

Value and Impact of Abundance Farm

A Survey of Members of the Jewish Schools and Synagogue

Executive Summary of Lander Grinspoon Academy Data

Overview: In March of 2019, a survey was launched to explore the value of Abundance Farm to the current membership of the Jewish institutions it serves and to determine if the farm has had any influence on members' decisions to enroll or join these institutions. This survey particularly targeted families enrolled at the Lander Grinspoon Academy (LGA), ALMA, and Gan Keshet, and the members of Congregation B'nai Israel (CBI). There was also a smaller subset of the survey aimed at people who are involved with the farm but not formally affiliated with any of these partner organizations. 123 people responded and 36 of them identified as LGA families.

Key overall findings:

All responding LGA families found the farm and other outdoor education components to be a valuable part of their child's education at LGA, with the large majority (67%) describing it as "Extremely valuable" or "Very valuable."

More than half of these families said that the farm impacted their original decision to enroll.

Many of the respondents enrolled their children before 2013, before the farm was really established. When factoring for only families who enrolled in 2014 and onwards, the farm's reported educational value, and the farm's impact on enrollment are notably higher.

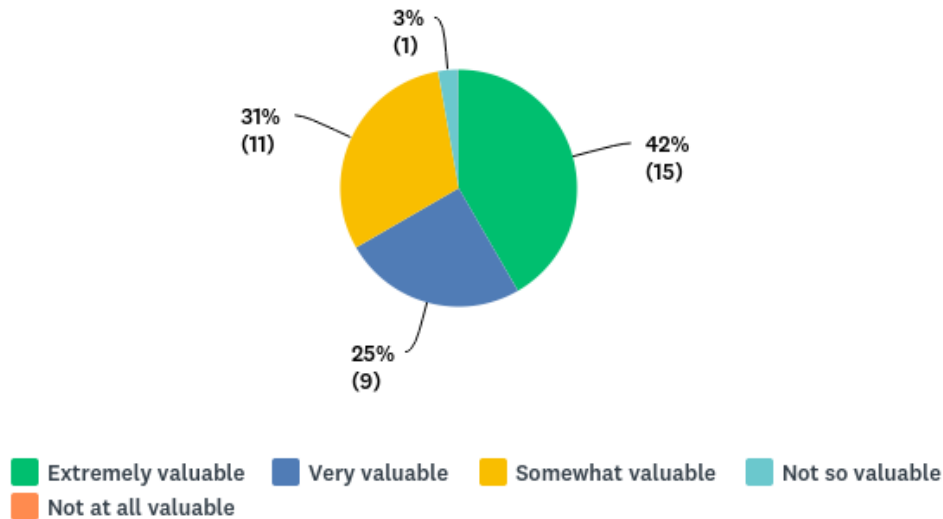
Similarly, comments from families who enrolled in 2014 and onwards were almost entirely enthusiastic about the farm, while some families who enrolled in 2013 or earlier had concerns.

Methodology: Survey questions were designed collaboratively by the senior staff of the farm, the three schools and the synagogue. The survey was launched in early March and remained open for 3 weeks. A lottery incentive was offered to respondents. 92% of people completed the entire survey and it took people an average of 4.75 minutes.



VALUE OF THE FARM AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION FOR LGA STUDENTS

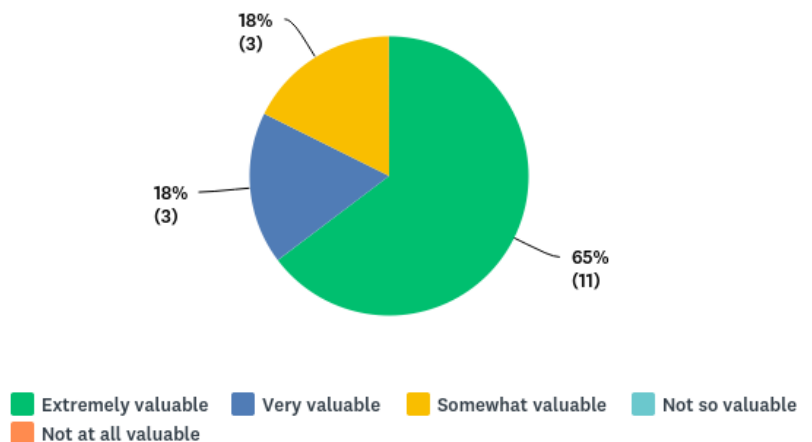
Question: In your opinion, how valuable is the Farm and outdoor education currently for your child(ren) enrolled at LGA?



