (scale: 1 = very liberal; 5 = very conservative) by school (Orthodox vs. non-Orthodox; density = % Sephardi/Mizrahi students) and ancestry



Political differences have often led to conflicts within schools, especially around COVID restrictions, DEI and Donald Trump, Israel, and gender and sexual orientation. Many of the Sephardi/Mizrahi parent interviewees expressed concern about these issues, even if they were not concerned about the lack of curricular content about their communities and traditions. In fact, several interviewees told me about families who had switched from one school (and sometimes denomination) to another because of political differences. Examples include progressive Ashkenazi Jews switching from a Conservative religious school to a Reform one because its values were becoming too conservative and Persian Jews complaining that their day school's COVID policies were too restrictive and switching to a school with laxer rules.

COVID Restrictions

The Coronavirus pandemic was a major source of tension. Persian parents and teachers were generally opposed to school closures and masking, testing, distancing, and vaccination requirements, while Ashkenazim tended to favor these public health restrictions. For example, only 27% of Sephardi/Mizrahi parents strongly agreed that "I was satisfied with the school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic," compared to 48% of Ashkenazi parents. One Ashkenazi teacher who lost her father to COVID reports being uncomfortable working at a school where many Persian families were minimizing the severity of the pandemic, saying things like, "This isn't a real thing, my kids don't need to wear masks, no one's dying." This divide is part of the country's broader political polarization, with Persians aligning with Republicans and Ashkenazim with Democrats. However, a few interviewees attributed the Persian leanings to historical trauma. At one school, an administrator said, "When you start talking about government mandate to a group of people who fled government mandates, you need to change your lingo. That's never going to go very well." Several families left that school over the vaccine mandate.

A few Jewish day schools were beneficiaries of this upheaval. Several Persian families who opted out of COVID vaccinations left their school and sought out Jewish day schools with laxer policies. Those who leaned more traditional in their Jewish observance generally selected an Orthodox school, and others chose the one non-Orthodox school that did not mandate vaccinations. The influx at these schools also came from Persian families who had previously selected public schools. At one Orthodox school, a parent told us she had been eyeing the school for a while, and she finally convinced her husband that their children should transfer from the public school because of what they saw as liberal "indoctrination" in the public schools, including the vaccination mandate.

Some religious schools and summer camps also report tensions around COVID policies, and some also lost and gained families around these issues. One religious school administrator said the pro- and anti-vaccination factions aligned completely with the Ashkenazi-Persian split. One camp director said the factions did not align with these identities, but another said those opposed to vaccination mandates tended to be Persian, Israeli, and Russian.

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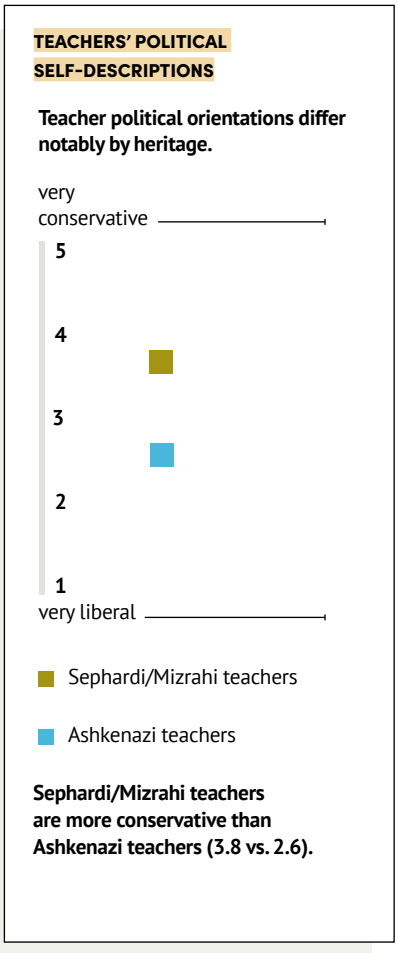

DEI and Elections

One Persian parent, who identifies as moderate, said she sees a shift to the right in her Persian community: "People are very tired of woke tendencies, especially Persians, who are traditional." She too was put off by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies at a secular private school she visited as a prospective family, as she feels they will "pick someone who's not as eligible to be in this institution." She notes that Persians are not included as a diverse group. "I feel that. I think that's why a lot of people shy away from saying they're Persian."

According to an administrator at a school with many Persian families, the school has stopped using the term DEI because of its "negative connotations." They do, however, talk about "inclusivity" and a related Hebrew term, klaliyut, which are acceptable to the Persian families in her school. We found a similar transition at an Israeli-majority school. An administrator reports, "We explicitly want to avoid any DEI language because that's a turn-off to Israeli-American families." Instead, they use words like "belonging" and "community."

Occasionally, political polarization leads to conflicts among students, with students "repeating whatever they're hearing at home," as one teacher put it. A Persian parent relayed an incident she heard about from a different Sephardi parent. Two girls were arguing, and the Ashkenazi girl said, "Oh, you believe in that? … Your parents must be listening to Fox News and be Trump supporters."

However, most of the political polarization we heard about involved parents. At one school, the community was deeply divided on the 2024 election, with Persian parents tending to align with Trump and most, but not all, others with Harris. The school hosted community town hall meetings where parents could share their views and learn from others. However, when a parent posted an inflammatory political comment in a class parent WhatsApp chain, the head of school intervened. She said, "I have to really work with the parent community to help them understand the damage that it can cause when we can't listen respectfully to different perspectives."

A teacher at this school said political polarization is found not only among parents but also between conservative parents and liberal administrators: "We all sort of coexist in this delicate balance until somebody does something that upsets somebody. And then, you see it flare up a little bit, and then everybody kind of goes back to neutral." This teacher feels the school would be a good site for research on how two opposing ideologies co-exist "where I don't think they normally would."

Another school is split politically, about 60% Democrats and 40% Republicans. When asked about challenges regarding diversity, an administrator said most of them surround politics rather than ethnic identity directly, although most Persian and Israeli families support Trump. Leading up to the election, he noticed teachers whispering about politics and changing the subject when someone walked by. The day after the election, there were conflagrations among staff and parents. He had to remind people about the handbook's directive not to discuss politics publicly.

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An administrator reports, "We explicitly want to avoid any DEI language because that's a turn-off to Israeli-American families." Instead, they use words like "belonging" and "community."

Israel and inter-group relations

Some school leaders spoke about support for Israel as a unifying issue, especially since October 7, 2023. But some schools reported tensions around Israel. At a diverse day school with many Israeli families, there was an assembly for Yom Hazikaron, and two parents spoke about their experiences serving in the IDF. They ended up fighting publicly about American support for Israel. Based on this and similar incidents, the school is leaning away from inviting parents to speak and toward invited guest speakers.

At a similarly diverse day school, a student production was slated to include the song "Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu," which includes the Hebrew and Arabic words for peace: "Shalom" and "Salaam." Several Persian families complained. According to an administrator, they were OK with the inclusion of a Farsi song, but they "did not want their children saying anything in Arabic while Israel was at war." The leadership considered their request but "felt really strongly that Arabic is part of our culture also as Jews, and the influence from the Arab communities and Arab cultures came to Israel, and that it needed to be represented in this production."

At a religious school, debates about Israel and Netanyahu have arisen between Persian and non-Persian parents and teachers. At the end of tefillah, their custom is to sing Hatikvah. Some teachers would run up to the bimah to stand near the Israeli flag, and others would walk out of the room. An administrator there says she does "a lot of mediation. I need to remind groups, 'This is what makes [our congregation] a blessing is that we're not preaching to the choir all the time, [and] we have an opportunity to talk to each other and hear dynamic voices.'" She characterizes these interactions as "very difficult."

