

Camp Supervisor Exchange Project



Evaluation Report and Recommendations
Pilot Project – Summer 2013

Noah Zaves, Project Director
noah.zaves@gmail.com • (925) 212-5679

Project blog:
www.modernjudaism.org/campexchange

1 Jewish grad student,
10 camp directors, and
24 supervisors
set out to improve
Jewish camping.

Each camp sent **2-5 visitors** on
a **1-2 day visit** to see a second
camp in action. This is the story
of the project's success.



*Supervisors from URJ
Crane Lake speak
with staff members
at Camp JRF.*

Noah Zaves, Project Director is an MBA student at Brandeis University's Hornstein Program, where he studies Jewish camping and informal education. Noah currently serves at the director and lead educator of the Institute for Modern Judaism. Previously, he was a Jewish educator in San Francisco, and an 8-year staff member at Camp Tawonga, most recently as Program Director and Lead Jewish Educator. Find out more at www.NoahZaves.com!



Supervisors from Camp JRF pose during their visit to Berkshire Hills Emanuel.

Contents:

Who Participated?	p. 4
Objectives and Key Findings	p. 5
Overview of Visits	p. 6
Project Materials	p. 9
Impact on Participating Camps	p. 10
Measuring Effectiveness	p. 11
Recommendations for Next Summer	p. 14
Financial Assessment	p. 15

We gratefully acknowledge funding from the Covenant Foundation for the project's transportation expenses.

Who participated?

10 individual camps:

- Berkshire Hills Emanuel Camp
 - Capital Camps
 - URJ Crane Lake Camp
 - URJ Camp Harlam
 - Camp JRF
 - Camp Moshava
 - Perlman Camp
 - Pinemere Camp
 - Camp Poyntelle Lewis Village
 - Camp Ramah in the Poconos
-

From 6 national movements:

- B'nai B'rith
 - B'nei Akiva
 - JCCA
 - JRF
 - Ramah
 - URJ
-

Departments represented:

14 program staff (58% of participants)

Including:

3 Jewish program supervisors

2 athletics supervisors

10 camper care staff (42% of participants)

4 camp administrators (17% of participants)

Average participant tenure: **4.7 yrs. on staff**

This project was designed to meet two parallel objectives:

Objective #1) This summer, create and optimize an exchange process for North American Jewish summer camps, ultimately ending up with a comprehensive framework that any camp can use.

Objective #2) Create a lasting culture, within and among participating camps (and ultimately across the entire field) of conversation, collaboration, and regular exchange of innovation and staff members.



Supervisors from Camp JRF learn about the art room at Berkshire Hills Emanuel Camp.

Key findings from this summer's pilot implementation:

→ Every participating camp director reported that they were pleased with the results of the exchange. After the "official" visit, several camps duplicated the exchange process on their own, to extend the project's benefits. Most utilized, or planned to utilize, concrete ideas that their supervisors identified during the exchange.

→ Most hosting camps were incredibly honest with the visiting supervisors, sharing both successes and challenges, and openly asking for advice. Many of the visitors built relationships with staff members at their host camp.

→ While some directors struggled with the logistics of running camp without certain supervisors, they said that the benefits of the exchange ultimately made it worthwhile.

→ The project achieved its goals, and is ready to be scaled up for next summer.

Overview of Visit Process

- 1) Camp directors **choose 2-5 supervisors** to participate in the exchange
- 2) At the start of the summer, camp directors fill out a worksheet to **plan an effective visit** for the camp they're hosting
- 3) Participants have a **pre-visit conversation** with their director, to establish goals and identify observation strategies