All LGA: 36 people total

Key findings on educational value

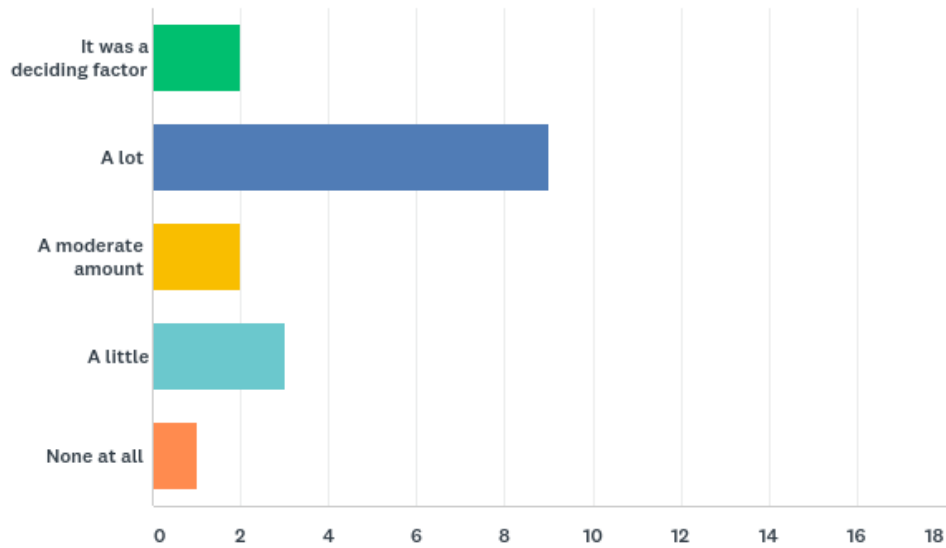
- Overall, there was a very positive response to the role of the farm and outdoor education for students at LGA. Everyone responding found the farm valuable for their child's education.
- 67% described it as "Very valuable" or "Extremely valuable"
- No one responded that the farm was "Not at all valuable" and only one person reported that it was "Not so valuable."
- When factoring only for families that enrolled 2014 and onwards, a whopping 83% describe the farm as "Very valuable or "Extremely value" to their child's education at LGA.



Enrolled 2014 and onwards: 17 people total

IMPACT OF THE FARM AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION ON LGA ENROLLMENT

Question: To what extent did the Farm and outdoor education influence your decision to enroll your child(ren) at LGA?



