

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

*Professionals and laity,
Working together,
Thinking strategically,
Finding the right teachers for your school.*

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment is part of the
Strategic Focus Series from:



The Experiment in Congregational Education
A Project of The Rhea Hirsch School Of Education
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion/Los Angeles
www.eceonline.org

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment, a project of the Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE),
sponsored by UJA-Federation of New York

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Getting Started

Welcome!

Welcome to the Guidebook for ECE's *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment*! By following this guidebook, you will be able to lead your team of lay and professionals through a process that will enrich your religious school in multiple ways. Over the course of the four meetings, you can expect to reflect on the goals of your religious school and on the type of teachers that best fit with these goals; you can also expect to explore a range of approaches to teacher recruitment, and arrive at a comprehensive strategy.

How to Use This Guidebook

This Guidebook has five sections, each of which represents a stage in the teacher recruitment process: Getting Started, Meeting One, Meeting Two, Meeting Three, and Meeting Four.

Getting Started provides the team leaders with the information they will need to choose and invite others into this project, the understanding they need of how the four-meeting process is designed and an explanation of the kinds of preparation needed for each of the four meetings.

The **Plans for Meetings 1-4** provide detailed information about the rationale, content, and timing for each meeting. In each Meeting section, you will find:

- A quick Meeting Overview that lists the elements of the meeting along with the time allotted to each;
- The Goals and Outcomes for the meeting, i.e. what team members will achieve by the end of the meeting;
- A more thorough Meeting Facilitation Plan that provides instructions on how to conduct each element of the meeting; and
- Handout pages ready to be copied for your meetings.

At the end of each meeting facilitation plan is a list of next steps, i.e. what the team members or the leaders need to do to prepare for the next meeting.

The Underlying Assumptions That Guide This Process

Anytime we face a task, we proceed based on some underlying assumptions we have—of which we may not even be aware—about what is involved and how successful we might be. For example, if you find yourself with a flat tire for the first time, what you decide to do about it will be based on many factors. Choosing between changing the tire yourself and calling AAA could be dependent on your time frame, the weather, whether you have changed a tire before and how you are dressed. Underlying these factors are assumptions you have

about self-reliance, your ability to attempt new challenges, your physical strength and how dirty one gets while changing a tire.

In the same way, it is important that you understand what the ECE's underlying assumptions are about teacher recruitment so you can be aware of the thinking behind the direction in which this Guidebook points.

First of all, this approach to teacher recruitment is about more than filling an opening in your faculty. You may know you are going to need a 4th grade Hebrew teacher next year, and this process may help you find one. However, the primary purpose of this process is to help you consider your school's needs beyond just next year, and plan a long-term strategy.

Our second assumption is that teacher recruitment is not just the educator's responsibility nor is it a seasonal activity. Rather, it is the ongoing responsibility of the entire congregation. Finding and keeping good teachers is a job for everyone—including the clergy, the lay leadership, parents and existing faculty—that should be on everyone's "radar screen" all the time.

A corollary to this assumption is that teacher recruitment is not an isolated activity. Rather, it can touch on and impact many aspects of congregational life. As the congregation begins to understand its role in finding the best teachers, it will become clear that the process of recruiting the best and the brightest might impact the budget, membership policies, and other aspects of the congregation.

Thirdly, approaching any problem is a matter of defining the challenge and identifying avenues of redress, or opportunities, that could help mitigate the challenge. All congregations face challenges, of various sorts, but within every congregational community there are levers for change, or opportunities, which can be part of the solution. This idea of defining challenges and identifying opportunities can be a refreshing way to rethink old problems.

Goals and Outcomes for *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment*

The *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* process is designed so that, over the course of four carefully-planned meetings, a small team from your congregation will:

- 1) Reflect on your religious school and create a plan for recruiting teachers.
 - a) Reflect on the religious school's overarching goals for its students and identify its primary goal. This goal will focus the team's decision-making over the course of the process.
 - b) Identify the teacher qualities and capacities that are needed to achieve the school's primary overarching goal
 - c) Reflect on what motivates religious school teachers to teach and the kinds of incentives that might be effective for both recruiting and retaining teachers.

