

The ECE Adaptation Continuum



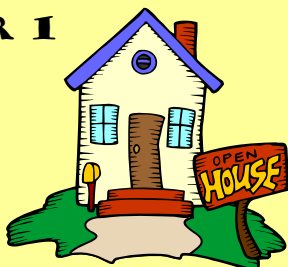
ברוכים הבאים – *B'ruchim haba'im* – Welcome!

Before attending your congregation's next RE-IMAGINE Task Force meeting, please read through the following pages and briefly note your responses to the questions at the end.

METAPHOR 1

Imagine.

*Buying a new house.
Building a new home.*



Over many years of living in the same place, you have become attached to it: The way the light dances across the dining room in the morning while you are eating breakfast; the memories of great evenings spent on the patio with friends; the trees outside the living room window, swaying with even the slightest breeze.

OR

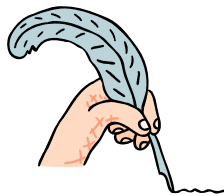
Over many years of living in the same place, you have learned to overlook the things that you don't like about it: The way the light spills across the dining room in the morning because you have no window shades; the tiny kitchen that has no room for a breakfast table; all those bug-bitten nights on the patio because the house was so hot and the air-conditioning never worked; the trees that you feared might fall on the house because you could never afford to prune them!

ECE COMMENTARY 1

Some of us might compare the religious school to a home that we love, while others of us might compare it to a home we would change in a second if we could. Often, it is not really that simple. We are attached to some parts of the school and dislike other parts. Sometimes, our opinions are based on particular expertise, but more frequently, they are based on our own experiences (and those of our friends and family). As we engage in a process of re-imagining the religious school, we will try to draw on both sources of knowledge, sort out—or at least identify—our biases and preconceptions, and integrate all of them in a way that will allow us to make thoughtful and effective change.

Here is a story from the corporate world: A management consultant meeting with a board of directors asks each person to change something about themselves on the spot. One person removes a pen from the table.

Another takes off her coat. One puts his notebook into his briefcase. After everyone finishes, the consultant observes that every one of the directors took something away. The consultant had only asked that they *change* something. Instinctively, the people around that boardroom table understood, as many of us do, that change involves loss, both “psychological” and “actual.” But change also includes transformation or expansion, opportunities and growth. The important questions for us at this time are not just what to change, but when to change, how to change, and, perhaps most importantly, why to change. Throughout the RE-IMAGINE process we will have the opportunity to address these questions. But first, we need to examine our own experiences and start unpacking the personal baggage we ALL bring to the table.



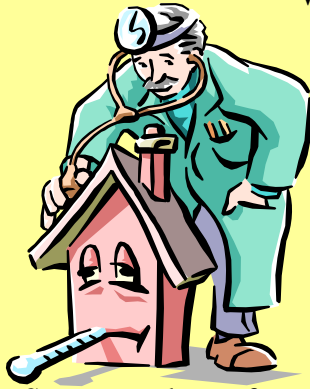
MY COMMENTARY 1

(please use separate response form at the end)

When in my life did I know I needed to change or adapt something?

- **How did I know that it was time to make a change?**

METAPHOR 2



Whether you feel affection for your house or not, you know that it no longer fully serves your needs and the needs of your family. You have thought about it and talked about it and you know that the time has come to move on. The time is right to make a change.

Some members of your family feel sad about leaving behind this house that is so full of memories, while others are caught up in the exhilaration of a new beginning. So you sit down and begin to talk about your needs and your desires. It is clear to everyone that you want to stay in the same neighborhood. All your friends live here. You know it very well and feel attached to it because you have been here for a while. And you really like it!

That said, you don't know whether you want to buy a house that is already on the market or build one from the ground up. Before you need to decide, it just so happens that you have planned a family trip to visit friends around the country (what incredible timing!). Along the way, you start looking at every house that you see. You look at big houses and small ones, new ones and old ones, and even a few weird ones! You also take the time to talk with your friends about their houses.

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ECE COMMENTARY 2

As you begin your journey to re-imagine your religious school, one of your most important tasks is investigating your own congregation as well as other communities.

You begin by looking inward, into your own congregation and into your own past experience to assess what you have, what you want, why you want it and what you will need to get it. At the same time, you need to look outward, to see how other congregations have re-imagined their schools. What great ideas have they discovered? How have they brought those ideas to life? What makes it possible for their programs to be successful, or what makes it difficult for them to flourish? We need to find out what's working, what's not working, what's missing, and why. The *Looking Inward* and *Looking Outward* stages of The RE-IMAGINE Project have the potential to spark your enthusiasm, raise new ideas, help you think differently, help you be successful in designing the model that is right for your congregation.

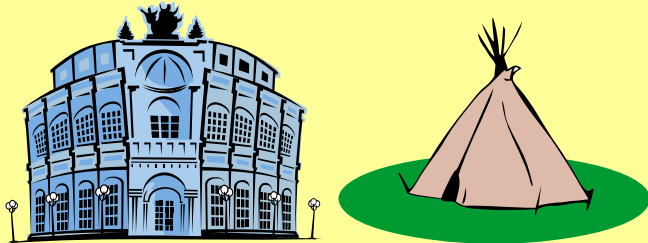
In the course of the ECE's explorations, we realized that just as there are different models of homes, so too there are different models of the religious school.

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METAPHOR 2 CONTINUED

When you return home, you begin to share with each other what everyone liked and didn't like. Although you saw some intriguing options, you know that your family has specific needs and concerns and you know that this project entails more than just likes and dislikes. It has to function for your family. So, you also begin to share what each of you considers essential and not essential, more important and less important for the new home.

