



**NETWORK FOR RESEARCH IN
Jewish Education**

**2026
NRJE
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**

**May 31 - June 2
University of
Maryland Hillel
College Park, MD**

**Benji Davis, Program Chair
Ari Y Kelman, NRJE Chair
Hosted by University of Maryland Hillel**

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
MAY 31 - JUNE 2, 2026 • UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND HILLEL

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CASJE



**SPECIAL THANKS TO THE
PROGRAM COMMITTEE**

**Benji Davis, Program Chair
Beth Cousens and Mitch Malkus**

**NRJE CHAIR
Ari Y Kelman**

**NRJE COORDINATOR
Melissa Zalkin Stollman**

NRJE

WELCOME

We look forward to a stimulating conference as we convene academics, practitioners and researchers from many disciplines and institutions to share the latest studies in the field of Jewish educational research.

SESSION FORMATS

- 1. PAPER SESSIONS:** Presentations of completed or nearly completed work by several researchers and a discussant providing feedback.
- 2. ROUNDTABLE:** A preformed discussion panel on a shared topic of interest without original research. This format welcomes teachers and practitioners who have educational questions and topics but not formal data, and includes framing questions, short responses from presenters, open discussion between attendees and presenters.
- 3. SKILLS SESSION:** A session led by a senior scholar where a specific skill is taught and junior scholars have the opportunity to ask questions. This could include topics such as “how to turn a dissertation into a book/article” or “how to secure a publishing contract.”
- 4. PRACTITIONER RESEARCH SESSION:** Practitioners, often collaborating with researchers, present research designed to provide practical ideas and strategies for immediate use in educational settings, with time for discussion and feedback.

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

SUNDAY, MAY 31

3:30-5:00pm Registration and Reception

5:00pm Opening Plenary

6:30pm Dinner

7:30pm Dessert Reception

MONDAY, JUNE 1

8:00am Registration

8:00-9:00am Making Research Accessible in a TL;DR World:
A Breakfast Discussion hosted by CASJE

9:00-10:30am Session Block 1

10:30-10:45am Coffee Break

10:45am-12:15pm Session Block 2

12:15-1:15pm Lunch and Awards Presentations

1:15-2:45pm Session Block 3

2:45-3:00pm Coffee Break

3:00-4:30pm Session Block 4

4:30-4:45pm Coffee Break

4:45pm Plenary

6:00pm Dinner

TUESDAY, JUNE 2

8:00am Registration

8:00-9:00am Breakfast and Coffee

9:00-10:30am Session Block 5

10:30-10:45am Coffee Break

10:45am-12:15pm NRJE Board Meeting

10:45am-12:15pm Session Block 6

12:15-1:00pm Boxed Lunch

1:00-2:00pm Luggage Pick-Up and Departures

PROGRAM

SUNDAY, MAY 31

3:30-5:00pm Registration and Reception

5:00pm Opening Plenary

6:30pm Dinner

7:30pm Dessert Reception

MONDAY, JUNE 1

8:00am Registration

8:00am Making Research Accessible in a TL;DR World: A Breakfast Discussion hosted by CASJE

9:00-10:30am Session Block 1

S 1.1 PAPER SESSION - "Am I Seen?": Agency in Curriculum and Content

Chair: Erika Bocknek (American Jewish University)

"Bringing a Curriculum to Life"-Teacher Agency in Implementing a Provided Jewish Studies Curriculum; Meredith Katz (Queens College, CUNY)

Missing Mirrors: Modern Orthodox Representation in Jewish Children's Picture Books; Alana Rifkin Gelnick (Dreamearly)

Let the Children Lead: A Teacher Action Research Study on Student Agency and Values as Curriculum; Margo Pellmar (Hebrew Union College)

S 1.2 PAPER SESSION - Israel Knowledge and Identification

Chair: Sivan Zakai (Hebrew Union College)

Growing Up with Israel: What a Fifteen-Year Panel Study Reveals About Attachment and Ambivalence Among Young Adults and Their Parents; Alex Pomson (Rosov Consulting)

Israel Knowledge, Jewish Day School, and Birthright Israel; Graham Wright (Brandeis University)

Peoplehood Moments as Professional Practice: A Case Study Workshop on Cultivating Community; Ezra Kopelowitz (Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education & Research Success Technologies)

S 1.3 PAPER SESSION - Practitioner Papers: Identity in the Classroom

Chair: Deborah Skolnik-Einhorn (Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School)

How Are Our Kids Doing?: Data About the Challenges, And Evidence-Based Approaches to Meet Them; Rivka Press Schwartz (SAR High School) and Russi Bohm (SAR High School)

Hebrew 2.0 - A Language that Acts and Shapes Reality: Hebrew as a Vehicle for Developing Thinking, Engaged, and Impactful Youth; Shelli Putterman-Kenett (Middlebury College and CESJDS)

Secondary Students' Self-Identified Drivers of Religious Growth in School; Yael Jaffe (Maimonides School)

