



AN ENDURING LEGACY

Building the
Field of Israel
Education



THE STORY OF THE iCENTER

2008-2026

**THE iCENTER FOR ISRAEL
EDUCATION**

OUR VISION

Every Jewish young person
develops a lifelong relationship
with Israel *and Israelis*

OUR MISSION

To catalyze excellence in the
professional field of Israel Education
by supporting the development
of educators, pioneering new
educational approaches, and
relentlessly promoting a relational
and learner-centered philosophy.

FOREWORD

A LETTER TO THE FIELD

Al hadvash ve'al ha'oketz
Al hamar vehamatok
Al biteynu hatinoket
shmor eyli hatov.

על הדבש ועל העקץ
 על המר והמתוק
 על בתנו התינוקת
 שמר אלי הטוב

Every bee that brings the honey
 needs a sting to be complete
 And we all must learn to taste
 the bitter with the sweet.

Al Kol Eleh (על כל אלה, "For All of These")
 Music and lyrics by Naomi Shemer
 English lyrics by Theodore Bikel

Eighteen years ago, Israel education was not yet a field. It was a class period, a unit, a song, a flag, a trip. It was a patchwork. There were extraordinary educators doing meaningful work, but there was no shared language, no common framework, no consortium of universities preparing the next generation of professionals, no national gathering where camp directors and day school heads and rabbis and Jewish Agency *shlichim* could find one another. The iCenter was created to stitch it all together.

This report is the story of what changed and of what will come after. At its heart, it is the story of a philosophy about what Israel education could be when approached with enthusiasm, candor, care and rigor. This philosophy took different shapes for different people: for some it was a set of frameworks and principles, for others it was a fellowship, a convening, a curriculum, or a *mifgash*, and for others still it was a lens on their work, and a language to describe it.

It is the story of tens of thousands of educators who made this philosophy their own, impacting millions of learners. It is the story of a field that grew beyond any single institution: propelled by a small organization with extraordinary partners and dedicated funders, which helped catalyze, define, name, and resource the strong and growing field we have today. It is the story of impact, of profound transition, and of the recognition that we met our goal. It is the story of our awareness that the field has matured. It is strong, professionalized, connected, and intellectually rigorous — exponentially more so than the patchwork we sought to develop in 2008.

It is the privilege of our careers to be leaving the field better than we found it, with a hand-off that is as clean, generous, and durable as possible. We are heartened that the work we started will continue to flourish under the care and direction of organizations and individuals across North America, including many iCenter alumni, partners, and collaborators.

The development of the field of Israel Education didn't happen by accident, and it didn't happen in a silo. The early years were shaped, above all, by the vision of Anne Lanski, our founding CEO. Long before it was obvious, Anne insisted that Israel education could be built as a real, learner-centered, scholarly field. The shift she helped catalyze in those early years — from content to relationship, from outcome to craft, from advocacy to education — set the direction that nearly two decades of work have been built upon. Anne, *today*.

The work was developed, built, and facilitated by a remarkable team. Across 18 years, the staff, consultants, and faculty of The iCenter — too many to name — developed frameworks and curricula, designed immersive learning experiences, convened discussions, mentored educators, traveled to camps and schools, created resources, and sustained relationships through countless moments both visible and unseen that helped educators become part of something larger than themselves. It is because of their dedication that the work endures.

And to the team helping us close this chapter: this has been a challenging season, and you have shown up

with care, professionalism, and grace. Closing well is itself a kind of building, and the way you have stewarded relationships, materials, and people through this transition is one of the most quietly important contributions our team has made to the field. Thank you for choosing to do that work, and for doing it with so much heart.

The pages that follow are organized to honor that arc: how a field was built, what it became, and where the work lives now. Within them you will find the people, the programs, the principles, and the impact. You will also find the names of the partners stewarding what comes next.

We assembled this while closing our doors, with limited time and hands. If a program, a partner, or a person who shaped this story has been left out of these pages, the omission is ours, and we ask your forgiveness. Any gap reflects the conditions of our closing, never the worth of the contribution.

Thank you for being part of our legacy. Thank you, in particular, to every educator who has trusted us with your craft, every learner who has trusted us with your questions, every funder who trusted us with your investment, and every North American and Israeli who trusted us with your story.

As work continues, I know it is in good hands.



Dan Tatar

Chief Executive Officer (interim)
Spring 2026

BY THE NUMBERS

Numbers are not the complete story of an educational field, but they are an important part of it. Drawn from program records, partner-published materials, and public reporting, the figures below capture the scale of what 18 years of investment, partnership, and craft built.



18

years of operation, 2008 to 2026



46,000

hours of iCenter videos watched (that's more than 5 years of continuous, around-the-clock viewing)



47,000

educators trained through workshops and intensives



850,000

visitors turned to our website for resources



3.1M

educators and learners served

WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE

This report is organized in six parts and a back matter section. Each part stands on its own, but together they trace an 18-year arc.

7 **PART I** **THE BEGINNING (2008-2010)**

A Field That Did Not Yet Exist | The Aleph Bet of Israel Education® | Public High School Hebrew

12 **PART II** **BUILDING THE FIELD (2011-2018)**

iFellows | Birthright Israel Fellows | iCamp/iCON | iNfuse Day School Initiative | The Library Becomes a Toolkit | Goodman Camping Initiative for Modern Israel History / Israel @ Camp | Integration of Practice | Approaching Conflicts | For the Sake of Justice | Graduate Degree Program at GW

21 **PART III** **SUSTAINING AND DEEPENING (2019-2023)**

Impact Study | Shinshinim | Conflicts of Interest

25 **PART IV** **AFTER OCTOBER 7: THE FIELD COMES OF AGE (2023-2026)**

Responding to the Needs of the Field | Adapting in Real Time | A Mifgash That Matters

28 **PART V** **A MEASURED HAND-OFF**

Why Now | Where the Work Lives Now

32 **PART VI** **WHAT COMES NEXT**

Reimagining Israel Education | A Final Word

34 **BACK MATTER**

Eighteen Years at a Glance: 2008–2026 | Acknowledgments | About This Report and Sources

2008

PART I

2009

THE BEGINNING (2008-2010)

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026



Reishit (רֵאשִׁית) | a beginning

Before there were standards there were instincts. Before there were frameworks there were guesses. Before there was a field there were a thousand classrooms, a hundred camps, a dozen training programs, and a quiet shared sense among an extraordinary cohort of educators that something was missing in how Jewish North America was educating its young people about Israel. This chapter describes how that quiet sense became a movement.



You don't teach Israel, you teach children... Our focus isn't on Israel. It's on the relationship. I don't want to prescribe what kind of relationship it is. It's part of me and part of my story. The relationship gives context and meaning."

Anne Lanski

interview with Helen Chernikoff,
eJewishPhilanthropy
October 2021

A FIELD THAT DID NOT YET EXIST

In 2008, when The iCenter was founded with the support of the Jim Joseph Foundation and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, the phrase "Israel education" was not yet in common professional use. There were Israel-themed lessons, Israel-celebrating programs, Israel-content units, Israel trips. But "Israel education" as a discipline with its own theory of learners, its own pedagogy, its own community of professionals, its own training pipeline, did not yet exist.