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- d) Consider a variety of recruitment strategies and evaluate them in light of the school's overarching goal, the challenges they present, and the opportunities to address these challenges that exist within their congregational community.
 - e) Design a plan for teacher recruitment, including a timeline and assignment of responsibilities.
 - f) Explore how the congregation, as a community, can play a role in teacher recruitment.
- 2) Get a taste of working in a self-guided, reflective process that is grounded in tested organizational principles and Jewish text.
 - a) Engage in ECE's five part meeting structure;
 - b) Work in partnership – lay and professionals
 - c) Drive decision-making from vision and goals
 - d) Through text study at each meeting, experience how Jewish texts can inform and enrich decisions about Jewish life today, and how studying text can create a community of learners.

Assembling the Team

The team of people who will go through this process together should include:

- The religious school educator(s)
- A key layperson, who will serve as the chair
- 1-2 additional laypeople
- A veteran and well-respected teacher
- The rabbi

The **chair and the educator** will spearhead this project and should meet together to prepare for the each of the meetings. This involves reading through the relevant guidebook section in advance, talking together about how they anticipate the meeting unfolding, preparing the agenda and addressing any issues they see arising. It is up to these two people to decide which of them will take responsibility for sending out meeting reminders, catching up those who might miss a meeting and keeping meeting notes. However, in order to reinforce that teacher recruitment is more than the educator's responsibility, we strongly urge the lay chair to lead the lion's share of each of the meetings. With this in mind, we suggest you look for a lay chair who—in addition to being involved with and dedicated to the congregational school—has experience and skill in facilitating group meetings.

The **laypeople** involved should be people who have been previously, or are currently, involved with the school and have a demonstrated interest in the success and future of the school and congregation. These may include past or present religious school committee members, room parents and/or active volunteers. In addition, it will be helpful to choose people who you know are thoughtful and can work well over time with the rest of the team.

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The **teacher** you choose should be someone who has proven to be dedicated and dependable. In addition, this needs to be someone who is known and well-respected by the rest of the faculty and who can be trusted to be discreet about sharing what transpires at the meetings.

Involving the **rabbi** on the team is important for both practical and symbolic reasons. The rabbi comes in contact all the time with people in the congregation and in the community who might be prospective teachers. In addition, the rabbi's presence sends the message that teacher recruitment is important to the congregation and can play an important role in making teacher recruitment a shared congregational responsibility (see discussion on page 69). Given the other demands of a congregation, if the rabbi isn't able to attend all the meetings, it is most important that he/she attend the first and the last (and that s/he agrees to trust the work the group will have done in the interim).

Inviting the Team

Once decisions have been made about whom to invite to be on the team, a formal letter should be sent out that asks them to be involved, briefly describes the task, delineates the time commitment and the meeting dates, and asks for a reply.

Below is a sample text for such a letter. It should be sent out under the signature of the person or persons whom you think will mean the most to those being invited (e.g. the educator, the rabbi, the chair).

Dear _____,

As you may know, our religious school has recently decided to embark on a targeted and strategic process through which we want to address our ongoing need for great teachers. I/We would like to invite you to join me/us on a small team of select people who will help us think through our needs and how we might be most successful.

The team will meet four times, using materials developed by the Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE), one of the foremost national synagogue transformation initiatives, that has helped congregations around the country rethink and improve their religious schools and educational programs. In addition to the four meetings, you will be asked to read some written materials in preparation for each meeting.

*The following dates have been chosen for our four meetings:
[Insert meeting dates here]*

I/We hope you will join us in this important work that could have a major impact on our school and our congregation. Please let us know your interest by contacting me/us by _____.