One day school popular among Persian families, which an administrator characterized as "not a woke school," hired a new teaching assistant who identified as non-binary and dressed in a flamboyant way. Some parents scraped this TA's social media posts and found one that used the word "occupation" regarding Israel. After parent complaints, the TA was fired, although they identified as Zionist. In the balancing act between competing values, this school chose a right-wing approach to Israel over political pluralism and inclusivity.

Another school took the opposite approach in a related values conflict. The school had established a partnership with a local Muslim school, where middle schoolers would visit each other's schools and learn about each other's religions. Several parents, especially those with ancestry in Morocco, Iran, and other Muslim-dominant countries, were uncomfortable with this arrangement. Some worried that the Muslim students would be antisemitic, and they expressed their concerns by referencing their inherited trauma. An administrator reassured the parents based on his interactions with the Muslim school's administrators, teachers, and students. "I understood where they were coming from and yet pushed back and said, 'No, we're doing this, and let me explain why." A Sephardi parent interviewee felt the (non-Orthodox) school should instead partner with a Haredi school so the students would be exposed to the broader Jewish

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Some school leaders spoke about support for Israel as a unifying issue, especially since October 7, 2023. But some schools reported tensions around Israel.

community. She said she raised this suggestion with the administration, but they were not interested. She felt they inappropriately prioritized engagement beyond the Jewish community. At a different school, a parent of mixed ancestry suggested that the school offer programs with Sephardi schools so the students can encounter and learn from each other.

Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Other Sensitive Topics

At non-Orthodox schools, parents were also polarized on "how the school has addressed gender and sexual orientation." 71% of Ashkenazi parents were satisfied, compared to 51% of Sephardi/Mizrahi parents. Several Persian parents said they believed that families, not schools, should educate their children about certain values. They were especially concerned about students being exposed to homosexuality and gender non-conformity at a young age.

One parent said she raised a concern with the administration, and they replied that some families never talk to their children about these issues, "so we have to do the job for them." She was upset by this response, as she felt the school was privileging one subset of the diverse school over another. This same parent pointed out what she sees as hypocrisy – an administrator replying to her concerns with a dismissive, "Oh my God, you Persians." She said, "If you put it in a Persian perspective, like whatever, we don't even care what you're saying." But in line with the "American" stance of advocating for inclusive and respectful communities, she said, "You're not practicing what you preach." An administrator at this school highlighted a parent response that epitomizes this concern: "Are you trying to drive a wedge between me and my child?" She attributed these concerns in part to the avoidance of taboo topics in Sephardi culture.

At another school, an administrator said that Persian parents of prospective students ask about gender on their tours.

> *They say, 'Is this part of your curriculum? Do you ask to identify with a pronoun?' They want nothing to do with that. So here's another divide because the Ashkenazi families are like, 'This is LA, this is 2024. I want my kid to know what this is.' And the Persian families are like, 'Not in my school. It doesn't belong in school.'*

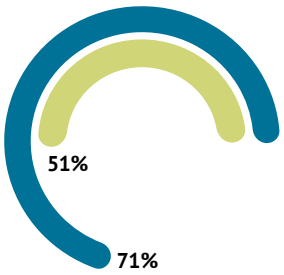
This school has adopted the Persian approach to this issue, whereas other non-Orthodox day schools have brought in JQ to do trainings about gender and pronouns. "We won't use the word 'pronoun' here unless it's a part of a grammar lesson," the administrator reports. However, a few days before the interview, an Ashkenazi fifth grader had announced that he would start using they/them pronouns. The administrator was still considering how to address the tension that would surely result from this development.

At this same school, a teacher reports incidents around children's books with gay characters. He also relates an incident that occurred years ago, when a child with two fathers began attending the school. Some conservative parents, including, but not only, Persians, expressed concern. The school hosted a large meeting to hear both sides of the debate but did not change their admission decision.

"At non-Orthodox schools, parents were also polarized on "how the school has addressed gender and sexual orientation."

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH GENDER & SEXUALITY INCLUSION

At non-Orthodox schools, parents express differing views on how their schools handle gender and sexual orientation.



While a majority of both groups are satisfied, satisfaction is notably lower among Sephardi/Mizrahi parents (51%) vs Ashkenazi parents (71%).

Gender tensions also affect non-Orthodox summer camps. An administrator reports that dozens of families have left the large camp over this issue. After years of research and deliberation with staff and board and, following many other west-coast non-Orthodox camps, the camp instated a new policy that they would now place campers and staff members in the bunk that aligns with their gender identity, even when that differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Some long-time campers left, and prospective families opted for different camps. At least half of those families were Persian or Israeli. "Some people feel that we are choosing trans inclusion at the expense of their child, … their ability to have parental rights." When parents ask the camp to notify them before the summer if their child will be in a bunk with a transgender camper, the camp declines, just as they would not share a camper's health or behavior information with parents of their bunkmates.

Competing Values

Clearly, different types of inclusion can conflict; if an institution is inclusive of LGBTQ+ students and teachers, then it is not being inclusive of more conservative families, many of whom are Persian. At a religious school where the vast majority of families are Ashkenazi, an administrator addresses this tension by privileging the congregation's progressive Reform values. She said, if a Mizrahi family requested a change in the curriculum, it would not be a problem unless it involved increased religious observance or "conflicted with other values like gender inclusivity."

At another religious school, this tension came to the fore when a Persian family complained about a 17-year-old madrich (teaching assistant) who has a gender-neutral name and wears a "they/them" button. The parents yelled at the director, saying, "You're ruining my children. This is not what Jews believe." The director replied by invoking "b'tzelem Elohim," the idea that people are created in God's image. She explained that she cannot ask the madrich to leave and asked the parents what she can do to help them through this. At the end of the contentious conversation, she suggested that the family might be more comfortable at a different school, but so far they have chosen to stay.

One religious school director said he addresses such tensions with an inclusive orientation:

> *We're gonna welcome everybody who's willing to welcome everybody. And if it's uncomfortable for you, or you don't have the right language, we will help out with that, and we will be patient. But, if your goal is to get people gone because… they're different than you, then sorry.*

A Mizrahi parent from a day school that is majority Ashkenazi highlighted a similar stance from the opposite side:

> *As long as you … still have respect for the other community and you're not stopping them from their doing what they're doing, then it shouldn't be a problem. If I want my kid out of a classroom [lesson] because it's teaching something that [some] parents like and I don't like, it shouldn't hurt you.*

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Clearly, different types of inclusion can conflict; if an institution is inclusive of LGBTQ+ students and teachers, then it is not being inclusive of more conservative families, many of whom are Persian.

That school did experiment with allowing students, by parent request, to opt out of specific controversial conversations, such as about sexuality. An administrator said, "I had staff that were just so exhausted from being beaten down that I did it for their sake." However, she is not sure whether this will be the policy moving forward because the parents who opt out are often not having conversations at home that the school deems necessary for the students.

At another school, which has a large Persian population and a small Asian population, teachers of various backgrounds feel that the inclusion issues are not about Ashkenazi attitudes toward Persian students but about (mostly Persian) students' racist attitudes in general. One Ashkenazi teacher gives the school low inclusion scores and says the Asian students at the school "are frequently teased, and one Asian student left the school. Students feel comfortable using inappropriate language online and 'dressed' as gangsters with doo rags and chains for Purim." This is another case where inclusion of one group conflicts with inclusion of another group.