The diagnosis was clear. Across day schools, supplementary schools, summer camps, synagogues, youth movements, JCCs, Hillels, and federations, educators were doing their best with materials of varying quality and with no shared theory of practice. Curricula often defaulted to one of two postures: an uncritical celebration of national narratives that worked when learners were ten but began to crack at fourteen, or an issues-and-conflicts approach that mistook adult debates for educational design. Neither put the learner at the center. Neither named what was specifically Jewish about the learning. Neither prepared an educator to teach Israel in a way that grew with a young person across the arc of identity formation.

Anne Lanski came to the work having built Shorashim and having spent a career listening to Israeli teenagers and their North American peers in conversation. She identified what most of the field could see but not yet name: that Israel education had been treated as an outcome rather than a process, as content rather than craft, as a topic to be covered rather than a relationship to be built. The iCenter was created to invert that.

The earliest work was less about programming than about clearing space. A small team listened, traveled, asked, drafted, redrafted. At the center of that effort were the foundational convenings of the *iTeam*, a group of leading thinkers and practitioners gathered to define what the field could become. Together they asked the founding question that would orient the next decade and a half of work: not "what should learners know about Israel?" but "what should the relationship between a learner and Israel feel like, look like, and grow into across a Jewish life?"

That reframing from content to relationship, from outcome to process, and from topic to craft, was the first contribution. Everything that followed grew from it.

THE ALEPH BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION®

If the founding question was "What should the relationship feel like?", then the founding answer was *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*®, The iCenter's foundational alphabet for our practice. This publication was a language, a set of core principles, approaches to content, and essential pedagogies designed to function as the building block of the field. It was deliberately not a curriculum. It was a foundation, on which curricula could be built.

The Aleph Bet of Israel Education® articulated a credo that has anchored the field ever since: the centrality of the learner, trust in the educational process, and a commitment to an Israel education that is at once loving and transparent. Around those principles, this foundational publication organized a set of core ideas: Israel as land, people, state, and idea; the centrality of Hebrew; the diversity of Israeli society; the place of Israel in Jewish identity formation; the value of *mifgash* (מִפְגָּשׁ, "encounter") with Israelis as people, not symbols; the role of the arts, music, food, and culture; and the role of educators in modeling thoughtful, evolving relationships with Israel.

From the moment it was published, *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*® did the thing that infrastructure does best: it became a building block. Day schools wrote their Israel curricula against it. Camps planned their summers from it. Universities used it as a reading in graduate seminars. Federations referenced it in funding decisions. It became the shared vocabulary that the field had been missing. *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*® would be revised, expanded, translated, taught, and reframed many times over the years, and in 2026, as part of The iCenter's hand-off, the evolved framework found its long-term academic home at the George Washington University, a fitting next chapter for a piece of infrastructure that began as a primer and ended as a discipline's foundational document.



I PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL HEBREW

Hebrew has been taught in a limited number of public high schools for decades, but how it is taught had gone largely unexamined. The iCenter saw an opportunity. In 2009, we conducted a national mapping of public high schools offering Hebrew. We discovered that roughly 1,500 teens were studying Modern Hebrew across some 30 high schools in 20 cities and more than a dozen states; nine of them in the suburbs of Chicago. Yet the programs were, in the report's words, "a scattered, uncoordinated, and unexamined resource." No one had connected the schools, built a framework for the teachers, or developed the type of standards that existed for every other language. When The iCenter convened the first-ever national gathering of these teachers in May 2010, many were startled to learn that colleagues existed beyond their own districts.

The work to elevate the field began in suburban Chicago and centered on the teaching itself, pushing past conjugation tables and vocabulary lists toward modern slang, conversational Hebrew, Israeli culture, and the deeper aim of connecting students to a people through a shared language. Twice a year, The iCenter gathered the region's public middle and high school Hebrew teachers for sustained professional development led by leading figures in Hebrew and foreign-language education,

giving them the same expertise their colleagues in other languages enjoyed. Beyond the classroom, The iCenter built the infrastructure the field had been missing: linking teachers to new tools and curricular resources, helping establish the first national organization for teachers of Hebrew, and working with both the Global Seal of Biliteracy and the Consortium for The Teaching of Hebrew Language and Culture to develop a rigorous Hebrew proficiency exam. The iCenter also marked Yom Ha'atzmaut with 800+ Hebrew students, an Israeli band, a trivia show, and hands-on workshops.

The iCenter also worked to protect the place of Hebrew in the schools. Because a single departure could put an entire program at risk from one year to the next, The iCenter stepped into those gaps. World Language Directors turned to us when they needed a certified Hebrew educator, and we brought those department chairs to Israel to experience why their Hebrew offering mattered. Many participants called the trip rewarding, some described it as life-changing. Much of this work was later carried forward by The iCenter's Shinshinim program, in partnership with the Jewish Agency for Israel, deepening the conviction that animated it from the start: that a language comes alive when it connects a young person to real people and a real place.



iFELLOWS SCHOLARS OF A NEW DISCIPLINE

In 2011, three years into The iCenter's life, the founding team launched what would become its most visible contribution to the field: the iFellows Master's Concentration in Israel Education. The premise was simple and consequential: A field cannot exist without scholars. Scholars grow through graduate studies. Therefore, if Israel education was to be a real field, it needed a graduate concentration, not at one university but across the universities that already trained Jewish educators, rabbis, and communal leaders.

The iFellows model was, from the start, a consortium. The iCenter convened existing graduate institutions and offered them a shared concentration in Israel education that their students could complete alongside their primary degree. The first cohorts brought together students from a handful of partner institutions. By the time the program reached maturity, the consortium had grown to 17 academic institutions across North America and Israel, a list that includes nearly every major rabbinical seminary, every major Jewish education graduate program, and major nonprofit and communal-leadership programs.

The model worked because it responded to the field's need for a pipeline of trained professionals without asking any single institution to abandon what it already did well. Students remained students and earned credentials from their home program. The Israel education concentration travelled with them into careers in those programs' own networks. The iFellows program did not compete with universities; it strengthened what universities were already doing by enriching their students' graduate experience.

The community the iFellows created — alumni in conversation across institutions, across denominations, across political views — became, over time, one of The iCenter's most enduring assets. iFellows did not just train scholars. It enabled and inspired the emergence of a community that continues to teach one another.



A highlight has been the incredible people that I had Fellowship has enabled me to create real relationships with Jews across America who I would have otherwise never interacted with. It has given me a larger sense of community within the Jewish world.”

Moshe Benhamu
Yeshiva University
Cohort 15 graduate

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

PART II

BUILDING THE FIELD (2011-2018)



Bonim (בונים) | we build

The years between 2011 and 2019 were, in retrospect, the building decade. It was during these years when the language that had been defined became the foundation for systemic development in the field. This period was built directly on *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*®, and served as the first platform from which the path forward was paved. Each signature initiative was designed to do one specific thing: train the trainer, convene the field, embed Israel in places where Israel had not yet lived, or make excellent materials so plentifully available that no educator anywhere could honestly say they could not find what they needed.



