

DELET GRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROGRAM AND THEIR PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING: AN EVALUATION REPORT

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Executive Summary

This report is mainly addressed to faculty, mentors and alumni at Brandeis and HUC-JIR and to the program's major funder, the Jim Joseph Foundation, which supports the DeLeT Longitudinal Survey.

The DeLeT program was established in 2002 in response to three decades of expansion in non-orthodox Jewish day schools. This created a demand for teachers prepared to teach in these new schools. In the 12 years since the program's inception, DeLeT at Brandeis and HUC-JIR have prepared close to 200 teachers who are teaching across the nation in 18 states and more than 46 schools.

This report focuses on how DeLeT graduates from both programs perceive their preparedness for day school teaching, as well as how they perceive the DeLeT faculty and the programs' strengths and weaknesses. It also examines similarities and differences between the two programs and offers possible explanations for the handful of differences we identified. Such an in-depth examination of graduates' perspectives provides valuable formative feedback to both programs. In addition, we anticipate that this report will be useful to funders and faculty at other Jewish teacher education programs who may be interested in using the evaluation tools and procedures we have developed to learn about their graduates and identify areas for program improvement.¹

Data and Methods

The report draws on two types of data—responses to surveys filled by DeLeT graduates upon completion of the program and responses to semi-structured interviews with DeLeT faculty leaders. Survey data were collected from DeLeT graduates at Brandeis and HUC programs (Cohorts 6 through 11) across the past six years (2007-2013) as part of the DeLeT Longitudinal Study. The survey was administered to all graduates (N=103) with a response rate of 90%. In addition, the report draws on a complementary set of interviews with program faculty at Brandeis and HUC which explore the possible meanings behind the graduates' responses to particular questions and how the data can be used to improve the program. Specifically, we wanted to learn how DeLeT leaders understand their graduates' assessment of the program, its faculty, and their own sense of preparedness for teaching.

We apply descriptive statistics to present the distribution of graduates' responses and Chi-square tests to compare the extent to which graduates from the two DeLeT programs responded similarly or differently to the survey's questions.

¹ Our survey instruments have been tested and used in the DeLeT Longitudinal Study since 2007 and are available free of charge either by downloading from the DeLeT Longitudinal Study website, <http://www.brandeis.edu/mandel/projects/delettracking.html> or upon request from Dr. Eran Tamir, etamir88@brandeis.edu

Findings

DeLeT graduates at both Brandeis and HUC perceive DeLeT as a program which prepared them well for their work as day school teachers. Eighty-one percent of DeLeT teachers reported high levels of alignment between their courses and their internships. The programs' strong sense of vision came through clearly: 93 percent of the graduates agreed or strongly agreed that DeLeT articulated a clear vision of good teaching. Faculty were seen as caring and knowledgeable, and students understood the value placed on reflective practice. A majority of the students (81%) felt well prepared to plan lessons, manage classrooms, and generally engage with the work of day school teaching with only one percent reporting feeling unprepared.

Conclusion

These findings affirm that the DeLeT program graduates beginning teachers who feel well prepared for their work as day school teachers. The findings also reveal that the DeLeT program embodies key features associated with effective teacher education, including a clear vision of good teaching, an intensive and extensive clinical component, strong alignment between university courses and field experiences, and a focus on subject matter preparation. These commitments and practices make the DeLeT model unique among programs that prepare teachers for Jewish day schools.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the vision of program founders and funders to support evaluation and research of the ongoing life of the DeLeT program and its teachers. By studying the program and tracking its graduates over time, the Longitudinal Survey provides systematic and reliable information about the students, the program and its impact, insuring accountability to those who conduct the program and those who support it.

Introduction

DeLeT was established in 2002 in response to three decades of expansion in non-orthodox Jewish day schools. This created a demand for teachers prepared to teach in these new schools. In the 12 years since the program's inception, DeLeT at Brandeis and HUC-JIR have prepared close to 200 new teachers who are teaching across the nation in 18 states and more than 46 schools.

Since 2007, the DeLeT Longitudinal Study has gathered data on graduates from Brandeis and HUC through annual surveys of incoming and graduating students and through a bi-annual survey of all program alumni. A project of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis, the Longitudinal Study has provided important information to leaders and funders of DeLeT as well as other interested stakeholders about issues related to day school teacher preparation, induction, retention and quality. In previous reports, we analyzed the career choices that DeLeT fellows make and the factors that shape their decision to stay in teaching, become teacher leaders or administrators, or leave the classroom to pursue alternative careers (Tamir & Lesik, 2013; Tamir & Magidin de Kramer, 2011). We have also described the backgrounds of DeLeT teachers and their views of day school teaching (Tamir, Feiman-Nemser, Silvera-Sasson, & Cytryn, 2010), and the challenges and opportunities they face in their schools (Birkeland & Tamir, 2013; Tamir, 2011; Tamir, 2013).

This report focuses on how DeLeT graduates from both programs perceive their preparedness for day school teaching, as well as how they perceive the faculty and the programs' strengths and weaknesses. It also examines similarities and differences between the two programs and offers possible explanations for the handful of differences we identified. Such an in-depth examination of graduates' perspectives provides valuable formative feedback to both programs. Besides DeLeT leaders, we anticipate that this report will be useful to funders and faculty at other Jewish teacher education programs who may be interested in using the evaluation tools and procedures we have developed to learn about their graduates and identify areas for program improvement.²

Data and Methods

This report draws on two types of data—responses to surveys filled by DeLeT graduates upon completion of the program and responses to semi-structured interviews with DeLeT faculty leaders.