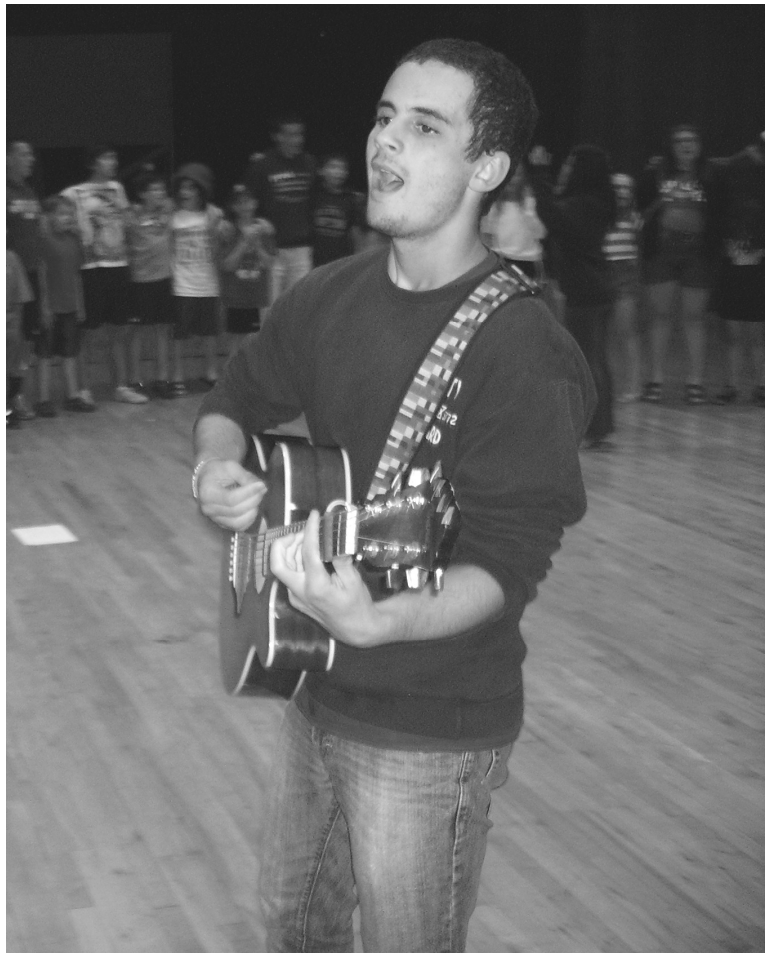
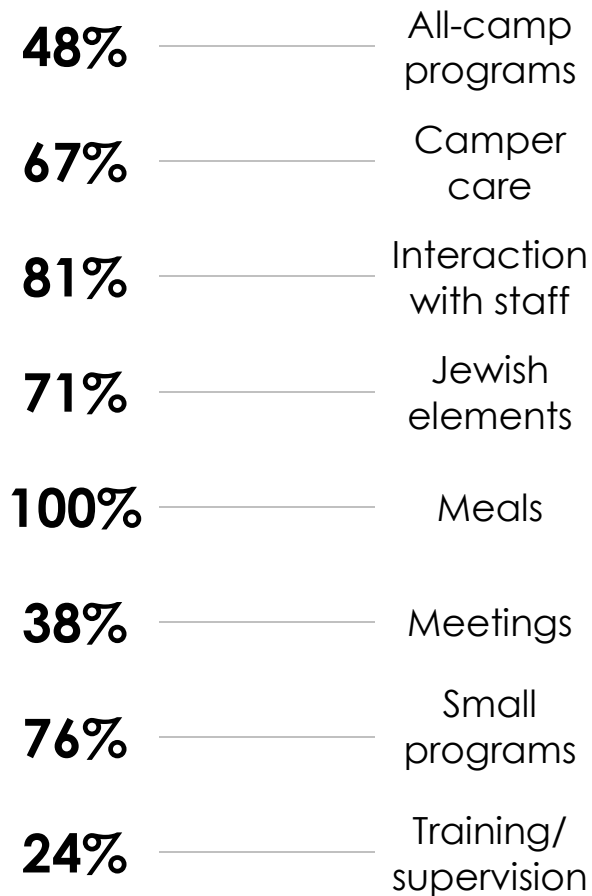
Supervisors from URJ Crane Lake observe an Israel education program at Camp JRF.

- 4) Participants **visit the host camp** for 1-2 days, where they explore the camp's facilities, observe programs, and meet with staff and directors
- 5) After returning home, participants meet with their director to **share their observations**, and **identify 3 concrete ideas** to implement:
 - 1 easy idea to implement immediately
 - 1 mid-range idea by the end of the summer
 - 1 long-term idea for the following summer

Evaluation: *All participating supervisors completed a written evaluation at the end of their visit, and all participating directors completed an over-the-phone evaluation at the close of the summer. This report is based on their responses.*

By the numbers:

How many visitors were able to experience the following elements of camp?