My cohort understands the opportunity and responsibility that we have been given. Now we feel empowered to encounter our trip participants with a greater sense of intentionality and purpose.”

Sami Herbert

Birthright Israel Fellows participant

BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL FELLOWS TRAINING THE EDUCATORS ON THE BUS

If **iFellows** trained the field's scholars, **Birthright Israel Fellows** trained the educators standing at the front of the bus. Launched in August 2014 in partnership with Birthright Israel, the program aimed to identify, attract, and train experiential Jewish and Israel educators to staff Birthright Israel trips. The initiative sought to elevate the role of the *madrich* (מְדַרְיֵךְ, trip "guide" or staff) from logistics-keeper to educator. Each year a cohort of roughly 100 Fellows gathered for an intensive four-day seminar, led by iCenter faculty alongside Birthright Israel's educators, immersing in storytelling, experiential education craft, and the themes and values that animate an Israel trip. In keeping with the relational philosophy at the heart of *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education®*, Birthright Israel Fellows learned to bring context to content, to give a North American articulation of what participants encountered in Israel, and to help young adults find their own place in the ongoing story of Israel and the Jewish people.

The model scaled. Through 2025, thirteen cohorts had come through the program, and since its launch Fellows had staffed more than 1,500 Birthright Israel trips. In 2019 alone, Fellows served as *madrichim* on over 300 buses, roughly 35% of all North American groups that year.



iCON WHERE THE FIELD CONVENES

A field needs scholars; a field also needs a town square. **iCON** was The iCenter's answer to the second need. From its earliest editions, **iCON** (originally named **iCamp**) was conceived not as a conference about Israel education but as the gathering at which the field encountered itself: day school heads beside camp directors, rabbis beside scholars, communal-leadership professionals beside Israeli educators, all in the same room, wrestling with the same questions over several days.

"**iCON** was curated to challenge, to provoke, to open new perspectives, to raise important questions, and most importantly, to inspire," said Aliza Goodman, director of strategy and R&D at The iCenter. Plenaries featured leading thinkers. Sessions invited educators to try and test methodologies, not merely to hear about them. Featured voices included international figures across arts and culture, sports, education, science and technology, and nonprofit leadership. As *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*® posits, Israel is not only a topic for educators but a society to experience.

First convened in Wisconsin in 2011, the gathering reconvened in Las Vegas in 2015, and rebranded as **iCON** in Chicago in 2018. After a five-year hiatus, **iCON** was held in Chicago in early 2023 as the field navigated a crossroads. It brought together more than 500 Jewish communal professionals, day school educators, camp professionals, youth group leaders, lay leaders, and others from across North America and Israel. Participants treated **iCON** not as a conference but as a "laboratory," infused with the curiosity and courage to discover something new and to deepen relationships with one another, with Israel, and with education.

Gathering after gathering, **iCON** did what *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*® had done in print: it became infrastructure for those leading the work of Israel education in North America.



We engage with Israel today not only as subject matter, but as part of who we are, who we wish to become, and who we wish Israel to become.”

Anne Lanski

iNFUSE A COHORT MODEL FOR DAY SCHOOLS

If the early years of The iCenter's work had proven that Israel education could and should be a field, the questions that followed were: how does a field extend reach? How do frameworks, pedagogies, and relational approaches move from a few pioneering schools into the daily practice of institutions across North America?

iNfuse: Israel in Jewish Day Schools grew out of a sustained AVI CHAI Foundation investment in the field. In 2014, AVI CHAI published the landmark study *Hearts and Minds: Israel in North American Jewish Day Schools* (Alex Pomson, Jack Wertheimer, and Hagit Hacohen-Wolf, with Rosov Consulting), which found that Israel learning takes root most deeply when a school articulates a clear vision and weaves Israel through the whole of school life, rather than confining it to a class period or a single trip. The same foundation funded the work that followed: The iCenter's flagship **iNfuse**, and subsequently the one-year **Hearts and Minds** school initiative — turning that finding into practice. It is why every **iNfuse** cohort began not with a curriculum but with a vision statement of its own.

Beginning in August 2016, The iCenter launched a cohort-based initiative designed to bolster the field at scale by systematically infusing Israel education into every aspect of school life, from environment to curricula, to culture and beyond. Based on the earlier work of BASIS in San Francisco that The iCenter supported, **iNfuse** brought together 24 Jewish day schools of all types from across North America in structured cohorts over the course of 4 years: Cohort 1 in 2016 with 8 schools, Cohort 2 in August 2017 with 9 schools, and Cohort 3 in August 2018 with 7 schools. Each cohort engaged in an 18–24 month, 4-part process in which they created a vision statement for Israel education at their schools, mapped what already existed, created outcomes for Israel education and made changes in areas that were either missing or misaligned with their vision statements and outcomes. Schools had access to a range of online tools, intensive mentoring by leaders in the field and the full complement of resources from The iCenter. Schools came together with their mentors for a 2-day kickoff of learning and preparation to engage in the work. The first cohort in **iNfuse** traveled to Israel for their kickoff.



Through the **iNfuse** initiative, we fostered authentic relationships between Israel and each student, revitalizing a core value of our school.”

Betsey Forester
iNfuse cohort 1 member

Alongside **iNfuse**, The iCenter launched **Hearts and Minds** in 2017, a one-year initiative for 10 schools across the U.S. and Canada. This program was designed for schools that weren't yet ready for a full systemic process but still wanted to deepen Israel education in their communities. Schools, with the support of a mentor, chose a significant project to develop and implement in the course of a year. This shorter, more concentrated model made the learnings from **iNfuse** accessible to smaller or less-resourced schools.

Together, **iNfuse** and **Hearts and Minds** reached tens of thousands of students through nearly 1,000 educators and school leaders across North America, with generous investment from the AVI CHAI Foundation. The materials and processes created through this initiative continue to be used in the field today in many of the original schools as well as in schools who have sought support from The iCenter in the past 18 years.

The significance of these initiatives lay in their approach: they treated day schools not as sites where Israel education happened to learners, but as institutions where educators could grow their craft and redesign their practice. In doing so, both **iNfuse** and **Hearts and Minds** embodied the core shift that had animated The iCenter's entire mission, from content coverage to relational depth, and from program to pedagogy.

THE LIBRARY BECOMES A TOOLKIT

A field is also influenced by its materials. Across 18 years, The iCenter built and curated a vast repository of high-quality, free, learner-centered Israel education materials in North America. Toolkits, frameworks, guides, lesson sets, holiday materials and programs, calendar materials, song packets, poster sets, video series, professional development modules, and the celebrated Israel Resource Cards (a printed deck distributed to thousands of educators) became the day-to-day materials of the field.

Two design principles ran through all of it. The first was learner-centeredness: every artifact began with a question about the learner, not the topic. The second was usability: educators are busy, and a toolkit that requires a graduate degree to operate is no toolkit at all.

The materials worked because they assumed the educator was a professional and treated them like one, helping build their confidence as practitioners in the field. They were beautiful when beauty mattered. They were utilitarian when speed mattered. They held up under repeat use. And they were, as our foundational documents had insisted from the beginning, designed to feature the diversity of voices in Israeli life and to draw on genuine Israeli culture rather than a sanitized export version.