I/We look forward to hearing from you.

B'shalom,

Rabbi/Educator/Chair

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Once people have agreed to serve on the team, be sure to send them the two handouts titled: “The Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE)” and “Goals of *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment*” that they will need to read in preparation for the first meeting.

Scheduling the Meetings

To ensure that members of the team will be able to attend all of the meetings, it is important to set the dates well in advance (and include them in the invitation letter as recommended above). Each meeting is designed to last two hours. You may want to allow at least two weeks between meetings to allow time to complete assignments, but more than a month between meetings could cause the team to lose momentum and precious meeting time recalling what was done at the previous meeting. Ideally meetings should be scheduled three to four weeks apart. You may want to start with the calendars of the busiest members of the team in establishing dates. If possible a consistent day, time, and location for meetings (e.g. the second and fourth Tuesdays of the next two months, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., at the synagogue) will help team members remember the meeting times and attend consistently.

How the Four Meetings are Designed

The Five Components of Each Meeting

Connection

The beginning of each meeting starts with a question that connects people to each other and to the work of the meeting.

Core Discussion(s)

Each meeting will have one or more Core Discussions during which the team will explore and clarify its preferences, concerns, and ideas.

Text Study

Built into each of the meetings is an opportunity for the team to engage with each other by studying a Jewish text together. Text study is integral to ECE processes for a number of reasons:

- Study is a mitzvah, an integral part of the Jewish tradition.
- Study is a vehicle for individual spiritual growth and a particularly powerful vehicle for community building and reflection.
- Participating in learning, as we address our children’s learning, roots us in the experience we are exploring.
- The textual tradition keeps Jews connected to Judaism and engaged in the ongoing process of interpretation.
- For Jews in some movements, study provides a critical basis for informed choice.

If your congregation hasn’t done text study in the interactive way that is described in the meeting guides, don’t be alarmed. Many congregations are used to the rabbi, a teacher, or a

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congregant giving a *d'var Torah*, (expounding on a verse, idea or section of the Torah), but do not have experience with this kind of text study. Actually, this way is much easier and doesn't require the participants to prepare. It is very interactive, it values each person's unique perspective, and there are no "right" answers. We have tried to use either familiar and/or simple texts that help to ground in the Jewish tradition the issues being discussed at each meeting. For these reasons, even if this seems uncomfortable at first, it is important not to skip text study or eliminate it from your meetings. You will find that the substance and outcomes of your meetings actually will be richer as a result of sharing the experience of learning together.

The blessing that is said before text study is provided. Each member of the team should have a copy of it to refer to at each meeting.

Reflection

The end of each meeting closes with a question and gives everyone a chance to share what they are thinking at this point in the process.

Next Steps

This is a brief roundup of who needs to do what in preparation for the next meeting.

An Overview of Each Meeting

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment is a *guided* process which means that what is outlined for each meeting has a specific purpose and follows the previous one in a step-wise progression. We expect that your team will follow the meeting plan as provided, though the chair and educator may decide, in advance, to make minor adjustments. For example, though you have the flexibility to decide *how* to do a particular exercise as a group (as a large group, in small groups or individually) deciding *not* to do an exercise will move the process off course. Here is a brief description of each of the four meetings:

Meeting 1

In preparation for this meeting, the team will read a handout describing the ECE and the goals of *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* that will help orient them to the process. During the meeting, the team will be introduced to three overarching goals of Jewish education and will explore the different skills and talents teachers need in order to achieve those goals. The Educator's Report will present the actual goals of your school. Knowing who you are and what you want as a school and congregation is the first step in teacher recruitment.

Meeting 2

In preparation for this meeting, the team will read short profiles of prospective teachers. The meeting will be spent reflecting on the various qualities and capacities teachers bring to their work as well as their motivations for teaching. Understanding who prospective teachers are, what they bring to the table, and what they are looking for in a teaching experience is the second step in teacher recruitment.