Survey data from program graduates. We collected survey data from DeLeT graduates from Brandeis and HUC-JIR (Cohorts 6 through 11) across the past six years (2007-2013) as part of the DeLeT Longitudinal Study. The survey was administered to all graduates (N=103), with a response rate of 90%. The response rate was roughly equal across the two programs

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as was the overall number of teachers filling out the survey from both programs. In order to capture graduates' perspectives as close as possible to the finish line, we distributed the surveys in the last four days of the program and gave graduates a \$15 gift certificate for their participation.

This report analyzes 10% of the survey's questions (26 of ~260) that focus on *program characteristics, faculty characteristics, and graduates' sense of preparedness for teaching*. Each of the questions uses an ordinal scale of five categories (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree or 1=not at all prepared to 5=extremely prepared). Many of the questions were selected from large-scale studies in general education and carefully vetted and edited by multiple reviewers, including researchers and teacher educators at Brandeis and HUC.

Interviews with DeLeT leaders. In addition to analyzing the survey responses, this report draws on a complementary set of interviews with program faculty at Brandeis and HUC which explore the possible meanings behind the graduates' responses to particular questions and how the data can be used to improve the program. Specifically, we wanted to learn how DeLeT leaders understand their graduates' assessment of the program, its faculty, and their own sense of preparedness for teaching. We identified two faculty members in each program with a comprehensive and significant history with the program. At HUC we interviewed a founder of the program and a former director and long-time faculty member; at Brandeis we interviewed another founder and a long-time field instructor and member of the leadership team.³ Interviews, which lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, were conducted in person or by phone. Content was recorded and transcribed verbatim.

We analyzed survey data using SPSS software. Employing descriptive statistics, we present the distribution of graduates' responses across the ordinal scale and describe the mean average response for each question item. We also apply Chi-square tests to compare the extent to which graduates from the two DeLeT programs responded similarly or differently to the survey's questions. These statistical tools helped us understand the graduates' experiences and sense of preparedness and enable program leaders to consider the alignment between program goals and students' experiences.

The semi-structured interviews with program faculty were designed to gather elaborated responses to a restricted set of questions in order to clarify or offer additional interpretations of findings. The interviews helped confirm or challenge hypotheses framed by the research team.

How DeLeT Graduates Perceive the Program

In this section we focus on three features associated with effective teacher education programs. Eight items examine the extent to which DeLeT rests on a clear vision of teaching, lending coherence to the program. Previous studies in general education confirm that programs with an explicit vision of good teaching are more effective (Darling-

³ During the seven years of data covered by the DeLeT graduation survey, both programs have brought in three directors. We chose not to interview short-term interviewed only veteran leaders in both programs.

Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Grossman et al., 2008). Another cluster of items probes DeLeT's emphasis on subject matter knowledge, given the consensus that having adequate subject matter knowledge is a *sine qua non* for effective teaching (Allen, 2003). Finally, the survey asks how well DeLeT graduates got to know one another in light of widespread support for professional collaboration as a factor in teacher satisfaction, retention and effectiveness (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Johnson & Birkeland, 2009).

Vision of Teaching and Program Coherence

Graduates' responses to survey items about the program's vision confirm that DeLeT articulates a consistent vision of good teaching. In general, graduates agreed or strongly agreed that DeLeT *articulates a clear vision of good teaching and learning* (93%) and that they *feel part of a larger group of people who share a common vision of day school education* (85%). This broad agreement reflects the effort of DeLeT founders who

concretized the vision of a 'DeLeT teacher' by developing a set of behavioral goals for beginning day school teachers called 'professional teaching standards' at Brandeis and a 'framework for teaching' at HUC" (Feiman-Nemser & Zeldin, 2007, p. 5).

Interviews with faculty confirm that these standards and frameworks continue to play an important role within the DeLeT programs.

In addition, a considerable majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that *the courses in DeLeT reflect a similar view of teaching* (81%). This speaks to the alignment among courses and indicates that most students experienced their coursework as promoting a particular kind of teaching. The presence of common "behavioral goals" in both programs may account for this finding. In addition, faculty at both programs identified specific aspects of teaching which the program reinforces. A Brandeis faculty member discussed how the core seminar on teaching and the subject specific methods courses "all reinforce a learner-centered focus on teaching and emphasize teaching for meaning and understanding." A faculty member from HUC explained how the academic coordinator "works with every faculty member so that they are aligned in their teaching of their courses with what we call "the DeLeT way." These faculty testimonies together with students' perceptions offer strong evidence that DeLeT inducts teacher candidates into an explicit vision of good teaching which is reinforced across the programs.

We also asked about a related issue—the level of coherence across program components. A common criticism of teacher education programs is the wide gap between ideas future teachers encounter at the university and practices they observe in schools. A key indicator of high quality teacher preparation is strong alignment between coursework and fieldwork (Feiman Nemser, 2001; Grossman et al., 2008; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). A majority of DeLeT students agreed or strongly agreed that what they *learn in [their] courses reflects what [they] observe in [their] internships* (75%) and that *the criteria by which [they are] evaluated as an intern are consistent with what [they are] taught in [their] courses* (77%). Given the challenge of managing this common tension, this agreement level seems to reflect a relatively strong alignment between DeLeT's courses and students' field experiences.

Faculty at both program sites acknowledged the challenge of creating alignment with the field and spoke of strategies they use to foster it. At HUC a faculty member who teaches a core pedagogy course described the weekly emails she sends to the clinical educators who work with students in the field. Brandeis offers a monthly study group for mentor teachers led by the instructor of the core pedagogy course. The emails and study group keep mentor teachers informed about what DeLeT students are learning in their courses and encourage them to explore their own teaching in relation to these ideas.