In the course of your conversations, you realize that there seem to be several different housing styles or models that are successfully repeated all across the country, though with variations. They might include ranch houses, duplexes, condominiums, apartments and multi-story homes. You start to wonder which model might best suit you and your family.

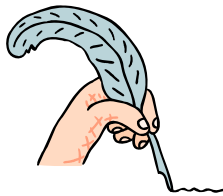


A model is a general design, a pattern or (in jargon-speak) a “paradigm.”

In the metaphor, the models might be a ranch house or a condominium; they are not any *particular* ranch house or condo.

In terms of the religious school, this translates to the concept that models are not programs. Just as there may be many variations of a ranch house, there may also be many different religious school programs that fit within the same model. That is why, in the Online Learning Experience (which you will be studying later on), the primary focus is on models and their underlying principles. By focusing on these “conceptual frameworks”, these models encourage the creation of programs that are designed and best-suited for a specific setting – your congregation.

(Don't worry, you will still have the opportunity to learn about specific programs within each of the models!)



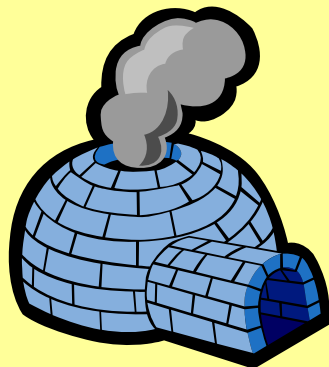
MY COMMENTARY 2

(please use separate response form at the end)

When in my life did I know I needed to change or adapt something?

- **How did I know what to change to?**

METAPHOR 3



After more family discussion, you come to the conclusion that there are a couple of models that might work for you, but you are not able to find a perfect fit. Nothing exactly meets your needs. Knowing that you can't just buy something and happily move in, you consider the options. You can either buy a house that comes close to your vision and renovate it, or you can buy an empty lot and build your own house, mixing and matching from others that you have seen.

Before you can do either one, though, you know that you need to gather 'round the dining room table again and talk some more. Maybe you need to return to the conversation about your family's needs. Maybe you need to call some of your friends around the country to ask them some more questions about their houses and their renovation projects; *What worked, what didn't, and why? What would they have done differently and why?* Maybe there are also some disagreements in the family that you need to sort out. Whatever your next step is, you know that what you have done together thus far has brought you significantly closer to your dreams and you have confidence that, in the end, your new home will be better for all of you.

ECE COMMENTARY 3

The ECE starts from the assumption that, like every family, each congregation is different and has different needs. Each congregation should have educational programs that address its unique circumstances. Just as the family in the metaphor could not simply move into another house “as is,” it is highly unlikely that another congregation’s program, “as is,” will meet the needs of your congregation. Further, just as building a multi-story home with a basement is a risky prospect in a flood plain, copying religious school programs from one congregation to another always presents a risk. A good fit can make all the difference.

Exploration and experience in the field have shown that “settings” (i.e., congregations, organizations, schools,) differ in important ways, including demographics, values, history (especially the history of efforts to make significant change), resources (financial and human), and the challenges and opportunities that the community faces. To successfully adapt a model to fit your particular congregation requires that you pay close attention to the dynamics and realities of your setting.

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Adaptation can take various forms. These forms range from:

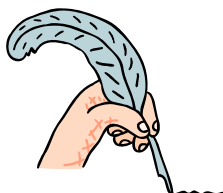
- 1) Making minor modifications, adjustments or variations on a model, to
- 2) Mixing and matching, i.e., combining design elements from several models, to
- 3) Designing a new model based on inspiration you've received from examining others.

ECE calls this range the Adaptation Continuum. It could be illustrated like this:



Whatever form adaptation takes, it is a process. Adaptation involves learning not only what other congregations *do*, it involves learning about how they *think*. It is rare that what is *done* in one place can be *done* somewhere else in exactly the same way. However, the *ideas* that inform the choices made in one setting can be translated and carried out in a different way in another community. These types of ideas form the basis for each of the five models you will explore in the Online Learning Experience. Instead of traveling all over the country, the Online Learning Experience will take you to “visit” these five models, to see what congregations living these models *do* and to hear how their members and professionals *think* about what they do.

Enjoy your journey as you learn about other congregations’ religious schools. Remember that you and your “family”—your Task Force—eventually will need to adapt what you see in a way that works for your congregation. And, in the end, you, too, will know that what you have created will make your religious school and—by extension—the life of your congregation, more fulfilling, and therefore, more meaningful.

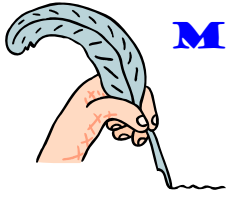


MY COMMENTARY 3

(please use separate response form at the end)

When in my life did I know I needed to change or adapt something?

- **Where was the change that I made on the adaptation continuum?**
- **What were the challenges I faced and what was made easier because of where I chose to be on the adaptation continuum?**
- **In what ways was I successful in making my change?**



MY COMMENTARY RESPONSE FORM

Please note your answers to all of the questions here and bring your responses to the next Task Force meeting where you will have a chance to share your thoughts with other Task Force members.

The animating question:

When in my life did I know I needed to change or adapt something?

MY COMMENTARY 1:

- How did I know that it was time to make a change?

MY COMMENTARY 2:

- How did I know what to change to?

MY COMMENTARY 3:

- Where was the change that I made on the adaptation continuum?
- What were the challenges I faced and what was made easier because of where I chose to be on the adaptation continuum?
- In what ways was I successful in making my change?