Addressing Polarization

Schools address polarization and values in tension in various ways. A Sephardi parent who is less conservative than many other Sephardi Jews recommended that the administration offer more parent education, explaining why they are teaching the controversial subject. "I think you just need to explain it, genuinely explain it, not put it in an e-mail and make it this formal thing because that's almost more like, oh, we understand, and you don't." At this school, the middle school recently added a curricular unit about drugs, alcohol, and addiction. They first introduced the unit through Jewish text study, and an administrator said parents were more accepting of the controversial topic. "It does seem that when we enter the topic through Judaism, it becomes more palatable, and families feel more at ease."

Another approach is forums where parents can express concerns. During COVID, at a school with a sizeable Persian population, the head of school organized large weekly Zoom town hall meetings, where parents could air concerns and debate each other about school closures and masking and vaccination policies. She moderated these debates, and several parents reported feeling heard and validated. One parent recalled, "She sat there taking it like a punching bag." Another said, "She just stayed so neutral and so classy and just really kept everyone satisfied in some way… I still don't know her political stance. I do think that's one reason this school is so peaceful." The school did make some policy changes based on parent feedback in these forums. Eventually the head of school replaced these large meetings with a series of smaller parlor meetings, where she invited four Persian couples and four non-Persian couples. Participants discussed and debated the issues of the day, from the school's response to the war in Israel to gender and sexual orientation. In a similar incident to one mentioned above, a young non-binary staff member had posted something about Israel's occupation of the West Bank. In contrast, this school did not fire the staff member but did allow parents to discuss

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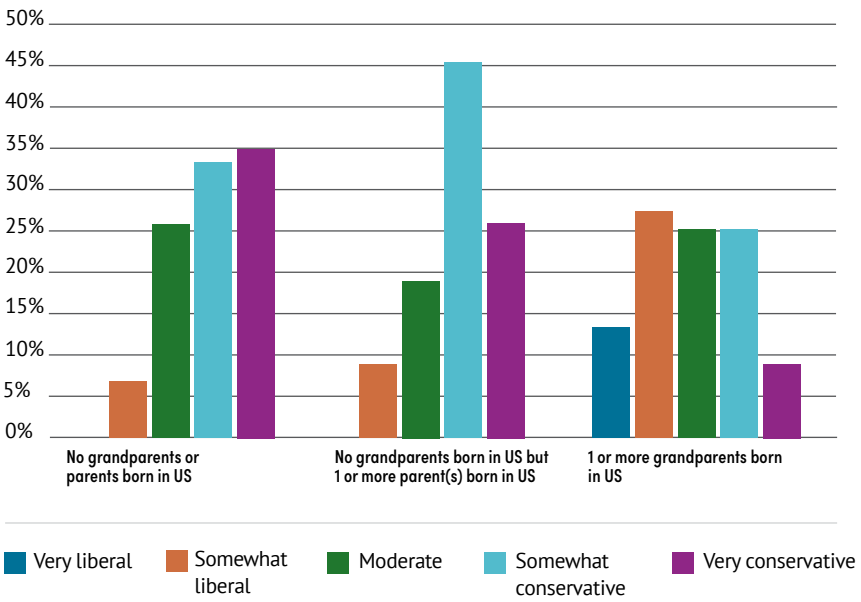
A Sephardi parent who is less conservative than many other Sephardi Jews recommended that the administration offer more parent education, explaining why they are teaching the controversial subject.

the incident at the parlor meetings. Although some parents were disappointed with the decision, they felt the administration had listened to their concerns. In one parent interview, I learned that this school prominently displays a large banner for Pride Month each year. Some Persian parents complain about it, and the administration listens to their perspective but keeps the banner up. Even parents who feel uncomfortable with some values and actions of the administration feel heard and talk about the school in a very positive way.

Another possible approach is an affinity group for parents who align with a minority political orientation. At one Ashkenazi-dominant, liberal-leaning school, a Persian parent wishes there were such a group for more conservative or traditional families within the school (although she did not use the term "affinity group," which seems to be common in schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, not in Los Angeles). She thinks it would attract not only Persian families but other Sephardi Jews, some Ashkenazim, and even a Mexican family. This aligns with the survey findings, as generational distance from immigration seems to be a major factor in political orientation (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Parent's political orientation by child's generational distance



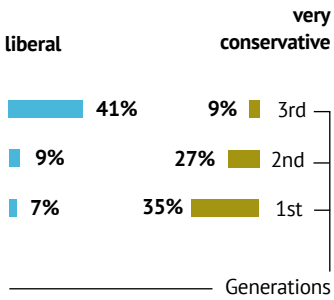
Among parents of third-generation children (those with one or more grandparents born in the US), 41% identify as very or somewhat liberal, compared to 9% of second-generation and 7% of first-generation. We see reverse trends for those who identify as very conservative: 9% of parents of third-generation children, 27% of second-generation, and 35% of first-generation.

> **Another approach is forums where parents can express concerns.**

FROM CONSERVATIVE TO LIBERAL: A GENERATIONAL FLIP

Each successive generation shows a political shift:

first-generation parents lean conservative, while those with U.S.-born grandparents are more likely to identify as liberal.



Summer camps

Several of the camp administrators we interviewed spoke about political conflicts, but they did not directly connect them to ancestry. One camp administrator points to a challenge around incorporating Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews into the racial justice work their camp has prioritized. "I think Jewish people often identify outside of a race-based system and more of like an ethnic-focused system," using categories like Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi. In particular, "America has not gotten it right around Middle Eastern people and where they fall in this racial categorization that we've created. People don't know where to put themselves." She said she has had conversations with Mizrahi families who inquire about participating in their family camp, which is advertised for families that include a Person of Color. In line with the American discourse on race, the family camp attracts mostly those with Asian, Black, and Latin American ancestry. The Mizrahi families the administrator has spoken to have explained that they do not identify with the label "Person of Color" but do feel marginalized by Ashkenormativity. This aligns with the finding of JIMENA's recent report (p. 23). Because of the [misaligned] self-identifications, these families wonder whether the family camp is the right fit for them. The administrator's response is "Come. You're always welcome. But that's not … what we're addressing in that space." The camp, she says, may seek to extend their inclusion work in the future, given the tools to create appropriate content and affinity spaces for Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews. She also feels she needs more training about identities and categorization so they can determine what "kiddos need so that they feel all the pieces of who they are being uplifted," contributing to the camp's "striving to be radically inclusive."

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America has not gotten it right around Middle Eastern people and where they fall in this racial categorization that we've created. People don't know where to put themselves.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND ADVOCACY

As the previous sections have explained, Sephardi/Mizrahi parents in non-Orthodox schools often feel their schools are too lax, progressive, or gender inclusive or not religiously observant enough, and some parents in schools of all denominations wish their schools offered more Sephardi content. Some parents have reported expressing these concerns to the administration, with mixed results. One said she requested more content about Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews, such as about foods and traditions. She was disappointed, saying, "Nothing really came of it." Another parent said, "I was in the office a lot of times. They always seem like they're receiving [my criticism]. I mean, they're taking notes and they're considering. But do I feel like things were done differently just because of what I said? Not really." She feels exhausted, and "some of it I just let go." She does recall some instances where a critical mass of parents complained, and a change was made.