Subject Matter Knowledge for Teaching

Another critical aspect of strong teacher education programs is preparation for teaching subject matter. While still a majority, somewhat fewer graduates agreed or strongly agreed that *DeLeT emphasizes strong subject matter preparation* (64%). In the U.S., elementary teachers are generalists which means they need a grounding in many different content areas. This is an even greater challenge for DeLeT, which embraces a dual curriculum of general and Jewish subjects. While a typical elementary teacher education program offers methods courses in teaching language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, DeLeT also provides courses in teaching Torah, prayer, Jewish holidays and Jewish culture. Just as Jewish day schools are challenged by the need to teach a dual curriculum, the DeLeT program finds it challenging to give adequate attention to all these content areas. While the program mainly prepares general studies teachers, some DeLeT graduates with strong Jewish studies backgrounds teach Jewish studies and all graduates are supposed to view themselves as Jewish educators. Graduates' responses suggest that this may be an area to strengthen or rethink.

Professional Learning Community

DeLeT was designed as a small, cohort-based program, with 10-12 students each year at each site. The intent is for students to form a strong community, learn how to interact around professional matters and support one another's learning. An indicator that students do, indeed, feel part of a community is that they overwhelmingly agree or strongly agree that they *know well the other students in DeLeT* (95%). Interviews with faculty suggest that DeLeT explicitly creates opportunities to develop a professional learning community. For example, at Brandeis, DeLeT students begin their program with an intensive week of text study in pairs in the program's Beit Midrash for Teachers. This lays the foundation for learning with colleagues (Feiman-Nemser, 2006). Throughout both programs, students have many opportunities to engage in small and whole group discussions and to learn with and from their peers.

Table 1: Graduates' perceptions of their program

Thinking about the program overall, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	1-2 Strongly disagree + Disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4-5 Agree + Strongly agree	Mean score
I have gotten to know well the other students in DeLeT	1%	4%	95%	4.67
DeLeT articulates a clear vision of teaching and learning	3%	4%	93%	4.43
I feel part of a larger group of people who all share a common vision of day school education	7%	8%	85%	4.27
The courses in DeLeT reflect a similar view of teaching	6%	13%	81%	4.09
The criteria by which I am evaluated as an intern are consistent with what I am taught in my courses	9%	14%	77%	3.95
What I learn in my courses reflects what I observe in my internship	14%	11%	75%	3.80
DeLeT emphasizes strong subject matter preparation	18%	18%	64%	3.63

How Graduates Perceive the Faculty

A second set consisted of twelve questions explores graduates' perceptions of the DeLeT faculty. It consists of three clusters (see Table 2, below).⁴ One cluster of questions includes items about faculties' pedagogical knowledge and their attentiveness and commitment to preparing teachers for Jewish day schools. A second cluster of questions includes general items related to effective preparation structures and practices used by faculty. A third cluster focuses on faculty-student relationships and the extent to which graduates felt supported in their professional pursuit to become day school teachers.

Pedagogical knowledge in context

Graduates generally agree that DeLeT faculty *are excellent teachers* (84%). Only 5% (which on average is half a student annually for each DeLeT program) of the graduates disagreed or strongly disagreed that DeLeT faculty *are excellent teachers*. This reflects a general endorsement of the faculty's pedagogical skill. (We use additional survey items to uncover more specific information about the faculty's teaching.)

Another set of critical indicators regarding instructional quality relates to teacher educators' knowledge of their subject matter and context. In DeLeT, content includes subjects taught in Jewish day schools. Most students (94%) agreed that faculty *are knowledgeable about teaching*

⁴ We used a Likert Scale with five categories to measure graduates' agreement; 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

and content areas and understand the realities of contemporary day schools and their children (91%). DeLeT students also overwhelmingly agreed that the DeLeT faculty *are committed to preparing Jewish day school teachers (96%).* This suggests that DeLeT graduates view their instructors as knowledgeable about the curriculum and context of Jewish day schools as well as fully committed to their preparation as day school teachers.

Early program documents articulate DeLeT's commitment to "integration" as a guiding principle. A report on the first five years of the program celebrates "teachers who can integrate general studies and Jewish studies in order to prepare students to live as Jews in the broader society" (Feiman-Nemser & Zeldin, 2007). Given this early program commitment, we asked graduates to what extent faculty demonstrate integration in their own teaching. A majority of DeLeT students agreed that the faculty *demonstrate how to integrate general and Jewish studies (81%),* which suggests that a majority of the faculty incorporate such experiences into their classes.

Faculty and program effectiveness

As discussed above, in high quality teacher education programs, university courses are aligned with field experiences. DeLeT graduates generally agreed that faculty *give assignments that connect [the] internship with coursework (86%).* For example, at HUC, students study integration as a curricular principle, then create integrated mini-units which they teach in their internship classroom. At Brandeis, students take a course on child development and learning. At the same time, they carry out a child study in their internship classroom, learning to observe and understand one student who puzzles them and using the theoretical lens they are studying to help interpret his or her strengths as a learner and a social and spiritual being. These assignments explicitly connect the content of courses with teaching and learning in the field.