Enrolled 2014 and onwards: 17 people total

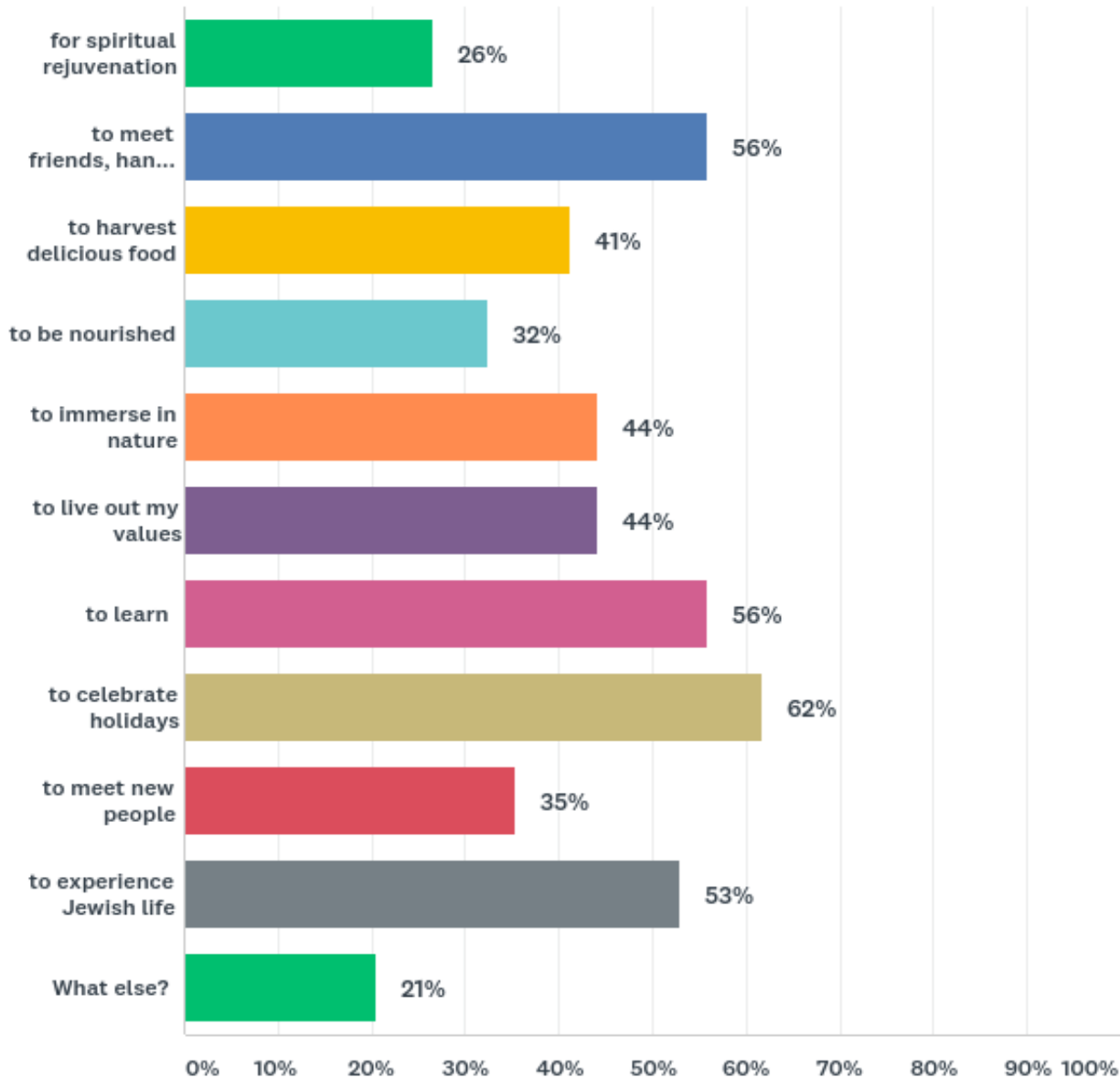
Key findings on enrollment impact

- The existence of the farm was a strong influencer on enrollment at LGA for families who enrolled in 2014 and onwards. LGA began its first forays into outdoor education in the winter of 2013, with the help of a parent volunteer. The first growing season on the Farm was spring of 2014. There would be no way for the farm to influence enrollment before the fall of 2014.
- 65% of families reported a strong correlation between their decision to enroll and the Farm, describing the Farm as either a “Deciding factor” or as having “A lot” of influence on their decision. The majority of families in this category enrolled in 2016, ‘17, and ‘18. This further supports the understanding that, as the farm has become more established, and the farm curriculum has become more integrated at LGA, it has had a greater influence on people’s decision to enroll at LGA.

GREATEST VALUES FOR LGA FAMILIES

Question: What is the Farm's greatest value to you and your family? (Choose all that apply)

"As a place....."



Key findings on value to families

The value of the farm goes far beyond the LGA child's education. This question asked about the family's experience and the value to the family as a whole. The chart above shows the responses of only LGA enrolled families. LGA families value the Farm for many reasons, but especially as place to be in community, learn, celebrate holidays, and experience Jewish life.

Additional values listed by LGA families

These are the other values to LGA families which they offered when asked “What else” (is of value to you)?

- The connection with the survival center
- As a place to provide a diverse setting for Jewish life even if it does not work for me and my family.
- As a place to physically give back to our community and our planet
- I compost all our food waste there. It has truly been life-altering for us.
- Hands-on activities related to Judaism
- As a place to remind us to give to others

Key findings from open-ended comments

The appendix of comments from LGA families mostly speaks for itself and bears reading.