At multiple schools, some Sephardi/Mizrahi parents report that the administration has taken their concerns seriously and made changes based on them. At one non-Orthodox majority-Persian school, all of the parent interviews included effusive praise of the administration. One Persian mother said:

> *They have always addressed any issue… They've always been communicative and inclusive… They made me want to be a part of their community… go to their events, go to synagogue on the High Holidays there, have my daughter sing up on the bima… They pulled me in in the right way.*

The parents at this school point to several factors in feeling included, especially the head of school listening to and validating their concerns, the town hall meetings and parlor meetings, and the increasing representation of Persian parents on the synagogue board. These all led to changes, such as a stricter kashrut policy, more focus on love for Israel, and less focus on "the gender stuff," as one parent put it. On the survey, only a few Sephardi/Mizrahi parents express concerns, and they focus on the synagogue's clergy, rather than the school's administration.

At a different school, a Sephardi parent said that some parents complain too much, "to their detriment sometimes." They "speak up whenever something is not completely to their liking, whether it makes sense or not, whether it can be changed or not… I think that that makes it harder for the admin to sift through and hear what's actually important." She says this happens about a variety of issues. She wants to remind such parents that the school can only include so much content from communities around the world: "It's OK that it's not a Sephardic school." An administrator at a different school expressed a similar sentiment. When parents complain about the school teaching Ashkenazi Hebrew pronunciation, his response is, "We're not a Sephardic school… School teaches a certain way, but we understand and we also explain – there are multiple ways to do it."

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Committees and board

Some schools and camps attempt to balance the board and various parent committees to be representative of the school's population, especially with regard to Ashkenazi and Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews. At one school, the parent association always has two co-presidents, a Persian parent and an Ashkenazi parent, "so that it doesn't look like it is all being run by one group," as an administrator said.

Other schools and camps have not made this effort or have not succeeded. One Jewish summer camp with a significant Sephardi/Mizrahi population said the board is predominantly Ashkenazi. But the administrator pointed out that the board aims for diversity in multiple domains, such as religiosity and race, not just Jewish ancestry. At a day school, an administrator talked about the challenge of finding Persians, especially women, to agree to serve on the board. She talks about the Persian community's gender norms that discourage women from serving on boards, in part because of the large "give or get" requirement. She finds this trend especially in the older generation that tends to serve on the board. She would invite Persian women to serve on the board, but they would decline, saying that was their husbands' job.

One school has aimed for representation on committees and the board, but they have found mixed results. An administrator says they have worked hard to recruit parents of diverse backgrounds to serve on the holiday committee, "so that they can bring in different traditions as appropriate." A Mizrahi Israeli mother at this school recounts being on a committee tasked with bringing more Hebrew to the school, which they did by running an after-school kiosk where students could purchase Israeli products by speaking Hebrew. She felt the school made good use of her Hebrew skills. However, a Persian parent at this school believes that the board is made up mostly of "American" parents. This is a problem, she feels, because Persian families sometimes view a situation differently, and she does not feel represented on the board. A Sephardi parent was asked to serve on a committee because "they said that they wanted the Mizrahi perspective." But, she said, "I don't feel like they want to hear my opinions. They want … a yes person." Finally, a Sephardi parent who was on the board sometimes felt like a "token" and was not sure she was able to fully represent the concerns of other Sephardi parents, especially those not born in the US. However, she did her best to serve as a liaison between more traditional parents and the board and administration, especially regarding sex education and gender inclusivity.

"A Sephardi parent was asked to serve on a committee because "they said that they wanted the Mizrahi perspective." But, she said, "I don't feel like they want to hear my opinions. They want … a yes person."

Student behavior, discipline, and parents' cooperation

A number of interviewees mentioned different parenting styles between American Jews on the one hand and Israeli and Persian Jews on the other – as well as different norms for parents interacting with teachers and administrators. At one day school, a Persian parent criticized other Persian parents at the school for protesting when their child is disciplined. "No," she said, "if your kid gets in trouble, your kid gets in trouble, you got to deal with it." A day school administrator said that "American" parents (generally those who grew up in the US) are more likely than Israeli parents

to respect the school's rules, such as regarding pickup times and carpool patterns. And a camp administrator reported issues with Israeli and Persian campers using curse words and racial slurs – behaviors that may be acceptable at home but are not allowed at camp.

At many summer camps, a common conflict is parents requesting more frequent personalized reports and photographs of their children. One camp administrator reported that some Persian parents have been overrepresented in the group that she characterizes as "helicopter parents." This relates to one reason why many Persian Jews are reluctant to send their children to sleepaway camp – because they are uncomfortable with the lack of communication between parents and campers during the camp session. As a camp leader said, some Persian "parents are so attached to their kids now, and they're so afraid to send them away that the kids don't even have a chance to learn about sleepaway camp and to want to go because … it's not at all part of their conversation." These concerns might be addressed by an inter-camp communal recruitment effort among Persian families.

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

Among the 60 teachers surveyed at five schools, only 27% agreed with this statement: "My school already provides me with opportunities to learn more about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and/or religious practice." Just over half (50-57%) of teachers feel confident in their knowledge of Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and religious practice, but most (71%) are curious to learn more. 55% want to include more content in their curriculum about Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews, and 66% agreed that their schools would likely provide them with such professional learning opportunities.

An Ashkenazi administrator at a Sephardi-majority school said he feels it is important for teachers to learn about the cultures of their students. He offered analogies: if he was teaching math in Compton, he would learn about Black and Hispanic cultures to better connect to his students. If he was in Teaneck, New Jersey, where Ashkenazim dominate, he would not feel the need to learn about Persian Jews. One religious school director wants to find more ways to elicit "the incredible stories within the community," like one Persian dad's harrowing escape from Iran.

When asked how they had learned about Sephardi/Mizrahi communities and cultures in the past, several Ashkenazi teachers mentioned speaking to Sephardi friends and colleagues, especially rabbis regarding halachic matters. Some said they read books or websites; one mentioned using online resources from Unpacked and from the Center for Israel Education, especially about Mizrahi Jews in Israel. A rabbi-teacher uses chinuch.org, a collection of resources for Limudei Kodesh from Torah Umesora, which includes some content about Sephardi nusach and halacha. He also mentioned several resources he found on JIMENA's website after being invited to interview for this study, such as bar-mitzva.com, which he had already shared with his students.

A few other interviewees also mentioned having used some of JIMENA's online resources and/or that their schools had brought in a JIMENA trainer for teacher professional development or sessions with students. At one school, some teachers had participated in sessions about Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews at RAVSAK/Prizmah, and they brought in experts on Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews to train a new teacher to implement a curriculum that included Sephardi content. At another school, Facing History & Ourselves led a professional development workshop about Sephardi experiences in the Holocaust, and a Sephardi rabbi led a session about Sephardi halacha. At a high school, some of the teachers had participated in Kivunim's travel programs, where high school teachers travel to countries like Tunisia and Morocco and learn about the Jewish communities there and their history.

Despite the availability of these resources, several teachers said they have little knowledge of Sephardi/Mizrahi culture, history, and minhagim. Even Sephardi/Mizrahi teachers reported that their educations included little on their own communities. A Persian teacher who grew up in Israel said she learned Bialik and other Ashkenazi poets and never "the great poetry of Iran." A Persian teacher who attended Ashkenazi schools in the US reports knowing a lot about Persian and Ashkenazi Jews but little about Mizrahi, Israeli, or Yemenite communities. A camp administrator of mixed Sephardi-Ashkenazi ancestry questions her own "ability to even identify, like, is this an Ashkenazi tradition, is this a Sephardi tradition?"

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One religious school director wants to find more ways to elicit "the incredible stories within the community," like one Persian dad's harrowing escape from Iran.

TEACHERS WANT MORE LEARNING ON SEPHARDI AND MIZRAHI HERITAGE

While just over a quarter of teachers say their school offers opportunities to learn about Sephardi and Mizrahi heritage, nearly three-quarters express curiosity to deepen their knowledge.