3,000+

decks of Israel Resource Cards distributed to educators across the Israel education ecosystem



ISRAEL @ CAMP PLANTING THE FIELD IN THE SUMMER MONTHS

The summer is its own microcosm. For many North American Jews, camp is the most intensive Jewish educational experience of their childhood, often outweighing every other formal Jewish setting combined. From the field-building decade onward, The iCenter invested heavily in making the summer months a serious site of Israel education, not as a backdrop or themed-day material, but as a deliberate educational practice integrated into how camps operate.

Israel @ Camp included direct partnerships with overnight camps, day camps, and camp movements; the development of resources oriented to a camp's actual rhythms (song sessions, evening programs, meals, rest hour); mentoring the people responsible for Israel at camp through one-on-one coaching for camps enrolled

in the fellowship, which built both individual capacity and the camp's capacity for Israel programming; training and faculty roles inside the Foundation for Jewish Camp's training initiatives; and the curation of materials such as the **Goodman Camping Initiative for Modern Israel History** database and the Amazing Israel Race, which translated experiential pedagogy into camp-shaped formats.

This body of work will endure in its long-term home at the Foundation for Jewish Camp, with whom The iCenter has worked closely for years, and will also be available in part through IsraelLink, The Jewish Education Project, The Jewish Agency for Israel, and OpenDor Media.



INTEGRATION OF PRACTICE

Beyond the signature initiatives, an enormous piece of The iCenter's work happened where it is hardest to count: in the day-to-day integration of better practice within the institutions where North American Jewish learning actually lives. iCenter team members consulted with day schools rebuilding their Israel curricula. We worked with supplementary schools rethinking their seventh-grade arc. We convened synagogue education directors, helped Hillel professionals reframe campus moments, partnered with Jewish federations on city-wide professional development, and ran community gatherings.

The integration was deliberate. The iCenter operated like a venture studio by design: incubating strong models, documenting them, training others to run them, and then letting them go. Many of the practices that today feel like common sense in good North American Jewish education (narrative-led Israel curricula, emphasis on genuine encounter, framing Israel education developmentally, treating Hebrew as a relational rather than only a liturgical asset) were integrated through that kind of patient, unbranded work.



APPROACHING CONFLICTS A LEARNER-CENTERED WAY IN

Launched in 2016 as *Engaging Israel: A Conflict Toolkit*, **Approaching Conflicts** was The iCenter's first systematic attempt to give educators a serious, learner-centered way into the field's most challenging material. With support from the Jim Joseph Foundation, The iCenter assembled leading thinkers in Israel education to build an approach, grounded in educational pillars, framing values, and authentic content drawn from Israeli life.

Its premise was that conflict is part of the human condition, and that teaching it well begins with the learner rather than the argument. Inquiry-based and values-driven, it was built on relationship-building, identity formation, and critical thinking. Rather than treating the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a debate to be won, it framed difficult content within larger values at once timely and timeless: empathy and diverse narratives, the sanctity of life, home and homeland, remembrance, plurality and division, and the pursuit of peace.

The materials drew on Israeli culture rather than talking points: the public exchange of letters between Palestinian-Israeli writer Sayed Kashua and Jewish-Israeli author Etgar Keret on despair and coexistence after the summer of 2014; the way social media had reshaped how a generation witnessed conflict in real time. As the *Aleph Bet* had, it insisted that the tensions among Arabs, Jews, Palestinians, and the Jewish state are worth teaching honestly, but are not the only lens for understanding life in Israel.

In retrospect, **Approaching Conflicts** was the proof of concept: educators wanted to teach the hard questions, and would do so with rigor when given a learner-centered scaffold. The principles it established — inquiry over advocacy, values over positions, complexity held rather than flattened — became the foundation on which **Conflicts of Interest** was built.

FOR THE SAKE OF JUSTICE ISRAEL AS A LIVING DEMOCRACY

Among The iCenter's less-known but most quietly influential bodies of work was its long collaboration with the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI). Together, we developed materials for North American educators to teach about Israeli democracy, justice, and civic life. Our **For the Sake of Justice** resources, which included case studies, classroom modules, source documents, and educator guides, made it possible to teach Israeli civics with the same care and rigor that learners deserve when they study any other democracy.

The collaboration normalized something the field had often avoided: teaching Israel as a real place with a real political life, real internal disagreements, and a real democratic culture worth understanding on its own terms. Questions about institutions, courts, citizens, accountability, and pluralism became teachable. When those questions grew urgent in the years that followed, the scaffolding built by **For the Sake of Justice** and parallel work was already in place.

The concepts in these modules inspired the more recent "Pulse of Israel" curriculum as well, which will be carried on by multiple organizations in 2026, including OpenDor Media, IsraelLink, The Jewish Education Project, and Hillel International.



GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Alongside **iFellows'** work across seventeen partner institutions, The iCenter's flagship graduate offering was the **Graduate Degree Program in Israel Education** at the George Washington University. The only program of its kind, this standalone two-year master's was dedicated entirely to Israel education.

Developed in close partnership with GW's Graduate School of Education and Human Development, the M.A. brought together The iCenter's pedagogical commitments and GW's academic infrastructure to produce graduates who were, simultaneously, formal degree-holders in both education and Israel studies. While **iFellows** lived as a concentration alongside students' primary degree, the GW M.A. was the primary degree itself: a serious, integrated graduate program in Israel education for educators who wanted that training as their core credential.

Every other field of education has standalone graduate programs. Mathematics education, literacy, special education, early childhood: all are supported by full graduate degrees at multiple universities. Israel education had nothing comparable until The iCenter and GW built it. The existence of a full master's degree dedicated to the field was, on its own, a statement of seriousness; it told prospective students, hiring institutions, and funders that Israel education was a discipline worth two years of intensive graduate study.

WHY A STANDALONE DEGREE MATTERS

While **iFellows** was the first Jewish cross-denominational graduate certificate program of its time, the GW Graduate Degree elevated the aims of credentialing educators in the field to new levels.

The creation of a Master's Degree in Israel Education marked a turning point broadly for the field and for the educators specifically. The degree combines the best of experiential education pedagogy, theory and philosophy with Israel studies, giving students the opportunity to expand and refine their practice. The field has recognized the value of the degree, creating new positions specializing in Israel Education, promoting graduates and seeking them out for employment.

Under the long-time stewardship of Dr. Benjamin Jacobs and his colleagues, the **Graduate Degree in Israel Education** remains intact and available to the next generation of Israel educators through the George Washington University.



2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

PART III

SUSTAINING AND DEEPENING (2019-2023)



Ha'amakah (הַעֲמָקָה) | going deeper

A field, once built, has to be sustained. The years between 2019 and 2023 — spanning a global pandemic, a series of Israeli political crises, multiple wars, and a sharp rise in campus and communal antisemitism — were years in which The iCenter's work shifted from constructing infrastructure to deepening it. New initiatives brought up harder-to-answer questions. The field grew more capable of holding complexity.



