



INVESTING IN EDUCATORS: RUSSIA'S FIRST PJ LIBRARY CONFERENCE

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FOR MANY JEWISH FAMILIES IN RUSSIA, PJ Library is the only regular Jewish experience they have for their children. Though books are delivered directly to homes throughout Russia, incorporating PJ Library into education and community programming has been instrumental to the program's success. From classroom learning to workshops and activities, hundreds of Jewish teachers and educators across Russia are using PJ Library books to engage children. Whether "hundreds" seems big or small to you, let me explain what this means for us here in Russia.

To invest in the educators who bring PJ Library to life across Russia, we brought 111 teachers from 46 cities together for two days of learning and networking at the first all-Russia PJ Library conference. Participants shared best practices and heard from speakers on reaching new families and using PJ Library books with existing curriculum.



Just imagine, the city of Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East is an eight-hour flight from Moscow. Yet the local Chabad community started regular activities for 30 kids at the Simha kindergarten based exclusively on PJ Library. In the Urals, in the city of Chelyabinsk, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and a local donor support PJ Library classes in the local Jewish community center. The same is true for Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan; Voronezh; Bryansk of Central Russia; and so many other Jewish communities where teachers greatly appreciate our books as new and effective tools for Jewish education.

The experience would not have been complete without a visit from founder Harold Grinspoon and Harold Grinspoon Foundation President Winnie Sandler Grinspoon, as well as donors and staff who help make PJ Library possible. Educators were truly excited to meet the Foundation leadership and felt so proud to be part of a global program that unites Jews of Russia with the rest of the Jewish world.



It is hard to overestimate the importance of such visits. Despite the stereotypes and thorny geopolitics, Americans, Russians, and Ukrainians* (and, technically, one Moldovan) joined together to learn and celebrate their love and appreciation of Jewish values and culture. *We miss you already. Please come again soon!*



*The PJ Library Conference in Russia also welcomed a small delegation of Jewish educators from Ukraine, led by the new Director of PJ Library in Ukraine, Evgeniya Ponomarenko, who came to St. Petersburg to announce the start of operations. Ukraine is the 21st country to join PJ Library.
