

EarlyJ Invests More Than \$510,000 to Expand Jewish Parenting Centers Across California

New investments bring total awarded to Parenting Centers to nearly \$1 million to strengthen Jewish early childhood engagement and connect young families to Jewish life in the Bay Area and Los Angeles

September 29, 2026 - EarlyJ has invested nearly \$1 million over the last 18 months to expand and open new Jewish Parenting Centers and strengthen early childhood engagement for young families in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, building on the success of an innovative initiative that connects parents with Jewish community long before their children enter preschool.

The new investment announced today will support the launch of six additional Parenting Centers, sustain successful existing programs, and expand EarlyJ's growing model of helping Jewish preschools become year-round hubs for expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers.

"Parents begin making lifelong decisions about their family's connection to Jewish community well before preschool enrollment," **said Sharona Israeli-Roth, Founding President & Executive Director of EarlyJ.** "These investments ensure that more families have welcoming places to build relationships, access meaningful resources, and begin their Jewish journey during one of the most important stages of family life."

Unlike traditional preschool outreach, Jewish Parenting Centers engage families during pregnancy and the earliest years of parenthood through parenting workshops, baby playgroups, Shabbat celebrations, music classes, expert speakers, family programming, and peer support. EarlyJ's Parenting Center grants require that the programming take place on-site at a preschool. This helps families build the routine of coming to campus, meeting staff, and experiencing the preschool's atmosphere firsthand. When parents become familiar with the preschool environment through welcoming, low-barrier entry points, they are more likely to enroll their children and build lasting relationships with one another and the broader Jewish community.

EarlyJ launched the initiative to reach both affiliated and unaffiliated families and to address a longstanding gap in Jewish communal life: many families with infants and toddlers have few opportunities to engage with Jewish institutions until preschool, missing a critical window for building community and long-term Jewish connection. Last year's grants helped to engage over 800 families across the Parenting Center grantees, supported more than 60 enrollments in preschools as a result of parenting centers, and led to over 360 families with no previous affiliation with Jewish organizations attending programming.

The latest grants include the launch of four new Jewish Parenting Centers in Los Angeles, two additional Parenting Centers in the Bay Area, and a second year of funding for the inaugural cohort of nine Bay Area Parenting Centers.

In **Los Angeles**, new Parenting Centers will launch at:

- Early Childhood Center at the J Los Angeles
- Kehillat Israel Early Childhood Center
- Temple Isaiah Preschool
- The Rose Engel ECC at Adat Ari El

The expansion also establishes new Jewish Parenting Centers in the **Bay Area** at:

- JCC East Bay Preschool (Oakland)
- Gan Israel Preschool (Petaluma)

The continued investment follows encouraging results from the initiative's first year. A survey of participating families found that:

- **95%** said the Parenting Centers helped them feel more connected to a Jewish community.
- **93%** said participation made them more likely to engage in other Jewish programs and opportunities.
- **91%** said participation strengthened their family's Jewish identity.
- **86%** said participation increased their likelihood of enrolling their child in the host preschool.

The inaugural Parenting Centers receiving renewed funding are located at:

- Addison-Penzak JCC Preschool and Shir Hadash Early Childhood Center (Los Gatos)
- South Peninsula Hebrew Day School (Sunnyvale)
- Leslie Family Preschool (Palo Alto)
- Helen Diller Family Preschool (San Francisco)
- Gan Mah Tov Preschool and Temple Sinai David Pregerson Preschool (Oakland)
- Osher Marin JCC Preschool (Mill Valley)
- Osher Marin JCC Preschool (San Rafael)

The survey also found that the initiative is reaching families who are new to Jewish communal life. Before participating in a Parenting Center, nearly one-third of surveyed families said they did not feel connected to the Jewish community, while almost one-quarter reported they were not celebrating Jewish holidays or Shabbat at home.

Together, the expansion represents EarlyJ's continued investment in helping Jewish preschools become community hubs for families from the earliest stages of parenthood. By reaching parents before preschool enrollment, the organization creates a pipeline to preschools, strengthening both the vitality of Jewish early childhood education and the long-term future of Jewish communal life.

“Building the future of our community begins at the very start of life,” **added Israeli-Roth**. “By supporting programs that welcome young families during these formative years, we ensure that the next generation grows up rooted in tradition, connection, pride, and joy. Investing in early childhood engagement is an investment in today's families and a lasting commitment to the vibrant future of Jewish life for generations to come.”

About EarlyJ

EarlyJ strengthens Jewish early childhood education by investing in innovative programs, strategic partnerships, and community-wide initiatives that help Jewish preschools thrive while creating meaningful pathways for young families to engage in Jewish life.