Out of 60 teachers surveyed...

27% Already have learning opportunities

71% Are curious to learn more

Survey results suggest the appetite for professional learning far exceeds what's currently provided.

There is clearly a need for trainings from JIMENA for administrators and teachers on what resources are available and how to implement them in schools and camps. These should target educators of all backgrounds; at some schools, the leaders of Sephardi/Mizrahi inclusion efforts are Ashkenazi. One head of school spotlighted the curriculum coordinator, who is Ashkenazi, calling her "one of the strongest advocates for making sure that we're presenting Jewish diversity in lots of different ways."

Some schools and camps are interested in incorporating more content but wary of wading through the extensive Sephardi toolkit and other available resources. They are also reluctant to add anything time-consuming to the already-packed curriculum. One recommendation is for JIMENA to create a list of low-bar ways to infuse more content about holidays, traditions, and history. As one religious school director suggested, this could be "the top 50 concrete things you can do to increase the [representation] of Middle Eastern and North African Jews."

Interviewees at multiple camps reported participating in cohort-based trainings on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which tend to focus on race, sexual orientation, gender, and ability. One of the camp administrators highlighted Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews as a growth area for her staff's anti-bias work. She wonders whether Sephardi/Mizrahi families would want to be included in the framing of events or affinity groups for People of Color and what language to use around this aspect of inclusion. Some of the more progressive community members may feel comfortable with this framing, but most of the community would likely not. In fact, JIMENA's recent report recommends avoiding "consensus on the same theories and tools for inclusion (e.g., diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) frameworks." The term "inclusion" seems to be more acceptable than "DEI" for many Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews. This could be an opportunity for JIMENA to partner with the organizations and individuals that run these DEI cohorts to help them incorporate content regarding Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews in community-appropriate ways.

The survey asked teachers what questions they have. Some were questions that we hope this report and the reports presented to participating schools have answered, such as, "I'm curious how families feel about the ashkenazic focus of our school. I wonder if they care about changing things" and "Are there ways we might unintentionally center Ashkenazi experiences that leave Sephardi/Mizrahi students and families feeling unseen or excluded?" Other questions would best be answered through trainings, such as:

- "How can we create more spaces for Sephardi and Mizrahi students and families to share their voices, stories, and perspectives in meaningful and authentic ways?"
- "Is there any recent information we should be aware of in how to best support our students and community?"
- "In what ways are sephardi traditions different from ashkenazi traditions?"
- "[What is] the difference between [Mizrahi and Sephardi] and the history of those groups/ terms?"

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CONCLUSION

This study offers a glimpse into an educational landscape at a moment of transition. Over the past few decades, schools and camps that were founded by Ashkenazi Jews have become populated – to varying extents – by the children and grandchildren of immigrants from Israel, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, and other countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The schools and camps have responded to this demographic shift by incorporating some curricular content about these groups and infusing some Sephardi practices into tefillah and holiday observance. However, there is still much work to be done to increase Sephardi/Mizrahi representation in the curriculum and throughout schools' and camps' religious and cultural practices. Parents and teachers mostly evaluate social dynamics and inclusiveness positively, but there is room for improvement here too. An area of unresolved tension between Sephardi/Mizrahi and Ashkenazi families and staff is political ideology, especially around gender, often requiring institutions to choose inclusion of one group over another.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, we offer several recommendations:

FOR SCHOOLS:

1. Increase leadership and faculty/staff diversity

Schools and camps should recruit more Sephardi/Mizrahi administrators, faculty, and staff. This will help even out the imbalance in schools and camps with large Sephardi/Mizrahi populations and may help with representation in some schools' and camps' curriculum and religious life. It will likely also enable them, especially camps, to recruit more Sephardi/Mizrahi campers.

2. Consider separate minyanim and halacha learning tracks

Schools and camps with regular prayer and a critical mass of Sephardi students should consider offering separate minyanim where students can choose which one to attend each time. Schools that teach halacha should consider separate Sephardi and Ashkenazi tracks in some grades and/or combined classes where they learn about each other's halacha. These decisions should be made carefully after deliberation over the pros and cons of separating students by ancestry. JIMENA might offer consultations for establishing separate minyanim and tracks in a way that minimizes social divisions.

3. Minimize Ashkenormativity and infuse Sephardi nusach, including through multi-nusach siddurim

If a school or camp (that decides against separate minyanim) uses and teaches Ashkenazi nusach, they should do so explicitly, not by default. They should consider teaching Sephardi variants and giving students options for learning Sephardi nusach – both the prayers and the

melodies – in or out of school. In addition, JIMENA might offer resources and consultations for infusing Sephardi content into predominantly Ashkenazi tefillah. This might include siddurim with options for multiple nusachim/nuschaot. Such siddurim do not yet exist for weekday prayers, but JIMENA could create them (separate Orthodox and non-Orthodox versions would be best), perhaps looking to The Kitchen's Shabbat siddur as a model. These multi-nusach siddurim would facilitate more in-depth education about similarities and differences in tefillah traditions and would allow Sephardi and Ashkenazi students to pray and lead services in their ancestral tradition with less confusion.

4. Teach Moroccan, Iraqi, and Persian te'amim before bnai mitzvah

Schools that teach Torah reading should offer separate tracks or outside tutors for Ashkenazi, Moroccan, Iraqi, Persian, and other students to learn their ancestral system of trope/te'amim. JIMENA or another organization could create an online resource with recordings of the te'amim from various traditions, as well as recordings of all parshiyot chanted with those systems. They should also offer a list of recommended bnai mitzvah tutors who can teach particular traditions, either in particular cities or online, including whether they are willing to teach girls.

FOR THE LA JEWISH COMMUNITY:

5. Collect data on student ancestry and family religious traditions

Data collection about student ancestry and Sephardi and Ashkenazi religious traditions is a clear gap, as we can see in most school and camp administrators' inability to provide accurate statistics. Because some administrators expressed discomfort around the topic, it is possible that schools may not initiate data collection without external motivation. We recommend that a central body, like the BJE or Federation, set an expectation or even mandate that schools collect data on Jewish ancestry as part of the admission and recommitment processes.

6. Coordinate a community-wide Persian recruitment initiative for summer camps

Jewish overnight summer camps serving Los Angeles should collaborate on a recruitment drive targeting the Persian community. This might take the form of an individual, perhaps through Foundation for Jewish Camp, the BJE, or the Federation, who markets the benefits of summer camp in the Persian community. This person might conduct information sessions in the homes of Persian current campers and in conjunction with Jewish schools and synagogues with large Persian populations. This person would answer questions, allay concerns, and serve as a concierge to help families find the most appropriate camp.

FOR JIMENA:

7. Promote the speaker and consultant bureau

JIMENA might multiply the impact of its speakers' bureau by offering a list of speakers and consultants on its website and by coordinating speaking tours for individuals, reaching out directly to several schools or camps in a particular region.

8. Expand professional development and resources in collaboration with inclusion trainers

In collaboration with JIMENA, organizations and individuals that currently provide training to schools and camps about diversity, equity, and inclusion might incorporate more content about Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews. In particular, they might offer coaching on responding to parent concerns about the ethnic balance of the school or camp and how, if at all, this issue should be addressed in promotional materials. The term "inclusion" is preferable to the politically charged acronym "DEI," which is taboo in most Sephardi/Mizrahi circles. Another option for professional development is travel to North Africa for immersive learning about particular Sephardi communities, perhaps in collaboration with Kivunim.