Another item related to program effectiveness asks whether faculty enabled graduates to reflect on and evaluate their practice. We included this item because teacher educators at DeLeT, like many other teacher educators, believe that reflection is key to teacher learning (e.g., (Dewey, 1904; Freese, 1999; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). In fact "reflection" has become a widely used slogan in teacher education, often without clear meaning. This makes it hard to study its impact (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

In DeLeT, reflection means analyzing and assessing one's teaching practice in light of the effects, attending closely to students, becoming aware of one's own assumptions and beliefs. Interviews with faculty shed light on ways that reflection is embedded in coursework and field experiences. For example, a Brandeis faculty member stated, "I think the emphasis on very close observation and note taking from early on helps [interns] to really think about what they're seeing and take a reflective stance and an evaluative stance toward their teaching..." An HUC faculty member described the program's emphasis on reflection as pertaining to "Every lesson, every class, every assignment, every paper..." In addition, there are regularly scheduled events at which DeLeT students in both programs publicly reflect on their teaching, their learning and their students' learning. Accordingly, students overwhelmingly agreed that faculty *enable [them] to evaluate and reflect on [their] practice to improve instruction (97%).*

As described above, DeLeT has deliberately articulated a consistent vision of good teaching. To help students learn to enact this kind of teaching, however, the vision must also be modeled throughout the program so that students not only learn *about* the program’s vision of good teaching, but experience it firsthand. One of the survey prompts asks whether faculty model the teaching practices which they teach in their courses. A majority of graduates agreed that the faculty *teach in ways that are consistent with the practices they advocate* (76%). While this reflects a majority of respondents, it is a relatively low percentage compared to other items on the survey. This may suggest some challenge in modeling pedagogies associated with elementary education at the university level.

Developing relationships with students

High quality teaching also depends on strong relationships between teachers and students. Students thrive when they feel known and cared about and believe that faculty take the time to help them succeed (Rots et al., 2010). Some faculty characteristics about which students articulated high levels of agreement include the following: faculty *demonstrate caring about whether or not I am learning* (91%), *know who I am* (88%), and *often are available to meet outside of class* (87%). These indicate that students recognize efforts on the part of DeLeT faculty to build strong relationships that are foundational to student growth. Strong agreement on these characteristics may also explain why DeLeT students generally agreed that the faculty were excellent teachers.

Table 2: DeLeT faculty instructional qualities

On the whole, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DeLeT’s faculty?	1-2 Strongly disagree - disagree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4-5 Strongly agree – agree	Mean score
Are committed to preparing Jewish day school teachers	0%	4%	96%	4.67
Are knowledgeable about teaching and content areas	1%	5%	94%	4.57
Enable me to evaluate and reflect on my practice to improve instruction	2%	1%	97%	4.54
Demonstrate caring about whether or not I am learning	6%	3%	91%	4.43
Often are available to meet outside of class	4%	9%	87%	4.35
Understand the realities of contemporary day schools and their children	2%	7%	91%	4.32
Are excellent teachers	5%	11%	84%	4.27
Know who I am	6%	6%	88%	4.27
Give assignments that connect my internship with coursework	5%	9%	86%	4.23
Demonstrate how to integrate general and Jewish studies	6%	13%	81%	4.09
Teach in ways that are consistent with the practices they advocate	11%	13%	76%	4.02

DeLeT Graduates' Sense of Preparedness

In this section we discuss responses to survey items designed to assess DeLeT graduates' sense of preparedness in relation to different aspects of teaching (see Table 3, below).⁵ Previous studies have used such measures of preparedness across multiple dimensions as a proxy indicator to estimate teacher retention and teachers' effects on student learning outcomes. For example, Darling-Hammond (2006) notes that, "Although there are limitations to self-report data—in particular the fact that candidates' feelings of preparedness may not reflect their actual practices or their success with students—research finds significant correlations between these perceptions and teachers' sense of self-efficacy (itself correlated with student achievement) as well as their retention in teaching" (p. 124). Ronfeldt and Reinger (2012) show that teachers' sense of preparedness is positively affected by participating in an extended teaching internship experience, itself a feature of strong preparation. This finding is particularly affirming to programs like DeLeT which includes a year-long, mentored internship.

The survey items that we used were partly adopted from previous research which sought to assess teacher education students' general sense of preparation. A few items were specifically designed, with input from faculty, to assess aspects of preparation unique to DeLeT's mission.

One item asked if graduates felt prepared to be effective teachers in general. While this prompt does not provide specific insights about the program's strengths or weaknesses, it can serve as an indicator of students' sense of their overall preparedness. Most students felt "very" or "extremely" prepared to *become an effective teacher* (81%) with only 1% of students choosing the response "slightly" prepared and not a single student chose "not at all prepared." In what follows, we examine responses to other prompts which provide more specific information about the areas of teaching that students felt prepared for.

Research shows that a well-managed classroom is fundamental to student learning (Evertson & Harris, 1992; Shulman, 1987) and many studies consistently cite classroom management as a major concern of beginning teachers. A clear majority of DeLeT graduates believe they were "very" or "extremely" prepared to *implement effective classroom management* (74%) and most of the remaining students felt "somewhat" prepared (23%). While it is desirable for new teachers to enter their first year of teaching with confidence, these numbers may also suggest that some DeLeT graduates are somewhat unrealistic about the challenges they will face as novice teachers.⁶

Another key task of teaching is developing curriculum (e.g., Shulman, 1987). Learning to plan lessons and design larger curricular units are central tasks of teaching which DeLeT students work on throughout the program. Most students felt "very" or "extremely

⁵ We used a Likert Scale with five categories to measure graduates' agreement; 1=not at all prepared, 2=slightly prepared, 3=somewhat prepared, 4=very prepared, 5=extremely prepared

⁶ Research suggests that extended internships such as DeLeT's affect teachers' perceptions of classroom management (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990) and this may reduce the number of teachers with unrealistic expectations.

prepared” to *design appropriate and challenging lessons* (87%), and almost all of the remaining students felt “somewhat prepared” (11%). It is possible that students’ confidence in their ability to plan lessons accounts for the relatively high number who feel prepared to be effective teachers.