A URJ Camp Harlam songleader leads his unit in the nightly Hashkiveinu ceremony, while supervisors from Camp Poyntelle Lewis Village look on.

What participants saw at camp:



What they wished they'd seen:



As reported by participants: What are the top three observations that will be useful for your home camp?



Note: Print size is proportional to the number of respondents who provided a given answer.

As reported by directors: What innovative ideas were identified, and implemented back home, by your supervisors this summer?

- Creating dedicated music room, with enough instruments for an entire group to play together
- Re-envisioning concept of Kabbalat Shabbat as an engaging, interactive service, leading into singing and dancing
- Building wooden laundry sheds to keep laundry dry, with separate sections for clean and dirty clothes
- Increasing the number of targets on the archery range, so campers can shoot more frequently without as much waiting
- Identifying new perspectives on PR and marketing, including fast and cheap methods to spruce up the camp property

Note: Several directors mentioned that the process of identifying ideas will continue at the start of next season, because their visit happened relatively late in the summer.

Project Materials

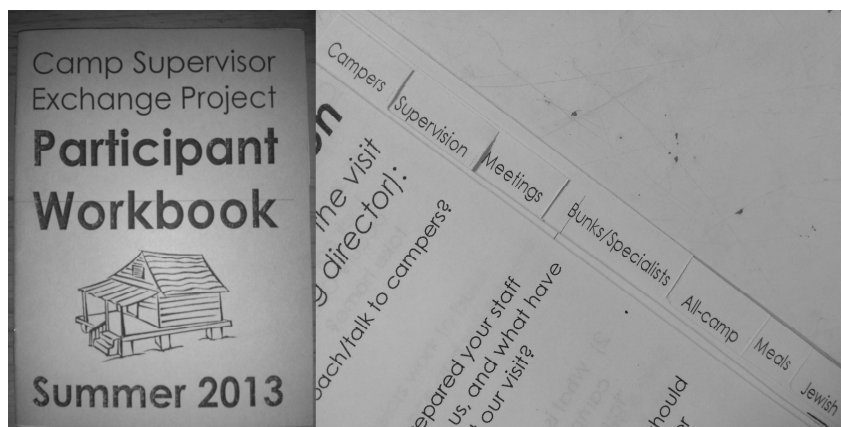
The materials for this project provided a framework for the exchange process, as well as ensuring that the directors would all prepare useful schedules for their visitors. The visit preparation worksheet was distributed digitally to the directors, and every participant got a paper copy of the workbook.

Visit Preparation Worksheet:

<p>Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Choose one year-round director: _____-Choose one seasonal supervisor: _____-Choose one (or more!) counselor or specialist: _____-Note: Consider arranging a meeting with a small group of teen leaders <p>Small program observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Choose a more technical program (like archery): _____-Choose a more content-oriented program: _____-Choose a program with explicit Jewish content: _____ <p>All-camp program observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Choose an all-camp program: _____-Choose a friendly staff member to accompany the guests, and explain

This worksheet guided directors through the process of identifying programs for the visitors to observe, meeting to attend, staff members to speak with, and other logistics of the visit. It also invited them to strategize about how they would welcome their visitors, and ensured that they would consider issues of kashrut and modest dress.

Workbook for Participants:



The workbook contained three sections:

- 1) An outline for a pre-visit conversation between the supervisors and their home director, to set goals and discuss expectations for the visit
- 2) Prompts for active observation at the host camp, across several different areas
- 3) An post-visit conversation between the supervisors and their home director, to identify three specific ideas for implementation at camp

Impact on Participating Camps

As reported by directors: What was the impact of this project on your camp?
Would you participate again next summer?

- It opened our eyes to some of the very progressive things that they do, and really let us think – when we want to take that next progressive step, these are great partners for us to learn from.
- It put a mirror up to camp, and forced us to acknowledge and reflect on who we are through a different lens.
- Being able to see things on the ground gives new perspective to the things that get talked about... You don't really know it until you see it.
- It was more impactful on the people than on camp itself.