9. Promote a "greatest hits" list of low-bar resources

To help educators who do not have time to wade through the vast collection of resources in the Sephardi Toolkit, JIMENA might create a "greatest hits" list. This could include several historical events, historical figures, holiday traditions, and prayer variants. It can also include songs in multiple languages, especially those with repetition and basic vocabulary, like "Ocho Kandelikas," "Who Knows One," "Happy Birthday," and "Everybody Loves Saturday Night." It might also include days on the calendar to commemorate or celebrate Sephardi/Mizrahi culture and history, such as March 20-21 (Nowruz), March 31 (the Alhambra Decree), November 30 (Mizrahi expulsions), and Rosh Chodesh Tevet (Eid Al-Banat). And it could include ideas for programs and festivals that spotlight Persian, Iraqi, Moroccan, and other cultures.

10. Cross-list resources on multiple educational platforms

JIMENA might partner with organizations and platforms like the Center for Israel Education, Names Not Numbers, Facing History & Ourselves, and chinuch.org to cross-list elements of their Sephardi Toolkit and additional resources tailored to each site.

APPENDIX

The parent and teacher surveys are presented here, along with the overall results (numbers and percentages). Questions included in the parent inclusion index are marked with * .

Parent Survey with Overall Results:

		COUNT	%
How many of your children have attended this school?	1	23	17%
	2	47	34%
	3	56	41%
	4	11	8%
	More than 4	1	1%
	Total	138	100%
What is your relationship to your children at this school?	Mother	105	77%
	Father	31	23%
	Step-parent	0	0%
	Grandparent	0	0%
	Other	1	1%
	Total	137	100%
Your gender:	Male	32	23%
	Female	104	76%
	Non-binary	0	0%
	I prefer not to say	1	1%
	Other	0	0%
	Total	137	100%
What is your highest educational degree?	High school/GED	6	5%
	Associate's degree	4	3%
	Bachelor's degree	38	31%
	Graduate degree (Masters, Doctorate, Professional, Semikha)	75	61%
	Total	123	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? - English	Fluent	119	97%
	Proficient	4	3%
	Some ability	0	0%
	A few words	0	0%
	Total	123	100%

Which language(s) do you speak? - Hebrew	Fluent	29	27%
	Proficient	17	16%
	Some ability	37	34%
	A few words	26	24%
	Total	109	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? - Persian/Farsi	Fluent	44	68%
	Proficient	8	12%
	Some ability	4	6%
	A few words	9	14%
	Total	65	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? - Spanish	Fluent	16	19%
	Proficient	22	27%
	Some ability	26	31%
	A few words	19	23%
	Total	83	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? - French	Fluent	6	17%
	Proficient	4	11%
	Some ability	8	22%
	A few words	18	50%
	Total	36	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? - Arabic or Judeo-Arabic	Fluent	1	5%
	Proficient	1	5%
	Some ability	4	18%
	A few words	16	73%
	Total	22	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? - Russian	Fluent	2	15%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Some ability	1	8%
	A few words	10	77%
	Total	13	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? - Ladino	Fluent	0	0%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Some ability	2	18%
	A few words	9	82%
	Total	11	100%

Which language(s) do you speak? - Yiddish	Fluent	0	0%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Some ability	2	13%
	A few words	14	88%
	Total	16	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? - Other	Fluent	1	20%
	Proficient	1	20%
	Some ability	1	20%
	A few words	2	40%
	Total	5	100%
About how frequently does your family attend synagogue?	More than weekly	15	12%
	Weekly	46	38%
	Monthly	30	25%
	Just major holidays	30	25%
	Just special occasions (lifecycle events, etc.)	1	1%
	Never	0	0%
	Total	122	100%
When you do attend synagogue, which type of synagogue does your family typically attend? (select all that apply)	Ashkenazi Conservative	48	39%
	Ashkenazi Orthodox	32	26%
	Ashkenazi Other or No Denomination	1	1%
	Sephardi	46	38%
	Persian	24	20%
Have you sent any of your children to Jewish sleepaway camp?	Yes	67	55%
	Not yet but considering it for the future	38	31%
	No and not considering it for the future	16	13%
	Total	121	100%
How would you describe your political orientation?	Very conservative	26	22%
	Somewhat conservative	38	32%
	Moderate	28	24%
	Somewhat liberal	18	15%
	Very liberal	6	5%
	Other	3	3%
	Total	119	100%

Was your child born in the United States or somewhere else?	United States	116	98%
	Somewhere else, please describe:	2	2%
	Total	118	100%
How many of your child's parents were born in the United States?	0	46	39%
	1	36	31%
	2	35	30%
	Total	117	100%
How many of your child's grandparents (your parents and in-laws) were born in the United States?	0	70	59%
	1	9	8%
	2	22	19%
	3	5	4%
	4	12	10%
	Total	118	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - English	Fluent	117	99%
	Proficient	1	1%
	Some ability	0	0%
	A few words	0	0%
	Total	118	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - Hebrew	Fluent	14	14%
	Proficient	34	33%
	Some ability	47	46%
	A few words	7	7%
	Total	102	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - Persian/ Farsi	Fluent	2	4%
	Proficient	9	18%
	Some ability	26	53%
	A few words	12	24%
	Total	49	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - Spanish	Fluent	1	3%
	Proficient	5	16%
	Some ability	11	35%
	A few words	14	45%
	Total	31	100%

Which language(s) does your child speak? - French	Fluent	1	9%
	Proficient	1	9%
	Some ability	0	0%
	A few words	9	82%
	Total	11	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - Arabic or Judeo-Arabic	Fluent	0	0%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Some ability	0	0%
	A few words	3	100%
	Total	3	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - Russian	Fluent	0	0%
	Proficient	1	25%
	Some ability	0	0%
	A few words	3	75%
	Total	4	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - Ladino	Fluent	0	0%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Some ability	0	0%
	A few words	4	100%
	Total	4	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - Yiddish	Fluent	0	0%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Some ability	0	0%
	A few words	4	100%
	Total	4	100%
Which language(s) does your child speak? - Other	Fluent	0	0%
	Proficient	1	100%
	Some ability	0	0%
	A few words	0	0%
	Total	1	100%

* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - My child is proud of our family's cultural background.	Strongly agree	78	67%
	Agree	35	30%
	Neither agree nor disagree	4	3%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	117	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - My child is knowledgeable about our family's cultural background.	Strongly agree	58	50%
	Agree	49	42%
	Neither agree nor disagree	7	6%
	Disagree	2	2%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	116	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - My child feels comfortable discussing our family's ethnic/cultural background in school.	Strongly agree	57	50%
	Agree	43	38%
	Neither agree nor disagree	11	10%
	Disagree	2	2%
	Strongly disagree	1	1%
	Total	114	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I encourage my child to discuss our family's ethnic/cultural background in school.	Strongly agree	54	49%
	Agree	28	25%
	Neither agree nor disagree	25	23%
	Disagree	4	4%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	111	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - In school, my child is friendly with peers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.	Strongly agree	53	48%
	Agree	46	41%
	Neither agree nor disagree	9	8%
	Disagree	2	2%
	Strongly disagree	1	1%
	Total	111	100%