As noted above, DeLeT early on embraced the principle of integration, even though the meaning of integration was somewhat vague. Two survey items asked about preparation to integrate Jewish content into the general studies classroom. It is interesting that more graduates felt very or extremely prepared to *integrate Jewish values into the classroom* (76%) than to *integrate general and Jewish studies* (66%). This finding may reflect the clear divide in many day schools between general and Jewish studies, thus making curricular integration difficult. Integrating Jewish values into the classroom culture may be easier to accomplish since this is clearly under the teacher’s purview and does not depend on collaboration with others. Another explanation is that DeLeT standards explicitly call for teachers to infuse their classroom learning community with Jewish values and experiences (Feiman-Nemser, 2014).

As noted above, an important indicator of high quality teacher preparation is attention to developing teachers’ content area knowledge. Two survey items asked about graduates’ perception of their preparation to teach in specific content areas. A majority of students felt “very” or “extremely” prepared to *teach language arts* (67%) and an additional 28% believed they were “somewhat” prepared. The latter aligns well with an earlier finding in the section about general program characteristics showing that subject matter preparation received one of the lowest levels of agreement among graduates. One possible explanation for the fact that some students still felt prepared to *teach language arts* may be related to an uneven teaching experience during their internship that offered some teachers stronger teaching and mentoring opportunities in language arts.

DeLeT students teach a wide range of content areas, including Torah. When the program began, there was a widespread belief that general studies teachers are often responsible for teaching the weekly Torah portion to their class. So DeLeT founders identified *parshat hashavuah* as a common focus. Upon graduation, however, only a slight majority of students felt “very” or “extremely” prepared to teach *parashat hashavuah* (53%). Strikingly, 23% of graduates felt “not at all” or “slightly” prepared to teach *parashat hashavuah*. One possible explanation is that the assumption about general studies teachers in the elementary grades teaching *parashat hashavuah* was only partially true. In reality, not all DeLeT teachers have the background to teach Torah comfortably and not all the interns worked with mentors who taught *parashat hashavuah* and could help them develop this skill.

Part of DeLeT’s mission is to lay the foundation for teacher leadership. After all, the “L” in DeLeT stands for “leadership” through day school teaching. This mission is accomplished in various ways, such as training mentors and advocating for schools to create opportunities for teacher leadership. There is also a hope that DeLeT graduates will eventually become teacher leaders, although not in the early years of teaching. Somewhat surprisingly, a strong majority felt “very” or “extremely” prepared to *become a teacher leader* (73%). This may reflect a combination of genuine passion to contribute to institutional change with a naïve understanding of the skills required to play this role.

Finally, it should be noted that the mean scores for this set of questions were somewhat lower compared to previous sections of the report. Given the complexity of beginning teaching, the more moderate mean scores may suggest that DeLeT teachers are aware of what lays ahead for them.

Table 3: DeLeT Graduates’ Sense of Preparedness

Sense of preparedness - To what extent did DeLeT prepare you to...	1-2 Not at all - slightly	3 Somewhat	4-5 Very - Extremely	Mean score
...design appropriate and challenging lessons?	2%	11%	87%	4.36
...become an effective teacher?	1%	18%	81%	4.14
...implement effective classroom management?	3%	23%	74%	4.01
...integrate Jewish values into the classroom?	4%	20%	76%	4.01
...become a teacher leader?	6%	21%	73%	3.96
...integrate general and Jewish studies?	5%	29%	66%	3.86
...teach language arts?	5%	28%	67%	3.84
...teach parashat hashavuah?	23%	24%	53%	3.39

Differences Between the Two DeLeT Programs

As mentioned, the two DeLeT programs were founded at the same time with the same mission, standards and structure. There were also differences stemming largely from differences in the institutional settings.⁷ Thus, we assume that some differences between the two programs would surface. Analyzing the data for potential differences and similarities between the two programs can shed light on what the programs share as well as on the different contexts in which they operate, the unique opportunities they offer, and the “local” pressures they face.

Overall, the analysis of the findings suggests that graduates of the two programs have similar perceptions of their preparation. When means are calculated separately for the two DeLeT sites and placed in order from highest to lowest, the patterns are fairly similar. (We did notice a general trend in which DeLeT HUC means tended to be slightly higher, but in most cases not statistically significant).⁸ However, on five of the twenty-eight survey items

⁷ DeLeT at Brandeis is the day school concentration in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program, while DeLeT at HUC does not lead to a masters degree. On the other hand, DeLeT at HUC offers a state approved induction program leading to a teaching credential, while DeLeT at Brandeis mainly offers induction support to new teachers in the Boston area.

⁸ See Appendix A for tables that include the mean scores for Brandeis and HUC for all survey items. This table includes a cross tabulation analysis that identifies which differences between the means are and are not statistically significant.

included in this analysis, the different responses reached a level of statistical significance (see table 4 below). We developed some hypotheses to account for those differences and used interviews with program faculty to explore their validity.

Three of the five survey items whose differences were statistically significant were in response to prompts about faculty characteristics. Of those three, two specifically referenced the context of Jewish day schools. We hypothesize that differences in the institutional contexts may help explain why DeLeT students at HUC might view their faculty as more (a) *knowledgeable about the contemporary realities of day schools* (13.30, .004) and (b) *committed to prepare teachers for Jewish day schools* (6.50, .039).⁹

At the institutional level, the two DeLeT programs occupy different positions vis-à-vis the mission, priorities and commitments of their host institutions. HUC places Jewish learning and the Jewish community front and center. Brandeis University is a non-sectarian university with a special relationship to the Jewish community and a mission emphasizing liberal arts, research, and commitment to social justice.

