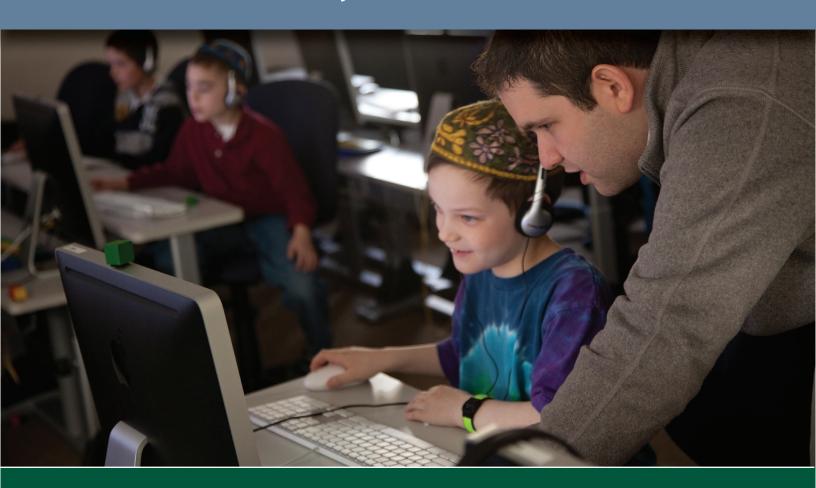# Online Learning State of the Field Survey

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The AVI CHAI Foundation, in October 2010, began work on a new initiative: online/blended learning. To that end, the Foundation established a two-fold goal: 1) to improve the quality of education by increasing individualized instruction and enabling students to develop skills and ways of thinking needed in the 21st century; and 2) to bring down the cost of education. Furthermore, AVI CHAI's work to promote the adoption of online learning by day schools is three-pronged: a) supporting the adoption of online courses at established Jewish day schools; b) supporting entrepreneurs who are willing to experiment with the model of a day school in service of both educational and cost-saving goals via the incorporation of online learning (and other 21st century learning ideals); and c) to stimulate the development of Judaic studies offerings online at both the middle and high school levels.

In order to gain a better understanding of the status of the field in regard to online learning, the Foundation launched an online survey in the fall of 2011 to gather state of the field information about the depth and breadth of online course offerings throughout Jewish day schools in North America. The survey was distributed to 529 Jewish day schools and a 48% response rate was achieved. A comparative analysis of the respondent schools to all schools in the database reveal that respondents' school characteristics are highly representative of the school population as a whole. The following summary findings emerged providing key insights into the current state of the field in online learning.

Finding 1: Online course adoption is slow; and has occurred recently; impacting few students across Jewish schools. However, Internet use to access resources is prevalent across all schools.

While the clear majority of these schools use the Internet to access Judaic resources, to provide faculty professional development (83%), or for networking purposes (60%), less than one-quarter (23.4%) offer online courses to their students. Even among the few schools that do offer online courses, relatively few of their enrolled students are **actually taking** these courses. Almost two-thirds (63.4%) report that less than 10% of their students are enrolled in the online courses. The **largest portion** (34.5%) of those who do offer online courses say that only a handful of their students (defined as less than 5%) are enrolled in the online courses.

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Put in the perspective of the entire respondent population (241 schools), only 2% of the schools report that "most" of their students are enrolled in their online courses. Most of those who are offering online courses are "new adopters;" more than half (57%) just started offering the online courses this year or last. Only 16 schools (6% of all respondents) have been offering online courses for 5 or more years. Finding online course resources that fit the school's values and mission provided the most challenging obstacle to adopting the online courses.

Finding 2: Steady growth is projected in the number of schools offering online courses in the near future, with as many as 15% of these schools adopting each year for the next few years.

If these projections continue, 60% of these schools could be offering online courses in the near future. Still, 25% of these schools have no interest or plan to offer online learning – founded primarily in their belief that online learning is not as effective as face-to-face learning or is not appropriate for curricula in the primary grades.

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Yet for those who do plan to adopt online courses, resources needed to get their offerings "up and running" fall into three consistent categories: More funding (67%), more technical expertise on their staff (50%), and finding content providers (50%) top the list as the most critical issues; significantly ahead of all other needs. Schools not considering online courses now or in the near future stem from three primary issues: a) concern that online learning is not as effective as face-to-face; b) the age of their students are too young to effectively benefit from online courses (primary grades); and c) the perceived lack of funds or technology infrastructure.

Finding 3: Motivations to offer online courses stem from meeting individual student learning needs.

Meeting individual student learning needs appears to be the primary motivator to offer online courses (81% of those offering online courses). Expanding course offerings beyond faculty expertise followed closely.

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Respondents cite individualization, whether for remediation or challenge, and the opportunity to meet all students' needs as the overwhelming value of their current online offerings.

Finding 4: Some difference noted in online course offering by school size.

Larger schools appear to be more likely to be offering online courses; schools with 750 or more students were almost twice as likely to offer online courses than the whole.

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