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - Out of school, my child is friendly with peers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.	Strongly agree	40	36%
	Agree	37	33%
	Neither agree nor disagree	19	17%
	Disagree	14	13%
	Strongly disagree	2	2%
	Total	112	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - In school, my child feels most comfortable with peers whose ethnic and cultural backgrounds match their own background. (reverse)	Strongly agree	17	16%
	Agree	18	17%
	Neither agree nor disagree	38	35%
	Disagree	29	27%
	Strongly disagree	7	6%
	Total	109	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - Out of school, my child feels most comfortable with peers whose ethnic and cultural backgrounds match their own background.	Strongly agree	16	15%
	Agree	26	24%
	Neither agree nor disagree	36	33%
	Disagree	24	22%
	Strongly disagree	6	6%
	Total	108	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I regularly communicate with my child's teachers.	Strongly agree	26	25%
	Agree	55	52%
	Neither agree nor disagree	21	20%
	Disagree	4	4%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	106	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I feel like my child's teachers understand my family.	Strongly agree	18	16%
	Agree	46	42%
	Neither agree nor disagree	39	35%
	Disagree	6	5%
	Strongly disagree	1	1%
	Total	110	100%

* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I feel like the school administrators understand my family.	Strongly agree	22	20%
	Agree	46	42%
	Neither agree nor disagree	27	25%
	Disagree	9	8%
	Strongly disagree	5	5%
	Total	109	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I regularly communicate with other parents and families from the school.	Strongly agree	54	50%
	Agree	39	36%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	12%
	Disagree	3	3%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	109	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I easily communicate with parents and families from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.	Strongly agree	52	47%
	Agree	44	40%
	Neither agree nor disagree	10	9%
	Disagree	2	2%
	Strongly disagree	2	2%
	Total	110	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - The other parents and families in the school make me feel welcome.	Strongly agree	42	38%
	Agree	39	35%
	Neither agree nor disagree	19	17%
	Disagree	5	5%
	Strongly disagree	5	5%
	Total	110	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - In classes at the school, my child learns about different cultures.	Strongly agree	9	8%
	Agree	54	50%
	Neither agree nor disagree	25	23%
	Disagree	15	14%
	Strongly disagree	4	4%
	Total	107	100%

* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - In school, my child learns about Sephardi/ Mizrahi history.	Strongly agree	3	3%
	Agree	32	30%
	Neither agree nor disagree	37	35%
	Disagree	21	20%
	Strongly disagree	14	13%
	Total	107	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - In school, my child learns about Sephardi/ Mizrahi culture.	Strongly agree	3	3%
	Agree	32	30%
	Neither agree nor disagree	33	31%
	Disagree	28	26%
	Strongly disagree	10	9%
	Total	106	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - In school, my child learns about Sephardi/ Mizrahi religious practice.	Strongly agree	2	2%
	Agree	24	23%
	Neither agree nor disagree	36	34%
	Disagree	31	30%
	Strongly disagree	12	11%
	Total	105	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - In school, my child learns about Sephardi/ Mizrahi history, culture, and religious practice as often as Ashkenazi history, culture, and religious practice.	Strongly agree	2	2%
	Agree	16	15%
	Neither agree nor disagree	31	30%
	Disagree	38	36%
	Strongly disagree	18	17%
	Total	105	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - [Our school] should offer a Sephardi Minyan. [only included in one school's questionnaire]	Strongly agree	17	57%
	Agree	10	33%
	Neither agree nor disagree	2	7%
	Disagree	1	3%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	30	100%

* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I think it is important for parents to donate money to this school.	Strongly agree	29	27%
	Agree	49	46%
	Neither agree nor disagree	24	22%
	Disagree	3	3%
	Strongly disagree	2	2%
	Total	107	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I am very involved in my child's school.	Strongly agree	34	32%
	Agree	50	47%
	Neither agree nor disagree	19	18%
	Disagree	3	3%
	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Total	106	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I am involved in parent committees.	Strongly agree	22	21%
	Agree	45	43%
	Neither agree nor disagree	21	20%
	Disagree	15	14%
	Strongly disagree	1	1%
	Total	104	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I feel welcome on parent committees.	Strongly agree	31	30%
	Agree	49	48%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	14%
	Disagree	7	7%
	Strongly disagree	2	2%
	Total	103	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - If I have a concern about something happening in school, I feel comfortable voicing my concerns to someone in the school.	Strongly agree	41	38%
	Agree	43	40%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	7%
	Disagree	9	8%
	Strongly disagree	7	6%
	Total	108	100%

* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - If I have an idea for a change in the school, I feel comfortable sharing my ideas with someone in the school.	Strongly agree	30	28%
	Agree	45	42%
	Neither agree nor disagree	15	14%
	Disagree	11	10%
	Strongly disagree	6	6%
	Total	107	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I feel that my concerns and ideas are appreciated and valued by the administration.	Strongly agree	21	20%
	Agree	38	36%
	Neither agree nor disagree	29	27%
	Disagree	11	10%
	Strongly disagree	8	7%
	Total	107	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I feel that my concerns are appropriately addressed by the administration.	Strongly agree	17	16%
	Agree	41	39%
	Neither agree nor disagree	26	25%
	Disagree	15	14%
	Strongly disagree	7	7%
	Total	106	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I was satisfied with the school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.	Strongly agree	32	34%
	Agree	25	27%
	Neither agree nor disagree	10	11%
	Disagree	10	11%
	Strongly disagree	16	17%
	Total	93	100%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I am satisfied with how the school has addressed gender and sexual orientation.	Strongly agree	29	28%
	Agree	30	29%
	Neither agree nor disagree	32	31%
	Disagree	6	6%
	Strongly disagree	5	5%
	Total	102	100%

* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - I have heard about students being bullied, harassed, or teased because of their ethnic or cultural background. (reverse)	Strongly agree	6	6%
	Agree	11	10%
	Neither agree nor disagree	30	29%
	Disagree	36	34%
	Strongly disagree	22	21%
	Total	105	100%
* To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following? - The school is good at addressing bullying among students.	Strongly agree	11	11%
	Agree	41	39%
	Neither agree nor disagree	26	25%
	Disagree	20	19%
	Strongly disagree	6	6%
	Total	104	100%

Constructed variables:

Child ethnicity	Only Ashkenazi	31	25%
	Sephardi/Mizrahi	77	62%
	Mixed Heritage	17	14%
	Not Jewish	0	0%
	Total	125	100%
Child ancestral origin	Israel	24	19%
	Both European and MENA Diaspora	14	11%
	European Diaspora	19	15%
	MENA Diaspora	65	52%
	No Jewish Ancestry	3	2%
	Total	125	100%
Family born in US (generational distance from immigration)	no grandparent or parent born in US	46	39%
	no grandparent born in US but 1 or more parents born in US	23	20%
	1 or more grandparents and 1 or more parents born in US	48	41%
	Total	117	100%

Teacher Survey with Overall Results:

		COUNT	%
What grade(s) do you teach?	Below 5th	7	11%
	5th	12	19%
	6th	49	77%
	7th	41	64%
	8th	42	66%
What subject(s) do you teach? History And/Or Judaics	No	27	44%
	Yes	34	56%
	Total	61	100%
Your Gender:	Missing	1	2%
	Female	44	69%
	Male	19	30%
	Total	64	100%
Degree(s) you hold: Master's Degree	No	25	41%
	Yes	36	59%
	Total	61	100%
Degree(s) you hold: Teaching Certification	No	38	62%
	Yes	23	38%
	Total	61	100%
Degree(s) you hold: Bachelor's Degree	No	21	34%
	Yes	40	66%
	Total	61	100%
Degree(s) you hold: Semikha/Rabbinic Ordination	No	59	97%
	Yes	2	3%
	Total	61	100%
Degree(s) you hold: Doctorate	No	57	93%
	Yes	4	7%
	Total	61	100%