- Overall, the comments were very positive and expressed great enthusiasm for the role of the Farm and outdoor education at LGA. Making the existing curriculum more experiential and physical was one of the primary positive outcomes that parents mentioned.
- Several people expressed a desire for their child to spend more time on the farm.
- One or two people expressed that they like and support the farm, but that they want to make sure it does not take over as the major teaching modality, as it is not their child’s best way of learning.
- Families who enrolled in 2013 or earlier had more concerns about the farm than those who enrolled 2014 and onwards.
- Several people who enrolled their child in 2013 or earlier had concerns about the financial impact of the farm, and its educational relevance.

“Time on the farm with Nili and Rose was a major highlight of our daughter's kindergarten experience. I feel strongly that Abundance Farm is one of the top and most unique attractions that LGA has to offer. I would love to see more time on the farm in older grades, and believe there is lots of potential for more integration of educational farm programming into the academic curriculum in science, social studies, Judaics, as well as farm programming for it's been sake.”

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A Survey of Members of the Jewish Schools and Synagogue

Executive Summary for the CBI Board

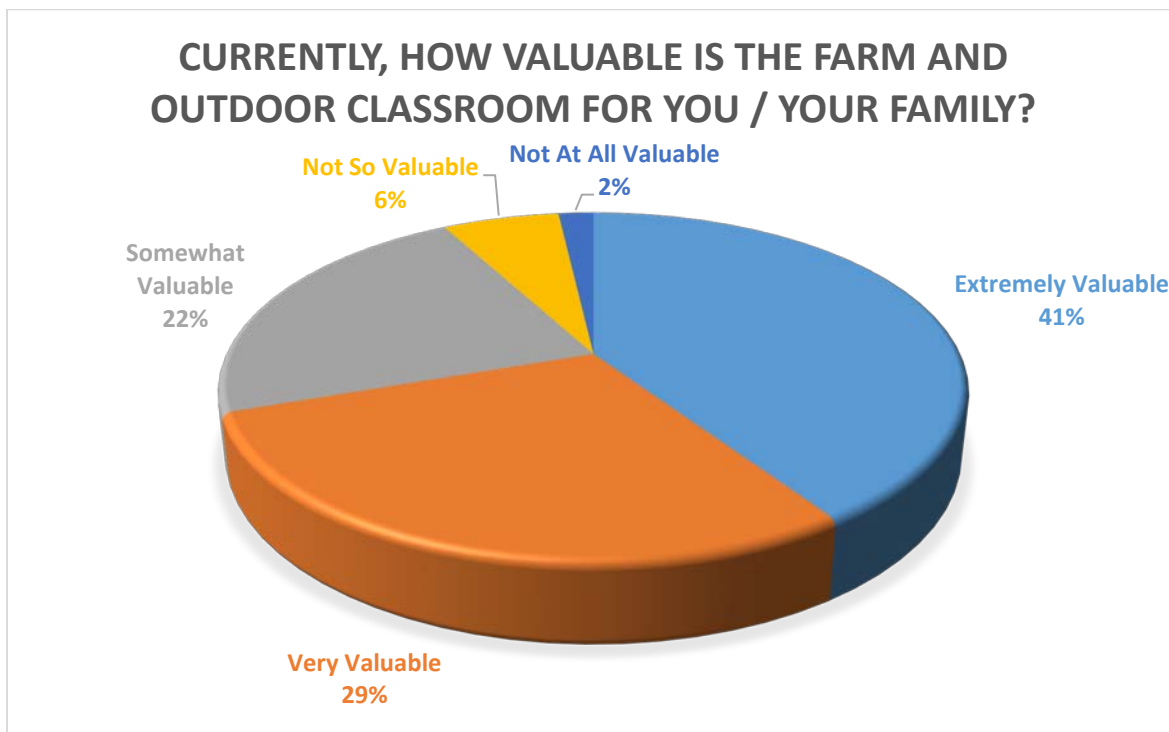
Overview: In March of 2019, a survey was launched to explore the value of Abundance Farm to the current membership of the Jewish institutions it serves and to determine if the farm has had any influence on members' decisions to enroll or join these institutions. This survey particularly targeted families enrolled at the Lander Grinspoon Academy (LGA), ALMA, and Gan Keshet (GK), and the members of Congregation B'nai Israel (CBI). There was also a smaller subset of the survey aimed at people who are involved with the farm but not formally affiliated with any of these partner organizations. 123 people responded. 24 identified as GK families, 70 identified as CBI members, 36 identified as LGA families, and 23 identified as ALMA families. 12 identified as no formal affiliation.