LOCATION

Lobby

Multi-Purpose Room

Multi-Purpose Room

Multi-Purpose Room

Lobby

Multi-Purpose Room

Conference Room

Synagogue

Library

PROGRAM

MONDAY, JUNE 1 (continued)

LOCATION

<p>S 1.4 PAPER SESSION - Teaching Jewish Texts Through a Gendered Lens: Research and Practice</p>	<p>Dining Room</p>
<p>Tidhar Gutman (Hebrew University) Anne Ebersman (Jewish Theological Seminary) Esther Friedman (OMEC Consulting) Discussant: Talia Hurwich (The Jewish Education Project)</p>	
<p>10:30-10:45am Coffee Break</p>	<p>Lobby</p>
<p>10:45am-12:15pm Session Block 2</p>	
<p>S 2.1 PAPER SESSION - Teen and Young Adult Decisions About Learning and Participation</p>	<p>Conference Room</p>
<p>Chair: Talia Hurwich (The Jewish Education Project)</p>	
<p>The Learning Culture Among High School Students; Yael Jaffe (Maimonides School)</p>	
<p>The Jewish Teens Friendship Study: A Mixed-Methods Study of Teens' Social Lives; Yael Findler (The George Washington University)</p>	
<p>On Their Own Terms: Pathways into Program Participation; Matt Reingold (Rosov Consulting) and Noa Havivi (Jewish Federation of Greater Washington)</p>	
<p>S 2.2 PAPER SESSION - Is There a Script to Follow? Three Cases of "Disruption" to the "Default"</p>	<p>Synagogue</p>
<p>Chair: Leslie Ginsparg Klein (Gratz College)</p>	
<p>Shared Concerns, Different Angles: Kids and Teachers' Differing Approaches to Engaging with "What Matters" in the World; Sivan Zakai (Hebrew Union College) and Lauren Applebaum (Hebrew Union College)</p>	
<p>Breaking the Frisch Cycle: How Gap Years Disrupt the Middle-Class Education-to-Employment Pipeline; Esther Friedman (OMEC Consulting) and Jon Levisohn (Brandeis University)</p>	
<p>Ethical Curation: Religious Jewish Women Navigate Popular Music and Religious Agency in the Streaming Era; Tal Vaizman (George Mason University)</p>	
<p>S 2.3 PAPER SESSION - Teachers as Bridges: Educational Shlichut as a Looking Glass into Israel-Diaspora Relations, 1930s to Present</p>	<p>Library</p>
<p>Ezra Kopelowitz (Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education & Research Success Technologies) Michal Junger (Brandeis University) Daniel Steiner (Har Zion Temple)</p>	
<p>S 2.4 PAPER SESSION - Israel Experience Education in a Time of Upheaval: Continuity, Change, and Challenge—And Opportunity</p>	<p>Dining Room</p>
<p>Chair/Discussant: Wendy Rosov (Rosov Consulting) Jessica Kalbfeld (RootOne at the Jewish Education Project) and Miri Lieber (RootOne at the Jewish Education Project) Yaakov Malomet (Rosov Consulting) Alex Pomson (Rosov Consulting)</p>	
<p>12:15-1:15pm Lunch and Award Presentations</p>	<p>Multi-Purpose Room</p>

PROGRAM

MONDAY, JUNE 1 (continued)LOCATION

1:15-2:45pm Session Block 3

S 3.1 PAPER SESSION - Teaching What Is Hard to Teach in Jewish Education

Conference Room

Leslie Ginsparg Klein (Gratz College)
 Julie Golding (Touro University)
 Ora Weinbach (Gratz College and The Soul Center)
 Discussant: Jon Levisohn (Brandeis University)

S 3.2 PAPER SESSION - Participatory Pedagogy in Jewish Education

Synagogue

Chair: Jenny Small (Brandeis University)

Reviving Oral Performative Tradition as a Pedagogy for Teaching Rabbinic Texts; Aviv Siegel (Academy for Jewish Religion)

Stepping Into Another's World: Digital Games, Critical Thinking, and Educational Possibilities in Contemporary Jewish Education; Uriel Aiskovich (University of Potsdam)

Reweaving Jewish Peoplehood in the Classroom: Scholar-Reviewed Tools for Centering Sephardi and Mizrahi Narratives; Drora Arussy (Jewish Unity Through Diversity Institute)

S 3.3 PAPER SESSION - Inquiry from Within: The Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education Teacher Research Group

Library

Ziva Hassenfeld (Brandeis University)
 Michal Junger (Brandeis University)
 Romy Neumark (Center for Jewish Studies)

S 3.4 PAPER SESSION - When Does Jewish Education Influence How People Choose to Live?