The Master's Degree program helped me build competence and confidence in my personal pedagogy and knowledge of Israel and Jewish education. As a result, I find myself thinking more critically about how theories of education play into my profession.”

Bekkah Gold
Cohort 5 M.A. Graduate

| IMPACT STUDY

In celebration of The iCenter's decade milestone, RMC Research conducted an extensive impact study, released in 2018, drawing on 60 interviews with founders, strategists, network partners, and program alumni, with substudies of Birthright Israel Fellows and the iFellows Master's Concentration. The findings revealed that The iCenter had a profound and enduring influence on those who work directly with young people of all ages in all frameworks.

Noteworthy achievements include:

- Establishment as a leading national resource for Israel education.
- Shaping and standardizing Israel education with a shared lexicon, guiding principles, and best practices.
- Evolving Israel education towards fostering genuine connections with Israel's culture, people, and heritage.
- Inspiring enthusiasm and collective engagement among leaders and practitioners.
- Catalyzing educational innovation within programs like Birthright Israel, day camps, and schools.
- Professionalizing the role of Israel educators.
- Development of widely embraced resources and networks.
- Strengthening alumni connections and support.
- Providing confidence and competence for partner networks.
- Widespread integration and influence across the field.
- Laying the groundwork for sustainable growth and impact.

SHINSHINIM ISRAEL, RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

Just as **iFellows** trained scholars and **iCON** convened the field, the **Shinshinim** program brought Israel itself into the daily lives of North American Jewish learners. In partnership with the Jewish Agency, The iCenter helped North American communities welcome young Israeli emissaries (high school graduates spending a year of service before their army induction) into day schools, public-school Jewish life, supplementary schools, synagogues, JCCs, summer camps, and youth movements. Beyond that national scope, The iCenter held the Chicago hub for the Shinshinim program from 2020 through 2026.

Shinshinim were not engaging as advocates or mascots, but as people: specific young Israelis with specific stories, specific tastes in music, specific opinions, specific complications. Their work was to make Israel feel like a place inhabited by people, not a place argued about by adults. They infused their settings with Hebrew, Israeli culture, stories, and learning. They sat in classrooms and at camp activity tables. For thousands of children and teens, *shinshinim* became the first Israeli they had ever known by name.

Across the program's years, hundreds of *shinshinim* served in dozens of North American communities, supported by a network of professional supervisors, training cohorts, host families, and partner institutions. The educational power of the program turned out to be exactly what we had predicted: the relational frame outperformed the informational one. Learners became able to picture an Israeli person when they thought of Israel. That picture, made of a real person they actually knew, has done more for resilient Jewish identity than a thousand units could.



It was such a unique and rewarding experience to learn about Israel's culture from students my age who live in Israel. I not only loved learning about how much we had in common, but I also really enjoyed learning how we see things differently because of the way we grew up."

High school participant



CONFLICTS OF INTEREST EDUCATING THROUGH COMPLEXITY

Conflicts of Interest built directly on **Approaching Conflicts**, the 2016 toolkit (Part II) that first gave educators a learner-centered way into the field's hardest material, taking that framework and adding to it a structured curriculum, a certificate program, and a community of practice.

By the late 2010s, it became clear that the field's most-used materials worked beautifully on questions of identities, narrative, and connection but struggled when the conversation turned to the hardest of the hard questions: conflict, occupation, the ethics of contested decisions, the lives of Palestinians, the lives of Arab citizens of Israel, and the lived realities of disagreement inside Israeli society and among the Jewish people.

Conflicts of Interest was designed for educators who wanted to teach the hard questions seriously. COI provided a structured curriculum, a certificate program, and a community of practitioners committed to teaching contested issues without flattening them into talking points or evading them through silence. The framing was educational from the first sentence: the goal was not to take a position but to make the learner more capable of holding complexity, weighing evidence, and forming their own informed view.

Conflicts of Interest took shape over a year-long research process beginning in 2021 and was piloted across four cohorts in 2023–2024, each evaluated by an external assessor who found gains in every measured area. Its design was distinct. Participants came wearing two hats, learner and practitioner, and the program deliberately “pulled back the curtain” at each session: having educators reflect not only on what they learned but how they learned it, so they could carry the method into their own classrooms. It taught receptiveness, the willingness to engage seriously with perspectives unlike one's own, as a core skill, and it placed the careful curation of multiple narratives — Jewish Israeli, Palestinian, Arab, and others — at the center of the work. Each educator's own relationship with Israel was the starting point, not an afterthought. The aim was never to manufacture experts, but to give educators the confidence to teach the conflict without being experts at all.

In 2026, **Conflicts of Interest** is migrating to the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership in Chicago, which will further develop the program's curriculum, certification, and the related materials.



Since October 7, everything has changed in how we teach. This program gives me tools to hold multiple truths at once. [This program] flipped my perspective on its head and pushed me to see history through multiple lenses.”

Barry Shinker
Conflicts of Interest participant

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

PART IV

AFTER OCTOBER 7 THE FIELD COMES OF AGE (2023-2026)



Acharei (אֶחָרֵי) | in the after

RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE FIELD

October 7, 2023, was the single worst day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. It changed Israel. It changed the Jewish world. It changed the lives of every educator in the field. It changed the questions our learners arrived with. It changed the texture of every classroom, every Friday afternoon song session, every Hillel campus event, every Israel experience, and every conversation between a parent and a child.

In the days and weeks that followed, The iCenter's response was instinctual: listen, gather, hold steady, and support a community in turmoil. But the instinct was able to move as fast as it did because the strategy, structure, and relationships we had been building since 2008 were already in place to carry it. Within hours of October 7, the team began assembling the educator-facing resources the moment required: materials for the youngest learners, for teens, for parents, for educators who were grieving, for camp directors planning the next summer, and for Jewish Agency *shlichim*. We deployed no-cost one-on-one consultations on demand, pairing educators with team members when they needed that support most.

Behind the scenes, we dove into relational work. It helped that the relationships were long-established. The iCenter's phone, inbox, and DMs filled with educators, some senior, some new, all stunned, who needed somewhere to bring the question of how to teach now. They came to us because they already knew us. The team listened,



convened, and connected individuals to the right partners. We were able to coordinate cross-organization responses because we had spent years building the very network that made coordination possible. And we answered, in detail, the literal “I have a class in two hours...what do I do?” question hundreds of times.

I ADAPTING IN REAL TIME

In the months that followed, three patterns crystallized. These patterns shaped the work itself and our analysis of how the field needs to evolve.

First, learners arrived in classrooms with strong feelings and not enough language. We observed that facts will not stick without the language to hold feelings. The reverse is also true: feelings, unaccompanied by content, do not produce understanding. Our work was to help educators hold both.

Second, dialogue is necessary, but dialogue alone is not sufficient. Following a major convening of Israel educators in Chicago, our team observed and documented what many practitioners already sensed: educators were looking for connection, shared learning, and practical ways to respond to the moment. Students were looking for opportunities to talk, and they were also looking to do something tangible with their learnings. The iCenter's evolving practice in this period treated conversation not as the destination but as the entry point.