At Camp JRF, the supervisors from URJ Crane Lake observed JRF's daily morning service.

How was the newly-gathered information shared with your staff?

- Participants presented the visit to their cohort at a senior staff meeting
- Supervisors that went shared their insight with entire leadership team
- Only enough time for a private conversation with the director
- Participants came back and talked to their peers informally

Project elements completed at each camp:

- 33%** Hosting worksheet, to plan schedule for the other camp's visit
- 100%** Pre-visit conversation, before sending out your camp's supervisors
- 100%** Post-visit conversation, after your camp's supervisors return
- 83%** Process of identifying specific ideas to implement

Measuring Effectiveness

Participants for
whom the visit
felt useful

100%

As reported by participants: How can we improve the visit process?

"More time with the Jewish component.
More time witnessing staff supervision,
meetings, or training."

-1st year Jewish programmer

"Rather than just a camp tour, I would have
liked to have seen more programming/
interaction with kids."

-4th year songleader

"Have more staff available to meet with us.
Programs that we could experience. All in
all, more interactions with kids at camp,
not just discussion but participation."

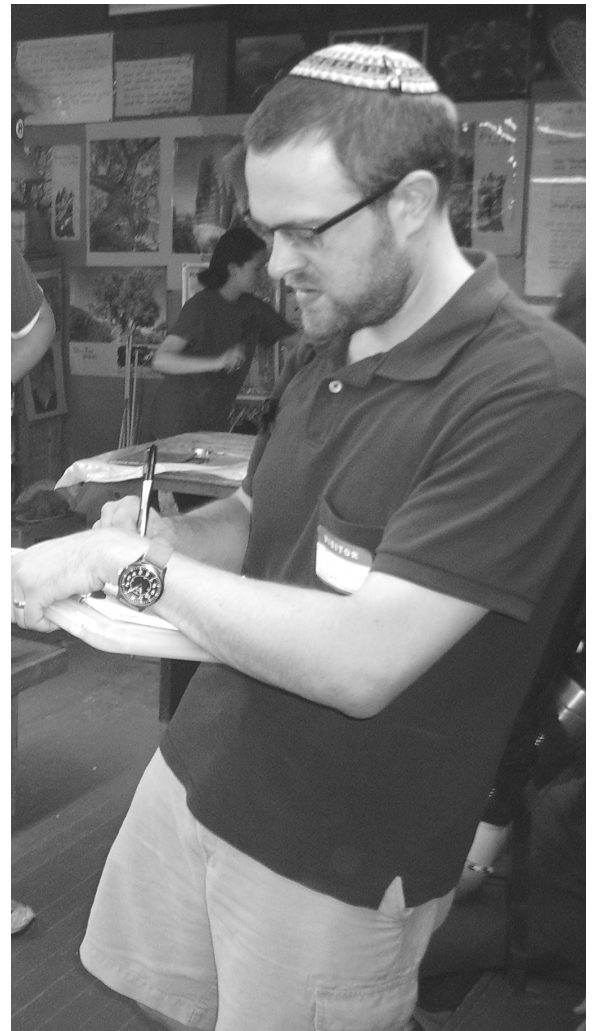
-4th year asst. unit head

"I would have liked to spend more time
visiting programs and seeing the various
programs offered."

-5th year program director

"Spending a whole day the way it runs,
instead of touring."

-3rd year counselor



*A supervisor from Pinemere Camp
makes notes about Camp Moshava's
science room.*

Conversations with Staff

95.2%

Participants who had
useful conversations
with staff

How to improve these conversations:

"We could really get a feel for the camp from the staff we spoke to, but [it] would have been nice to speak to some counselors."

-4th year division head

"I only really got to meet with the younger kids staff, so maybe get the chance to switch it up."

-5th year division head

"Many of our conversations were ad hoc, that we initiated."

-15th year asst director

"Getting to talk with the person who does my job here. (He was on a day off.)"

-1st year Jewish life director

"With the regular staff members, meeting with them alone, and not having a supervisor there, would be helpful with their honesty about camp."