Dining Room

Ezra Kopelowitz (Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education & Research Success Technologies)
 Benji Davis (Yeshiva University)
 Tal Vaizman (George Mason University)
 Gal Harpaz (Open University of Israel)

2:45-3:00pm Coffee Break

Lobby

3:00-4:30pm Session Block 4

S 4.1 SKILLS SESSION - Extraordinary Magic: Conceptual Foundations of the Risk-Resilience Continuum

Conference Room

Erika Bocknek (American Jewish University)

S 4.2 PAPER SESSION - Campus and Communal Leadership

Synagogue

Chair: Beth Cousens (Beth Cousens Consulting)

Insourcing Leadership: How Chassidic Lived Tradition Inform Sustainable Organizational Practice; Chanie Chein (Chabad at Brandeis University) and Peretz Chein (The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education)

Mind the Gap: Community Priorities and Organizational Mission Across 18 Dimensions of Jewish Life; Maor Shani (M2: The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education)

Civil Conversations, Not Civil Engineering: Jewish Identity and Building Bridges on College Campuses; Elana Riback Rand (The George Washington University)

PROGRAM

MONDAY, JUNE 1 (continued)

LOCATION

S 4.3 ROUNDTABLE - Navigating AI Use in Jewish Education Research: A Community Dialogue

Ziva Hassenfeld (Brandeis University)
 Jonathan Krasner (Brandeis University)
 Esther Friedman (OMEC Consulting)
 Ezra Kopelowitz (Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education & Research Success Technologies)

Library

S 4.4 PAPER SESSION - Four Windows into Inquiry: Practitioner Action Research as a Catalyst for Shifts in Jewish Educational Leadership

Mindy Gold (Hebrew Union College; Mandel Teacher Educator Institute)
 Gail Boone (Mandel Teacher Educator Institute)
 Babette Cohn (Shaare Tefila Congregation)
 Melissa Werbow (Jewish Learning Collaborative)
 Discussant: Miriam Raider-Roth (University of Cincinnati)

Dining Room

4:30-4:45pm Coffee Break

Lobby

4:45pm Plenary - Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Founders and Field Builders in Conversation

Joseph Reimer (Brandeis University)
 Hanan Alexander (University of Haifa)
 Diane Schuster (Brandeis University)
 Moderated by Alex Pomson (Rosov Consulting)

Multi-Purpose Room

6:00pm Dinner

Multi-Purpose Room

TUESDAY, JUNE 2

8:00am Registration

Lobby

8:00am Breakfast and Coffee

Multi-Purpose Room

9:00-10:30am Session Block 5

S 5.1 PAPER SESSION - Beyond Belief: Lived Experience of Jewish Plausibility Structures

Fluency and Plausibility: The Phenomenology of Jewish Linguistic Naturalization; Jon Levisohn (Brandeis University)

Conference Room

Schools as Gatekeepers of Normativity: Educational Institutions and Religious Retention in High-Cost Religious Communities; Moshe Krakowski (Yeshiva University)

Discussant: Rivka Press Schwartz (SAR High School)

Synagogue

S 5.2 PAPER SESSION - Pedagogies of Israel Education Post October 7th

Chair: David Bryfman (The Jewish Education Project)

Commemorating October 7th and Community Jewish High Schools; Meredith Katz (Queens College)

Israel Education During Wartime: Aboutism and Traitism in Jewish Summer Camps; Tal Vaizman (George Mason University)

Teaching Palestinian Perspectives with a Pedagogy of "Historical Empathy"; Benji Davis (Yeshiva University)

PROGRAM

TUESDAY, JUNE 2 (continued)**LOCATION**

S 5.3 ROUNDTABLE - When Scholars Collaborate with Teachers, Students, and One Another Moderator: Susan Kardos (Harvard University) Lauren Applebaum (Hebrew Union College) Allison Cook (Hadar Institute) Orit Kent (Hadar Institute) Sivan Zakai (Hebrew Union College)	Library
S 5.4 SKILLS SESSION - Holding Space: Educators in Dialogue on Resilience, Reflection, and Care Miriam Raider-Roth (Mandel Teacher Educator Institute) Erika Bocknek (American Jewish University)	Dining Room
10:30-10:45am Coffee Break	Lobby
10:45am-12:15pm NRJE Board Meeting	Game Room
10:45am-12:15pm Session Block 6	
S 6.1 PRACTITIONER RESEARCH SESSION - What's in a Name?: Understanding Zionist and Anti-Zionist Identities in Contemporary Jewish Life David Manchester (Jewish Federations of North America) Anna Langer (Jewish Federations of North America) Robbie Gringras (For the Sake of Argument) Daniel Parmer (Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston)	Conference Room
S 6.2 PAPER SESSION - Raising Jewish Americans: Family, Community, and Well-Being Talia Hurwich (The Jewish Education Project) Zachary Nichols (Collaborative for Applied Studies in Jewish Education) Discussant: Arielle Levites (CASJE)	Synagogue
S 6.3 PAPER SESSION - Jewish On Campus: Student, Alumni, and Faculty Perspectives Jenny Small (Brandeis University) Pietro Sasso (Delaware State University) Steven Feldman (Indiana University Bloomington) Benjamin Selznick (James Madison University) Discussant: Nicole Samuel (Brandeis University)	Library
12:15pm Lunch	Multi-Purpose Room
1:00-2:00pm Luggage Pick-Up and Departures	Dining Room

Thanks for joining us!
We'll see you again next
year.