Third, the field needed a refreshed framework. *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*® had been built for a pre-October 7 world. Its principles remained true as ever, but the texture of the work and the needs and landscape of the field had changed enough that an updated articulation of what good Israel education looks like in this new moment, and how it should be implemented, was required. That articulation became part of the Reimagining Israel Education framework, the focus of Part VI of this report.



For the past seventeen years, The iCenter has tried to approach this differently. Dialogue is a starting point. The goal is movement: toward learning, relationships, and tangible educational outcomes.”

Dan Tatar

"From Dialogue to Action," 2026

A MIFGASH THAT MATTERS ENCOUNTERS THAT MOVE PEOPLE

Mifgash (מִפְגָּשׁ, “encounter”) has been a core principle from the beginning. After October 7, *mifgash* needed to evolve. The horrors of the day, the displacement of communities in the north and south, the hostage families, the political fractures, the public debates, and the immediate transformation of Israeli everyday life made it clear that the encounters that had powered Israel education for a generation had to be redesigned for a different reality.

Launched in February 2024, **A Mifgash That Matters** was that redesign. Over the course of ninety-six hours in Israel, North American educators met poets and writers, displaced families and hostage families, *kibbutz* members, religious and secular Israelis, Bedouin and Arab citizens, professors, artists, soldiers, and survivors. These educators returned home equipped to share what they had seen, heard, and experienced, with tangible tools and program ideas to share their learnings on a broader scale.

A Mifgash That Matters was not a tour, and it was certainly not a grief tour. It was an educational workshop set inside a country in shock. It required participants to do hard learning, to sit with grief and contradiction, and to come home with resources and first-hand accounts for their classrooms, their camps, and their congregations. By 2026, hundreds of educators had been through the program, and have shared what they learned with thousands.



We came as strangers. We left as a group. We return home equipped to share with our home communities and institutions what we have seen, heard and experienced, with tangible tools and program ideas to share our learnings on a broader scale.”

David Matlow

A Mifgash That Matters participant

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

PART V

A MEASURED HAND-OFF



Mesirah (מְסִירָה) | handing
forward

WHY NOW A FIELD THAT HAS COME OF AGE

In March 2025, founding CEO Anne Lanski stepped down after seventeen years. The board appointed an interim leadership structure and accelerated the strategic conversation about what comes next. By early 2026, with the funders' partnership and a clear-eyed reading of the field, the conclusion was unmistakable. The field was strong enough to carry its own weight. The iCenter's next contribution was a clean, generous hand-off.

On February 12, 2026, the decision to wind down The iCenter's operations was announced by our founding and steadfast funders: the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, the Crown Family Philanthropies, and The Marcus Foundation. The board-supported decision was made in light of two converging realities: the growth of the field and the changed shape of Israel education after October 7.

On growth: a field that did not exist in 2008 now exists, and is embedded in our institutions and practices. There are graduate programs producing Israel educators. There are convenings and consortia. There are journals and frameworks and curricular standards. There are foundations whose Israel education portfolios are larger and more sophisticated than anyone could have imagined

18 years ago. There are hundreds of organizations that do excellent Israel education as a matter of routine professional practice. These organizations span day schools, camps, JCCs, synagogues, youth movements, federations, Hillels, universities, media platforms, and Israel-based partners.

On the changed shape: October 7 made it unmistakably clear that Israel education needs different, additional, and in some cases new shapes for the moment. The field needs a stronger center of gravity in higher education. It needs deeper partnerships with the media. It needs new investments in Hebrew. It needs more sophisticated work on Israeli civic life and on Israel's diverse populations. It needs more, not fewer, organizations doing this work in the right shapes for their constituencies.

A field that has come of age does not need a single hub. It needs a network of strong actors, each contributing their distinct strengths. The funders read the field that way. The board agreed. The iCenter's role now is to close well: to place the materials responsibly, honor the relationships, equip the partners, and give the funders a clean conclusion. That is our final contribution to the field we helped build.



WHERE THE WORK LIVES NOW GRATITUDE TO OUR STEWARDS

Beyond the program-by-program transitions, a stewardship plan ensures that the open-access digital library (the toolkits, downloadable PDFs, frameworks, educator resources, and the wider distribution infrastructure) remains stable and accessible to educators in the field. The plan is structured around three commitments: continuity, attribution, and clarity.

The hand-off is being executed deliberately, but it is not a simple division of property. Some bodies of work — the graduate degree, distinct curricula, and certifications — are finding a single institutional home. Much of the rest, including the open library of educational resources, is being shared rather than assigned: the same materials are passing into the hands of multiple partners at once, so that the widest possible range of educators can use them for years to come.

Attribution to The iCenter is preserved in perpetuity for historical clarity. Materials carry forward as legacy resources, not as new iCenter programming, and not as the property of any one successor organization.

Every steward listed above has its own brand, mission, and constituency, and is best positioned to evolve the materials they receive in service of the educators they serve. We are deeply grateful to each of these institutions for their willingness to take responsibility for a piece of the field's shared inheritance.

Across its life, The iCenter commissioned an arc of independent research documenting the field it set out to build, from *Defining Israel Education and Mapping the Landscape* in 2012 to the 2024 landscape analysis *Israel Education in North America*. That body of work, including the 2018 Impact Study and evaluations of the graduate program, the Goodman Camping Initiative, and day school education, is preserved as a permanent record of the field's development and will remain publicly searchable.

While we can't offer a single permanent home for every resource and report at the time of this publication, key materials remain publicly accessible across The iCenter's website and partner sites.

STEWARDSHIP AT A GLANCE

Programs and curricula with a primary home:

The George Washington University: the **Graduate Degree Program in Israel Education** continues at GW, where the M.A. has always been hosted.

Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership: **Conflicts of Interest** curriculum and certification.

Hebrew at the Center: Hebrew language pedagogy physical materials.

Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools (with the DEEP Consortium): day school curricular frameworks and mapping tools.

Foundation for Jewish Camp: **Israel @ Camp** materials and the Goodman Database.

The Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, in partnership with the Jewish Agency for Israel: **Shinshinim** hub for the Chicago region and related materials.

M²: The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education: the commissioned body of artwork created for The iCenter by Israeli artist Ira Ginzburg.

Resources shared across partners:

The iCenter's library of educational resources — its conflict education frameworks, Israeli arts and music collections, FAQs, and classroom tools — is being carried forward by a number of organizations together, including Foundation for Jewish Camp, Hebrew at the Center, Hillel International, Hillel Israel, IsraelLink, OpenDor Media, Pardes Center for Jewish Educators, The Jewish Agency for Israel, The Jewish Education Project, and M²: The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education.

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

PART VI

WHAT COMES NEXT



HaBa (הַבָּא) | forthcoming

REIMAGINING ISRAEL EDUCATION

The next chapter of Israel education is being written, and that, in itself, is the point. The process of Reimagining Israel Education has served as a reorientation: a reading of where the field stands, what it has built, what the moment requires, and what will be needed in the future.