These larger institutional contexts shape how DeLeT developed. In 2007, DeLeT at Brandeis became a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program with a concentration in Jewish day school teaching. The same MAT program also started to offer a concentration in public school teaching. DeLeT students share classes with their public school counterparts related to general studies, including child development as well as the teaching and learning of mathematics and language arts. In these shared courses, the faculty, whether or not they have experience teaching in day schools, do not emphasize the day school context. In contrast, students at HUC experience their program exclusively with other DeLeT students. When HUC interns take general education courses, their instructors are able to ground the work in the specific context of Jewish day schools. At HUC, students take courses in literacy, science, and human development from instructors with years of experience in Jewish day schools. An HUC faculty member noted that this context influences the content of the course, “When you talk about [child development] with a bunch of people who are getting ready... to do internships in Jewish settings, there’s no way that the Jewish setting doesn’t come up.”

Another area where we found a statistically significant difference between the programs is around evaluation and reflection. As described above, interns at both campuses overwhelmingly agreed that faculty *enable [them] to evaluate and reflect on [their] practice to improve instruction*. Yet, a Chi-square analysis reveals that graduates of the HUC program were significantly more likely to “strongly agree” with the statement compared to Brandeis’s graduates (12.46, .006). When we further inquired with program faculty, it emerged that the concept of reflection, while very important on both campuses, is embedded more systematically in the HUC program. When one HUC faculty member was asked how reflection is part of the program, he responded, “Almost everything we do is followed by reflection. When I describe the program, I talk about the three R’s... rigor, respect, and

⁹ The numbers in parenthesis come from the Chi-square analysis that we conducted. The second number is the P-value, which tells us to what extent the two sets of responses (from Brandeis and HUC) are similar or different. When the P-value equals or goes below 0.05 it is 95% likely that the discrepancy between the two sets of responses reflects a real difference between the two groups.

reflection... Reflection is in everything. Every time they [DeLeT students] do an assignment... the last part of the assignment is to write a reflection.” In addition, at HUC, an administrative position called the “academic coordinator” was created in order to help faculty members enact the principles of the program in their coursework. A DeLeT Brandeis faculty leader noted that fostering a reflective disposition is important, but the overriding goal of teacher preparation is to prepare people who know how to act in principled ways.

Another area of significant difference between the two programs is in how prepared the interns felt to *integrate general and Jewish studies* (13.30, .021). The perceived emphasis of HUC on integration seems to align well with the scholarship of Michael Zeldin, the director of DeLeT at HUC, who is known for his writing on curricular integration. According to HUC faculty, curricular integration is a key priority. Each student must develop a “mini-unit” that explicitly integrates Jewish and general studies. In the early years at Brandeis, students were also required to create a unit integrating Jewish and general studies, but the assignment was modified in recent years. Many mentor teachers reported that it was difficult to support interns in developing and teaching units which authentically integrated Jewish and general studies within the confines of their school’s curriculum. The current version of the assignment responds to these concerns. Now students design and teach units which integrate any two content areas, but not necessarily Jewish and general studies.

In addition, the academic coordinator at HUC supports faculty in integrating their coursework with Jewish studies, thus strengthening the modeling that students experience. An HUC faculty member described two of these courses: “We have a course that’s entitled ‘Health and Jewish Values.’ It’s the health course required by the state of California. We explicitly integrate that with Jewish values and the teaching of Jewish values. And similarly we have a course that’s called ‘PE and Jewish Values’ in which the students learn how to teach physical education and also, again, integrate that with Jewish values, Jewish text.”

The final item for which the responses between graduates of the two programs were significantly different was how prepared interns felt to *teach parashat hashavuah* (24.65, .000). Again, the interviews shed some light on this. At Brandeis, students take a summer course on *Learning Torah* and a Fall semester course called *Teaching Torah*. In the latter, they learn about teaching Torah, including *parashat hashavuah*. Each student teaches at least one Torah lesson in their internship. If *parashat hashavuah* is taught in their mentor’s classrooms, then they teach it. If not, they teach a lesson from the ongoing Torah curriculum in their class. At HUC, students take part in a two-semester experience in which they meet weekly for an hour to study *parashat hashavuah*. The portion is studied one week ahead of the synagogue cycle so that interns can use their learning the following week in the classrooms. In the fall, different faculty members or guests teach the session each week, spending a few minutes at the end reflecting on their teaching and sharing how they prepared for and thought about the lesson. In the spring semester, each intern teaches one week of *parashat hashavuah* to his or her peers. This comprehensive and ongoing work on *parashat hashavuah* most likely contributes to a stronger sense of preparedness among the DeLeT HUC graduates.

Conclusion

Overall, DeLeT graduates at both Brandeis and HUC-JIR perceive DeLeT as a program which prepared them well for their work as day school teachers. The programs' strong vision of good teaching came through clearly to students, faculty were seen as caring and knowledgeable, and students understood the value placed on reflective practice. Students felt prepared to plan lessons, manage classrooms, and generally engage with the work of teaching. These findings align well with research on effective teacher education and reinforce the need for Jewish teacher education programs to include a robust clinical component aligned with professional coursework, articulate and model a strong vision of good teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005), and prepare teachers to teach the array of general and/or Jewish subjects for which they are responsible. The latter is particularly critical given the increasing value that day schools place on academic excellence (Tamir, 2014).