-4th year division head



Supervisors from
URJ Camp Harlam
talk with their
counterparts at
Camp Poyntelle
Lewis Village.

The Exchange Process



Supervisors from Camp JRF share T-shirts and other souvenirs with the staff at Berkshire Hills Emanuel Camp.

How to improve the preparation process:

"Solicit other staff for questions to ask and things to observe."

-1st year director of athletics

"It would be helpful to have a schedule for the day."

-4th year director of education

"Have a conversation more than a day in advance."

-5th year division head

"A more detailed goal session ahead of time would be helpful."

-1st year director of Jewish life

Additional information desired in advance of the visit:

"Numbers and history of camp."

-1st year Jewish programmer

"Our directors provided a very rough outline of their expectations..., but ensured we'd go into the visit with an open mind."

-4th year songleader

"The schedule of what we'd be doing/who we'd be meeting, to come up with other questions."

-5th year division head

"How the camp schedule works."

-5th year program director



Participants who reported a pre-visit meeting with their director

Recommendations for Next Summer

1) Time frame

The planning and execution of this pilot was rushed, due to the late start. Next time, the directors said that they'd like to register, and find out their exchange partners, in late winter. They'd also like to schedule the visits in the first few weeks of the summer, leaving time to process the experience with their supervisors over the ensuing weeks.

2) Geographical scale

The success of this pilot was due in part to the geographical layout of the Eastern Pennsylvania camp community. To continue building on that success, the next round might expand into three more regional clusters: Georgia, Wisconsin, and Los Angeles (camps listed below). In future years, once the cluster-based exchange is perfected, the question of long-distance exchange might be explored.

Pennsylvania: 10 camps

- Camp Moshava
- Berkshire Hills Emanuel Camp
- B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp
- Capital Camps
- URJ Crane Lake
- URJ Harlam
- Camp JRF
- Pinemere Camp
- Camp Poyntelle Lewis Village
- Camp Ramah in the Poconos

Georgia: 5 camps

- Adamah Adventures
- Camp Barney Medintz
- Blue Star Camps
- URJ Camp Coleman
- Camp Judaea
- Camp Ramah Darom

Los Angeles: 6 camps

- Camp Alonim
- Habonim D'ror Camp Gilboa
- Camp JCA Shalom
- Camp Mountain Chai
- Camp Ramah in California
- Wilshire Boulevard Temple Camps

Wisconsin: 8 camps

- B'nai B'rith Beber Camp
- JCC Camp Chi
- Hertzl Camp
- Camp Interlaken JCC
- Camp Moshava
- URJ Camp OSRUI
- Camp Ramah Wisconsin
- Habonim D'ror Camp Tavor
- Camp Young Judaea Midwest

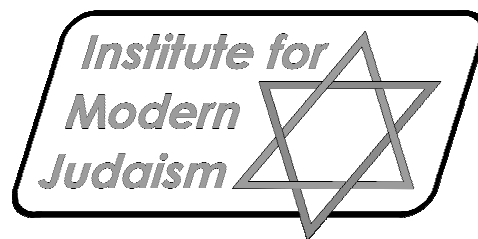
3) Director commitment

The camps that experienced the biggest impact were the camps whose directors followed through on each of the project's elements. Similarly, the best visit hosts were camps where the director created a thorough, detailed, and thoughtful visit schedule. Thus, it would be useful to require participating directors to follow a stricter set of instructions, thus ensuring maximum impact for their own supervisors and those whom they'll host.

I express special gratitude for Prof. Joe Reimer, my academic advisor; Sarah Raful Whinston, my field work mentor and director of Camp Poyntelle Lewis Village; Rebecca Leibowitz and Rabbi Avi Orlow at the Foundation for Jewish Camp; and Harlene Appelman, Executive Director of the Covenant Foundation, all of whom supported my efforts to make this project a reality.



At the end of their visit to Berkshire Hills Emanuel Camp, supervisors from Camp JRF complete a written evaluation of the experience.



Camp Supervisor Exchange Project
Report and Recommendations
www.modernjudaism.org/campexchange