What is clear is that the work is happening. Practitioners, funders, scholars, and institutional leaders across the Jewish education landscape are gathering, in convenings, research projects, and planning processes, to ask what Israel education should look like in the years ahead. Those conversations now share a reference point: a published framework, grounded in a landscape analysis drawn from more than 400 voices across the field, that names what depth, continuity, and connection can look like in Israel education. The iCenter was part of that process, represented among the field leaders who helped shape it.

The framework is not an endpoint. The work of translating its commitments into sustained practice, pipelines, and institutions belongs to the organizations and leaders who will carry the field forward, many of them shaped in ways large and small by what The iCenter helped build.

A FINAL WORD

The work was never the institution. The work was always the field.

What we built over 18 years — the frameworks, fellowships, convenings, curricula, *mifgashim*, materials, and most of all the people — was always intended to outlast any single organization. That is the standard a field-building enterprise must hold itself to. By that standard, the work has succeeded.

The iCenter's closing chapter is not a loss. It is a transfer. It is an evolution. The work is in good hands. Programs are moving to partners who are better positioned to evolve them. Materials are remaining accessible to the educators who need them. Frameworks are continuing to anchor the field. Alumni are continuing to teach. The questions Israel education must hold — questions of identity, belonging, complexity, encounter, and hope — are continuing to be asked, with stronger tools, in a stronger field, with more widespread support and integration than was possible 18 years ago.

To everyone who facilitated a session, attended a convening, sent a learner on an Israel experience, hosted a *shinshin*, used Israel Resource Cards, completed a fellowship, was part of a camp session, supported a colleague through a hard day, funded a program, attended an **iCON** convening, downloaded a toolkit, or simply took up the work of helping a young person build a relationship with the Jewish homeland and people, *today*. You are the field.

The work continues. It is in good hands.

BACK MATTER

EIGHTEEN YEARS AT A GLANCE 2008-2026

Shmoneh Esrei
(שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂרָה) |

A milestones-only timeline of the founding, growth, adaptation, and hand-off of The iCenter.

2009-2010

Foundational convenings of the **iTeam**, comprised of leading thinkers and practitioners.

Drafting and publication of *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*®, the field's emerging shared language.

Hebrew in the Public High Schools: first national mapping of public school Hebrew programs and the first-ever national convening of their teachers, launching The iCenter's work to elevate how Hebrew is taught.

2012

The Goodman Database launches, cataloguing Israel-related activities across the Jewish camping field.

Israel Resource Cards enter wide use, giving educators tangible, session-ready tools. Subsequent redesigns and updates are made throughout the following years.

2008

The iCenter is founded as a national hub and catalyst for the field of Israel education. Anne Lanski is named founding CEO.

2011

iFellows Master's Concentration in Israel Education launches as a multi-institution academic consortium, the first graduate concentration of its kind.

iCamp is established as the field's first dedicated conference for Israel professionals, bringing the field together under one roof, first convened in Wisconsin.

2014

Birthright Israel Fellows launches, training an annual cohort of 100 diverse leaders, including Israel tour educators, to build more cohesive educational teams and deliver more meaningful Birthright experiences.

2016

Approaching Conflicts launches (first introduced as *Engaging Israel: A Conflict Toolkit*), the iCenter's first systematic, learner-centered framework for teaching the Arab-Israeli/Israeli-Palestinian conflict, developed with support from the Jim Joseph Foundation.

For the Sake of Justice, a collaboration with the Israel Democracy Institute, launches its own dedicated website. The collection offers educators a seven-module curriculum exploring Israeli civic life through the lens of its Supreme Court, from free speech and the Law of Return to the tensions between religion and democracy.

2018

iCamp is rebranded as **iCON** and convenes in Chicago. The **Graduate Degree Program in Israel Education** at the George Washington University takes shape, the only standalone master's in Israel education in the field.

RMC Research releases the iCenter's tenth-anniversary impact study, documenting its establishment as a leading national resource for Israel education and its role shaping and standardizing the field.

2015

The 2nd edition of *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education®* is published. Publication and use of the *Aleph Bet* expands internationally.

iCamp builds on its founding momentum with its second convening in Las Vegas, deepening its place as the field's home base for Israel professionals to connect, learn, and grow together.

2016-2018

iNfuse: Israel in Jewish Day Schools launches and expands across three 24-month cohorts. With support from the AVI CHAI Foundation, this initiative revolutionizes Israel education within 24 schools across the U.S. and Canada.

Hearts and Minds, a focused one-year day initiative with 10 schools, runs 2017–18.

2020

Pandemic adaptation: rapid pivot to virtual cohorts, webinars, and asynchronous learning. Digital series expand. iCenter video library scales.

The iCenter welcomes its first cohort of **Shinshinim** to Chicago.

The iCenter publishes "Israel: Voices from Within," a comprehensive poetry anthology reflecting Israel's history.

2022

iFellows consortium reaches seventeen academic institutions, including major partners across North America and Israel.

2021

A year-long research process begins for **Conflicts of Interest**, building on the **Approaching Conflicts** framework.

2023

After a five-year hiatus, **iCON** returns to Chicago in early 2023, bringing together 500-plus Israel educators and leaders.

Conflicts of Interest launches. This certificate program equips Israel educators with the content knowledge, pedagogical tools, and confidence to engage the Arab-Israeli/Israeli-Palestinian conflict in their communities; it was piloted across four cohorts in 2023–2024.

2024

In response to October 7, **A Mifgash That Matters** launches intensive four-day Israel experiences for North American educators. Nine cohorts and 300-plus participants later, the program has become a cornerstone of post-October 7 field renewal.

2025

In the first half of 2025, founding CEO Anne Lanski steps down after seventeen years, and the board appointed an interim leadership structure.

Monthly *sadna'ot* workshops and open educator hours create ongoing community for Israel educators. The virtual spaces explore new resources, process shared experiences, and engage leading artists and field leaders amid a rapidly shifting landscape.

2026

The iCenter and its funders announce wind-down of most operations.

The iCenter ceases operations over the summer.

Considered hand-off and stewardship of programs to named field partners. Legacy library remains accessible to the field.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Hakarat Hatov (הַכֶּרַת הַטּוֹב) |
recognition of the good

A field-building organization is a relational organization. The iCenter's 18 years would not have happened without an extraordinary network of funders, board members, professional staff, alumni, partner institutions, educators, and learners who trusted the work.

EARLY FOUNDATION SUPPORT

- The Jim Joseph Foundation, the institutional sponsor whose belief that Israel education could be a real field made every other thing possible.
- The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, founding investor; long-time partner across signature initiatives, including **Conflicts of Interest**.
- The Crown Family Philanthropies, deep partnership across the Chicago region and beyond, supporting **iCON**, the **Shinshinim** hub, and other field-building work.
- The Marcus Foundation, long-time partner in the work of building a serious, scholarly, learner-centered field.

FOUNDING LEADERSHIP

Anne Lanski, whose vision, more than any single factor, established the early shift that made Israel education a real field: from content to relationship, from outcome to craft, from advocacy to education. *The Aleph Bet of Israel Education*®, the **iFellows** consortium, the **GW master's degree**, **iCON**, and the relational pedagogy that runs through all of it grew from her insistence, long before it was obvious that the work could be built this way.