How long have you been teaching at any school?	0-3 years	5	8%
	4-5 years	6	10%
	6-10 years	15	24%
	11-20 years	19	31%
	21+ years	17	27%
	Total	62	100%
How long have you been teaching at this school?	0-3 years	26	42%
	4-5 years	12	19%
	6-10 years	9	15%
	11-20 years	9	15%
	21+ years	6	10%
	Total	62	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? English	A few words	0	0%
	Some ability	0	0%
	Proficient	4	6%
	Fluent	58	94%
	Total	62	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? Hebrew	A few words	7	15%
	Some ability	14	29%
	Proficient	10	21%
	Fluent	17	35%
	Total	48	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? Persian/Farsi	A few words	6	46%
	Some ability	2	15%
	Proficient	2	15%
	Fluent	3	23%
	Total	13	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? Spanish	A few words	13	41%
	Some ability	14	44%
	Proficient	5	16%
	Fluent	0	0%
	Total	32	100%

Which language(s) do you speak? French	A few words	6	43%
	Some ability	6	43%
	Proficient	2	14%
	Fluent	0	0%
	Total	14	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? Arabic	A few words	3	50%
	Some ability	3	50%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Fluent	0	0%
	Total	6	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? Russian	A few words	4	67%
	Some ability	0	0%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Fluent	2	33%
	Total	6	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? Ladino	A few words	4	100%
	Some ability	0	0%
	Proficient	0	0%
	Fluent	0	0%
	Total	4	100%
Which language(s) do you speak? Yiddish	A few words	9	69%
	Some ability	1	8%
	Proficient	1	8%
	Fluent	2	15%
	Total	13	100%
Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? Hebrew	No	2	3%
	Yes	56	97%
	Total	58	100%
Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? Persian/Farsi	No	15	26%
	Yes	43	74%
	Total	58	100%
Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? Spanish	No	37	64%
	Yes	21	36%
	Total	58	100%

Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? French	No	52	90%
	Yes	6	10%
	Total	58	100%
Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? Arabic	No	57	98%
	Yes	1	2%
	Total	58	100%
Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? Russian	No	45	78%
	Yes	13	22%
	Total	58	100%
Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? Ladino	No	58	100%
	Yes	0	0%
	Total	58	100%
Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? Yiddish	No	56	97%
	Yes	2	3%
	Total	58	100%
Other than English, what language(s) do your students speak? Other	No	57	98%
	Yes	1	2%
	Total	58	100%
How would you describe your political orientation?	Missing	4	6%
	Moderate	13	20%
	Other	4	6%
	Somewhat conservative	7	11%
	Somewhat liberal	19	30%
	Very conservative	9	14%
	Very liberal	8	13%
	Total	64	100%
I am aware of my students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	3	5%
	Agree	30	50%
	Strongly agree	27	45%
	Total	60	100%

I encourage my students to discuss their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	15	25%
	Agree	20	33%
	Strongly agree	25	42%
	Total	60	100%
My students feel comfortable bringing up their ethnic and cultural backgrounds in my class.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	5	8%
	Agree	22	37%
	Strongly agree	32	54%
	Total	59	100%
I have a rapport with students from ethnic and cultural backgrounds different from my own.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	3	5%
	Agree	17	29%
	Strongly agree	39	66%
	Total	59	100%
I have a greater rapport with students whose backgrounds are similar to mine than with students whose backgrounds are different from mine.	Strongly disagree	10	17%
	Disagree	10	17%
	Neither agree nor disagree	17	28%
	Agree	15	25%
	Strongly agree	8	13%
	Total	60	100%
I easily communicate with parents and families from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	1	2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	5	8%
	Agree	27	45%
	Strongly agree	27	45%
	Total	60	100%

I have a lot of freedom over the content of my curriculum.	Strongly disagree	2	4%
	Disagree	1	2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	15%
	Agree	23	42%
	Strongly agree	21	38%
	Total	55	100%
If I want to make a change to the content of my curriculum, I can do so easily.	Strongly disagree	1	2%
	Disagree	2	4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	15%
	Agree	21	38%
	Strongly agree	23	42%
	Total	55	100%
My curriculum includes texts that represent a range of culturally diverse voices.	Strongly disagree	1	2%
	Disagree	4	8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	26%
	Agree	16	32%
	Strongly agree	16	32%
	Total	50	100%
My curriculum includes content related to the cultural backgrounds of my students.	Strongly disagree	1	2%
	Disagree	1	2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	27%
	Agree	17	35%
	Strongly agree	16	33%
	Total	48	100%
I feel comfortable teaching my students about cultures that are not my own.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	7	14%
	Agree	16	31%
	Strongly agree	28	55%
	Total	51	100%

My curriculum includes content about Sephardi/ Mizrachi history, culture, and/or religious practice.	Strongly disagree	1	3%
	Disagree	10	29%
	Neither agree nor disagree	5	15%
	Agree	13	38%
	Strongly agree	5	15%
	Total	34	100%
I want to include more content about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and/or religious practice.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	3	9%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	38%
	Agree	14	41%
	Strongly agree	4	12%
	Total	34	100%
I feel confident in my knowledge of Sephardi/Mizrahi history.	Strongly disagree	2	4%
	Disagree	7	15%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	30%
	Agree	18	38%
	Strongly agree	6	13%
	Total	47	100%
I feel confident in my knowledge of Sephardi/Mizrahi culture.	Strongly disagree	1	2%
	Disagree	8	17%
	Neither agree nor disagree	11	24%
	Agree	20	43%
	Strongly agree	6	13%
	Total	46	100%
I feel confident in my knowledge of Sephardi/Mizrahi religious practice.	Strongly disagree	2	4%
	Disagree	8	18%
	Neither agree nor disagree	9	20%
	Agree	20	44%
	Strongly agree	6	13%
	Total	45	100%

[Our school] should offer a Sephardi Minyan. [only included in one school's questionnaire]	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	5	38%
	Agree	3	23%
	Strongly agree	5	38%
	Total	13	100%
I am curious to learn more about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and/or religious practice.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	0	0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	15	29%
	Agree	27	52%
	Strongly agree	10	19%
	Total	52	100%
If I want to learn more about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and/or religious practice, my school will likely provide me with professional learning opportunities.	Strongly disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	4	8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	26%
	Agree	26	49%
	Strongly agree	9	17%
	Total	53	100%
My school already provides me with opportunities to learn more about Sephardi/Mizrahi history, culture, and/or religious practice.	Strongly disagree	4	8%
	Disagree	7	14%
	Neither agree nor disagree	25	51%
	Agree	11	22%
	Strongly agree	2	4%
	Total	49	100%
I have observed students being bullied, harassed, or teased because of their ethnic or cultural background.	Strongly disagree	4	7%
	Disagree	12	22%
	Neither agree nor disagree	7	13%
	Agree	19	35%
	Strongly agree	13	24%
	Total	55	100%

If I witness an instance of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on ethnicity or culture, I know what the policy is for addressing the behavior.	**Strongly disagree**	**3**	**6%**
	Disagree	**1**	**2%**
	Neither agree nor disagree	**4**	**8%**
	Agree	**22**	**42%**
	Strongly agree	**23**	**43%**
	Total	**53**	**100%**
CONSTRUCTED VARIABLES:			
Ethnicity	**Ashkenazi**	**36**	**58%**
	Sephardi/Mizrahi	**13**	**21%**
	Mixed Heritage	**4**	**6%**
	Not Jewish	**9**	**15%**
	Total	**62**	**100%**
National Origin	**No Jewish Ancestry**	**10**	**16%**
	European Diaspora	**34**	**54%**
	MENA Diaspora	**8**	**13%**
	Both	**3**	**5%**
	Israel	**6**	**10%**
	Other	**2**	**3%**
	Total	**63**	**100%**