In analyzing the data, a few areas of potential improvement emerged. Some relate to one program, while others are more general. These include the diverse range of content areas that interns need to master, the ways that programs articulate and enact core values such as reflection, and the different strategies programs use to manage tensions between the pedagogies taught in the university and those interns experience in the field.

One challenge both programs face is preparing elementary teachers to be “generalists,” capable of teaching many subjects. This is reflected in the relatively low means for subject matter preparation. While there are no easy answers, the findings serve as a reminder that elementary education programs need to continually ask themselves how to strengthen their students' ability to teach across different content areas and adjust their programs to meet this important goal.

An important lesson that both the DeLeT programs and the wider field should consider is the importance of clarity around program-wide commitments and how they play out across the program. For example, the findings about reflection provide evidence that students recognize when programs demonstrate commitment to particular ideas and practices. Both programs hold reflection to be fundamental for a novice teacher and students agreed that they had many opportunities to use reflection to support their learning. The findings also suggest that the more passionate and systematic a program is about implementing particular ideas, the stronger the impact on students. At HUC, the practice of reflection seems to have been enacted more systematically and forcefully through careful articulation of this core value in a way that came through to both students and faculty. At Brandeis reflection was important, but it either has not been elevated to a similar level, or the term itself was not as pervasive.

Two other areas of difference between Brandeis and HUC, preparation to integrate Jewish and General Studies and preparation to teach *parashat bashavuah*, reflect different approaches which the two institutions took in their relationships with partner day schools. While highly valued by some day school leaders and scholars, the strategy of integrating Jewish and general studies was not common in the schools where DeLeT students did their internships. Similarly, although DeLeT students studied how to teach *parashat bashavuah*, many did not see this modeled in their internship. At HUC, these tensions led to a strengthening of these

aspects of the program, perhaps in order to compensate for the uneven exposure that students experienced in their placements. Similarly, at Brandeis, these tensions led the first program director to focus explicitly on preparing teachers to teach *parashat hashavuah*.¹⁰ Subsequent directors, however, saw this as one area where the program could be responsive to the field. This led to a decreased focus on *parashat hashavuah* and an increased emphasis on the learning and teaching of Torah as part of DeLeT students' own Jewish literacy. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages. Misalignments between the university and the field are inevitable and teacher educators need to deal with them thoughtfully. Sometimes accommodation is appropriate; other times a program needs to adopt a normative stance, not only preparing teachers for schools as they are but for schools as they could be.

Finally, analyzing the survey data highlighted for us the strengths and limitations of specific survey items used in this study. While the survey includes validated measures used in program studies in general education, we did not have a similar bank of questions in Jewish teacher education to draw on. Consequently we had to develop questions, knowing they might turn out to be less valuable than we initially thought. For instance, we developed items about how prepared students felt to teach language arts and *parashat hashavuah*, both text-based subjects. We decided to ask about *parashat hashavuah* because at the time we were compiling the survey, faculty at Brandeis and HUC agreed that this was an important area for the programs. Since this is no longer the case, tracking this item may be of greater interest to HUC than to Brandeis. In addition, other core program ideas such as “teaching for understanding” or “teachers as textpeople” are unrepresented in the survey. Just as clarity around program values is critical to the program's quality, so too aligning data collection with program values can improve the usefulness of the findings.

This report is mainly addressed to faculty, mentors and alumni at Brandeis and HUC and to the program's major funder, the Jim Joseph Foundation, which also supports the Longitudinal Survey. The findings affirm that the DeLeT program graduates beginning teachers who feel well prepared for their work as day school teachers. The findings also reveal that the DeLeT program embodies key features associated with effective teacher education, including a clear vision of good teaching, an intensive and extensive clinical component, strong alignment between coursework and field experiences, and a focus on subject matter preparation. These commitments and practices make the DeLeT model unique among programs that prepare teachers for Jewish day schools.

The findings of this report are underscored by a new study from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) which examined the relationship between teacher preparation and teacher retention (Ingersoll, Merrill and May, 2014). Researchers concluded that “those (teachers) with more training in pedagogy were far less likely to leave teaching after their first year on the job” (p. 29).

DeLeT offers strong pedagogical training, including a set of general and content-specific methods courses as well as a year-long mentored internship. This may well account for the

¹⁰ This study began in 2007, after the tenure of this DeLeT director. Thus we see no record of this policy in the findings, but do see the change of course in the area implemented by the three following directors.

strong sense of preparedness which graduates across the board feel. It may also bode well for their long-term commitment and retention as day school teachers.

The Longitudinal Study of Day School Teachers tracks DeLeT graduates over time, examining the relationship between preparation, working conditions and patterns of retention. In a new study we will consider the relationship between preparation and retention for DeLeT graduates as well as for graduates from other day school teacher preparation programs.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the vision of program founders and funders to support evaluation and research of the ongoing life of the DeLeT program and its teachers. By studying the program and tracking its graduates over time, the Longitudinal Survey of DeLeT Alumni provides systematic and reliable information about the students, the program and its impact, insuring accountability to those who conduct the program and those who support it.¹¹

¹¹ For a complete list of publications and reports produced by the Longitudinal Survey, see Appendix 2.