Methodology: Survey questions were designed collaboratively by the senior staff of the farm, the three schools and the synagogue. The survey was launched in early March and remained open for 3 weeks. A lottery incentive was offered to respondents. Respondents who had multiple affiliations were asked them same questions multiple times, in regard to each of their affiliations. 92% of people completed the entire survey and it took people an average of 4.75 minutes.



KEY FINDINGS

In aggregate, the people of this campus find the farm of great value. The chart below shows all the responses to this question. (If someone had multiple affiliations, they would give multiple responses to this question.)



The farm and its outdoor components had a dramatic influence on GK enrollment, a definitive and important influence on LGA enrollment and CBI membership, and the least influence on ALMA enrollment. Even when there was not an influence on affiliation, there was still a strong sentiment that the farm was valuable to people in each sub-group. (Details on the next page.)

The farm connects those who have chosen not to formally affiliate. A small subset of people (12) who were not formally affiliated, via enrollment or membership, to anything on our campus, also responded. The majority of their comments showed that they feel the farm helps them create a relationship with our campus organizations.

People enjoy a variety of activities on the farm. (Chart on the last page).

Almost all the critiques of the farm came from concerns that it would distract from core curriculum or mission. These comments tended to come from people who joined or enrolled before 2014. There was a particular concern that the farm not become the only offering for teens and pre-teens on this campus.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FARM FOR EACH SUB-GROUP

The farm and outdoor classrooms had the most dramatic impact on Gan Keshet. 96% of respondents who enrolled in 2014 and onwards found it “extremely” or “very” valuable. All of these families said it influenced their decision to enroll, with 69% citing it as a major or deciding factor.

“We really value the opportunity for our child to internalize the idea that good comes from the Earth, as well as to wrap his head around nature's cycles, at such an early and influential age.”

CBI Membership got a significant membership boost from the farm in the last four years. 36% of respondents who became CBI members in 2014 or onwards said it was a major or deciding factor in joining the synagogue. That's 18 people in the past 4 years. An additional 8 people (16%), said it had a moderate amount of influence on their decision to join. And 61% of these people found the farm “extremely” or “very” valuable.

“I feel very proud that my synagogue has a farm and about everything the farm does. It makes me feel like my values are represented in so many ways- social justice, connection to the earth, non-traditional community building. Having a beautiful outdoor space to pray and gather Jewishly is very important to me.”

The farm and outdoor curriculum is very valuable to LGA families, and influenced enrollment more heavily over the years. 100% of respondents who enrolled in 2014 and onwards found it “extremely” or “very” valuable. 65% of families reported a strong correlation between their decision to enroll and the Farm, describing the Farm as either a “Deciding factor” or as having “A lot” of influence on their decision. The majority of families in this category enrolled in 2016, ‘17, and ‘18. This further supports the understanding that, as the farm has become more established, and the farm curriculum has become more integrated at LGA, it has had a greater influence on people’s decision to enroll at LGA.

“The farm is a wonderful tool to integrate into the rest of school learning--for example, math, Judaic studies, history, reading and writing are all integrated into a single farm project that is memorable and hands-on.”

ALMA families find the farm and outdoor curriculum to be a valuable asset, but are not strongly influenced by it to enroll. After adjusting the data for respondents who enrolled in 2014 and onwards, 84% found it “extremely” or “very” valuable. While only 6% reported that the farm was a major deciding factor in their decision to enroll, 67% did say that it had a small or moderate influence in their decision.

“Learning about healing the world and food justice as a child is almost impossible in the abstract. The Farm gives the program the opportunity to live these values not just discuss them.”

WAYS THAT PEOPLE ARE ENJOYING THE FARM

What is the Farm's greatest value to you (and your family)?

check as many as you want