The founding board and the boards that followed, whose stewardship over 18 years protected the mission and the work.



Together, [The iCenter] helped build a field that is stronger, more professionalized, more connected, and more intellectually rigorous because of their work. Their vision, persistence, and collaborative spirit have shaped Israel education in lasting ways.”

Joint statement of the Jim Joseph Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, Crown Family Philanthropies, and The Marcus Foundation, eJewishPhilanthropy, February 12, 2026

THE TEAM THAT BUILT IT

Across 18 years, the staff, consultants, and faculty of The iCenter wrote the curricula, ran the convenings, facilitated experiences, designed the materials, traveled to camps, sat with educators in living rooms and faculty lounges, mentored, produced the videos, supported the *shinshinim* and *shlichim*, and answered the late-night calls that sustained the field through a thousand small moments. While we've attempted to include as many people as possible in the list below, we regret if a name was unintentionally missed. The program rosters, faculty lists, and credits across iCenter materials over 18 years are the most accurate roster we can offer. To every team member, present and former: *todah*. The work is yours.

Anne Lanski	Naomi Brown	Dan Tatar	Or Shemer
Aliza Goodman	Ginger Malin	Arielle Rosenberg	Nomi Mitchell
Dr. Keren Fraiman	Sarah Atkins	Jon Adam Ross	Rabbi Josh Herman
Cari Schulman	Rabbi Josh Feigelson	Nasya Miller	Shirlee Klein
Dr. David Bryfman	Judd Holzman	Dvora Goodman	Moshe Lencer
Dr. Barry Chazan	Rachel See	Shauna Waltman	Yotam Wolk
Jay Leberman	Scott Frankel	Ari Feinstein	Alex Harris
Dr. Lesley Litman	Ayal Weiner-Kaplow	Rachel Smith-Savaya	Ilana Graziel Ami
Dr. Zohar Raviv	Carl Schrag	Dan Brosgol	Omer Haviv
Lori B. Sagarin	Jay Frankel	Yehudit Werchow	Steve Levy
Michael Soberman	Binnie Swislow	Anna Langer	Idan Chazan
Adam Stewart	Leah Breslow-Katz	Dr. Benjamin Jacobs	Jake Shulman
Dr. Joshua Yarden	Alex Feder	Dr. Michal Peles-Almagor	Mikayla Laufer-Stokes
Vavi Toran	Lynnley Miller	Carolyn Kraus	Dena Berkman
Clare Goldwater	Shalom Orzach	Emily Rothstein	Denny Frank
Rabbi Jan Katzew	Ari Berkowicz	Emma Kaplan	Max Pivo
Pearl Lerner Kane	Erika Vogel	Elana Weiner-Kaplow	Rebecca Cohen
Matt LeVee	Kristy Scher	Mitch Cohen	Laura Baruch Sherman
Natalie Blitt	Rabbi Brett Kopin	Elisheva Lanzkron-Vachman	

THE TEAM HELPING US CLOSE THIS CHAPTER

Closing well is itself a kind of building. To the staff and consultants carrying the wind-down through 2026: placing programs with stewards, revising legacy materials, fielding the daily questions from educators in the field, supporting one another through a season that has not been easy, continuing to grow and facilitate programs to the end, and simply showing up in the office. Your care, professionalism, and grace are among the most important contributions our team has made to the field. Thank you.

FIELD PARTNERS

Across 18 years, The iCenter has worked with hundreds of organizations across day schools, supplementary schools, summer camps, JCCs, federations, Hillels, youth movements, synagogues, universities, media platforms, and Israel-based partners. Naming each one would require a separate book. To every educator, every executive director, every program officer, every camp director, every rabbi, every *shinshin* or *shaliach*, every faculty member, every lay leader, and every learner who carried this work in their own setting: thank you. The field is yours.

ABOUT THIS REPORT AND SOURCES

This impact report was prepared by The iCenter as part of its considered conclusion of operations in 2026. It is intended as a record for funders, partners, alumni, board, and the broader Jewish community of what 18 years of investment in the field of Israel education accomplished, and as a working document of how the legacy is being responsibly transferred to field partners.

SOURCES

Where direct quotations appear in the report, they are drawn from the following sources, each of which is publicly available or has been published by The iCenter or its partners.

iCenter CEO Anne Lanski on Israel education beyond the 'encounter,'" by Helen Chernikoff, October 8, 2021 — source for the Anne Lanski quote on relationship-centered Israel education in Part I.

JEducation World. iNfuse Initiative Deepens Israel Education Across All Aspects of Jewish Day School Learning Experiences. May 2019 — source for iNfuse framing and quote.

Chicago Tribune, "Israel trip a revelation for high school educators," Karen Berkowitz, November 6, 2017 — source for Public High School Hebrew context.

eJewishPhilanthropy, "After 17 years, the Israel education-focused iCenter announces it's shutting down," February 12, 2026 — source for the funders' joint statement and contextual reporting on the wind-down.

Jim Joseph Foundation, "The iCenter's iCON 2023: Where Israel and Education Meet," March 28, 2023 — source for the Anne Lanski and Aliza Goodman quotes in the iCON section.

Jim Joseph Foundation, "The iCenter Defines and Leads the Field of Israel Education" — source for foundational framing of The iCenter's role.

JNS.org and Algemeiner coverage of Anne Lanski and the iFellows program — source for the founding-CEO framing of Israel education and consortium scale.

eJewishPhilanthropy, "Why The iCenter's Mifgash That Matters Really Matters" — source for descriptive language and participant quote of A Mifgash That Matters.

The iCenter, "The Aleph Bet of Israel Education®" — source for the Aleph Bet credo language and core principles.

The iCenter, public mission and program materials at theicenter.org and in print — source for institutional voice and program descriptions.

eJewishPhilanthropy, "It's time to teach about the conflict: Here's how," by Ari Feinstein and Mikayla Laufer, June 27, 2024 — source for the Conflicts of Interest pilot

structure, evaluation results, and core pedagogies.

Atlanta Jewish Times. "Educators Gather in Chicago for Birthright." March 27, 2025 — source of quote for Conflicts of Interest.

Dan Tatar, "Teaching Israel: Holding Feelings and Facts" and "From Dialogue to Action," The iCenter, 2026 — source for post-October 7 pedagogical framing.

Email messages and social media direct messages to The iCenter.

RMC Research Corporation, "The iCenter for Israel Education: Impact Study, 2018" — source for the tenth-anniversary impact findings, based on 60 interviews with founders, network partners, and program alumni.

Shelley H. Billig, "Israel Education: A Landscape Analysis of the Field in North America, 2023" (Billig Consulting, January 2024), commissioned by The iCenter — source for the 2023 assessment of the state and maturation of the field.

Notes on the hand-off list | The list of stewards in Part VI reflects The iCenter's plan as of the date of this report. Final terms vary by program and partner. The list is offered as a faithful representation of where the work is going, not as a guarantee of every detail.

With gratitude to Rachel Dorsey, whose careful copyediting made this piece read as clearly as it does, and to Ira Ginzburg and her team at Ira Ginzburg Studio, who brought it to life with such care.