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Appendix A: Detailed program comparisons

Table 1: Program characteristics by institution affiliation

General program characteristics ordered by mean (Mean) Thinking about the program overall, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Brandeis Mean	HUC Mean	Chi-square (P value)
I have gotten to know well the other students in Delet (4.67)	4.73	4.60	3.84 (.279)
Delet articulates a clear vision of teaching and learning (4.43)	4.28	4.58	7.24 (.203)
I feel part of a larger group of people who all share a common vision of day school education (4.27)	4.13	4.42	6.35 (.174)
The courses in Delet reflect a similar view of teaching (4.09)	4.10	4.08	3.30 (.654)
The criteria by which I am evaluated as an intern are consistent with what I am taught in my courses (3.95)	3.90	4.00	4.48 (.345)
What I learn in my courses reflects what I observe in my internship (3.80)	3.67	3.94	6.31 (.277)
Delet emphasizes strong subject matter preparation (3.63)	3.80	3.44	5.79 (.327)

Table 2: Faculty characteristics by institution affiliation

Faculty characteristics ordered by mean (Mean) On the whole, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about DeLeT's faculty?	Brandeis Mean	HUC Mean	Chi-square (P value)
Are committed to preparing Jewish day school teachers (4.67)*	4.54	4.81	6.50 (.039)*
Are knowledgeable about teaching and content areas (4.57)	4.40	4.76	9.03 (.060)
Enable me to evaluate and reflect on my practice to improve instruction (4.54)*	4.37	4.73	12.46 (.006)*
Demonstrate caring about whether or not I am learning (4.43)	4.41	4.46	6.18 (.186)
Often are available to meet outside of class (4.35)	4.31	4.40	3.52 (.621)
Understand the realities of contemporary day schools and their children (4.32)*	4.08	4.58	13.30 (.004)*
Are excellent teachers (4.27)	4.17	4.38	10.01 (.188)
Know who I am (4.27)	4.22	4.31	2.33 (.802)
Give assignments that connect my internship with coursework (4.23)	4.23	4.23	5.19 (.158)
Demonstrate how to integrate general and Jewish	3.92	4.26	9.96 (.076)

studies (4.09)			
Teach in ways that are consistent with the practices they advocate (4.02)	4.00	4.04	3.65 (.724)

Table 3: Sense of preparedness by institution affiliation

Sense of preparedness ordered by mean (Mean) To what extent did DeLeT prepare you to...	Brandei s Mean	HUC Mean	Chi- square (P value)
...design appropriate and challenging lessons? (4.36)	4.31	4.43	2.02 (.732)
...become an effective teacher? (4.14)	4.04	4.25	7.70 (.174)
...implement effective classroom management? (4.01)	3.92	4.12	8.23 (.083)
...integrate Jewish values into the classroom? (4.01)	3.84	4.21	6.71 (.243)
...become a teacher leader? (3.96)	3.83	4.10	6.43 (.267)
...integrate general and Jewish studies? (3.86)*	3.60	4.14	13.30(.021) *
...teach language arts? (3.84)	3.62	4.07	9.14 (.104)
...teach parashat hashavuah? (3.39)*	3.01	3.80	24.65(.000) *

Appendix B: DeLeT Longitudinal Survey research work

Papers in Peer-Reviewed Journals

Tamir, E. & Lesik, S. (2013). A partial least squares analysis of the factors contributing to a long-term commitment to teaching in Jewish Day Schools. *Journal of Jewish Education* 79 (2), 131-156.

Tamir, E. (2011). The impact of the economic recession on teachers and teaching in Jewish day schools. *Private School Monitor* 32(2), 1-11.

Tamir, E. & Magidin de-Kramer, R. (2011). Teacher retention and career commitments among DeLeT graduates: The intersection of teachers' background, preparation to teaching, and school context. *Journal of Jewish Education* 77(2), 76-97.

Papers in Practitioner Non-Refereed Journals

Tamir, E. (2013). School Quality depends on teacher quality. *HaYidion*, 24-25, 47.

Birkeland, S., & Tamir, E. (2013). What does it mean for a school administrator to be supportive? *Jewish Educational Leadership* 12(1), 20-22.

Tamir, E. (2012). How to fix our approach to evaluation research in Jewish education -- and why we need to. *eJewish Philanthropy*.

Reports

Tamir, E., Feiman-Nemser, S., Silvera-Sasson, R. & Cytryn, J. (2010). *The DeLeT Alumni Survey: A Comprehensive Report on the Journey of Beginning Jewish Day School Teachers*. Waltham, MA: Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education.

Presentations

Tamir, E. & Pearlmutter, N. (2014). *DeLeT Graduates' Perceptions of the Program and Their Preparedness for Teaching*. Network for Research in Jewish Education, Los Angeles, California.

Tamir, E. & Lesik, S. (2013). A partial least squares analysis of the factors contributing to a long-term commitment to teaching in Jewish Day Schools. Network for Research in Jewish Education, New York City, New York.

Tamir, E. (2012, June). *Working Conditions of DeLeT and Pardes Teachers: Challenges and Opportunities*. Network for Research in Jewish Education, Newton, Massachusetts.

Birkeland, S., Feiman-Nemser, S., and Tamir, E. (2011, November). *Tending the Garden: Creating Conditions to Nurture Excellent Teaching*. A community event and a workshop with educational leaders from the Boston area. Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education, Brandeis University.

Tamir, E. (2011, June). *Preparing and retaining high-quality teachers: Implications for the future of Jewish day schools in North America*. A Spotlight Session accepted for the *Network for Research in Jewish Education*, Toronto, Canada. Session video

Tamir, E. and Magidin de-Kramer, R. (2010, June). *Teacher retention and career commitments among DeLeT graduates: The intersection of teachers, background, preparation to teaching, and school context*. Network for Research in Jewish Education, New York City.

Tamir, E. (2009, June). *DeLeT Alumni Survey: Preliminary Findings*. Network for Research in Jewish Education, Cleveland.