Meeting 3

Preparation for this meeting requires reading descriptions of what other congregations and communal agencies have done to recruit teachers. Analyzing these as a team in the

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meeting—in light of your goals, your needs, your challenges and your opportunities—is the third step in teacher recruitment and the beginning of designing a teacher recruitment plan that you will implement.

Meeting 4

In preparation for this meeting, only the chair and educator have work to do to fill in the remaining pieces of your recruitment plan, which they will present to the team for review. The rest of this meeting is spent thinking about how to build an awareness of teacher recruitment into the life of your congregation and identifying those questions that have arisen over the last meetings that deserve and require more discussion.

Preparing for Each Meeting

The chair and the educator

We suggest that the chair and educator both read through the entire meeting description, including looking through all the handouts, before discussing together how they see the meeting unfolding. Then the two should meet to decide how to divide meeting leading responsibilities, whether to delegate any responsibilities (and to whom), and whether to make any modifications to the exercises. If you are unsure about the intent of something in the Meeting Facilitation Plan or on a handout or want to discuss a modification you are considering, those are appropriate times to contact your consultant.

After the first meeting, as you meet to prepare for the subsequent meetings, the chair and educator should take time to reflect on the previous meeting to consider whether the goals and outcomes were achieved, whether any group dynamics issues have arisen and need attention, or whether any unexpected developments or obstacles to the team's work have emerged. These, too, may be appropriate occasions to seek input or coaching assistance from your consultant.

Making and confirming assignments

It is the chair's and educator's responsibility to see that team members have the materials they need to read and prepare enough in advance of each meeting to be able to come prepared. You are in the best position to know whether your team members will need a gentle reminder a week before the meeting to complete the reading.

In advance of the first meeting, team members need to receive and read two handouts:

- The Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE) (found on on page 19) and
- Goals of *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* (found on on page 22)

If a team member is asked to present information at the meeting, this assignment needs to be confirmed. (For the first meeting, the Educator has a special assignment. Guidelines for preparing this assignment can be found on page 11 at the end of this section.)

Handouts

Handouts for use during each meeting are provided in ready-to-copy form and need to be copied in advance. For the first meeting this includes the following handouts:

- FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment Roadmap,
- Purpose Statements Exercise,
- Meeting One Core Discussion Chart,
- Blessing Before Study,
- V'ahavta* Text Study, and
- Prospective Teacher Profiles (3 versions).

In order to help team members keep their handouts organized, you may want to provide a small binder or two-pocket folder for them to bring to each meeting.

Keeping Notes: Building Blocks for your Plan

At several times over the four meetings, there will be ideas generated that need to be referred to at a later time. We have identified those particular times and, for each one, have provided a handout—marked “Building Blocks” in the upper left corner—on which the chair or educator should record those ideas for safe keeping. These are Building Blocks for your Teacher Recruitment Plan that you will compile by the end of Meeting Four. Our experience with many congregations shows that this level of record-keeping is different from what many congregational committees or task forces are accustomed to. As a result, it is easy for this seemingly insignificant detail to “slip through the cracks.” We strongly encourage you to be conscientious about taking these notes, keeping them in a safe place, and bringing them to each meeting. The insights and conclusions recorded on them are cumulative, and you will definitely need them later in the process (and will be at a disadvantage without them).

At the end of the four meetings you should have the following sets of Building Blocks:

From Meeting One:

- Reasons for Participating in *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment*
- Meeting One Core Discussion Chart

From Meeting Two:

- Teacher Qualities and Capacities That Match the Goal [that you will have chosen as your primary goal]
- Prospective Teacher Profiles—Pools
- Motivations, Incentives and Obstacles

From Meeting Three:

Recruitment Strategy charts for each strategy

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From Meeting Four:

Ideas for Involving Your Congregation in Teacher Recruitment

Your “parking lot”

You should also keep another set of notes, which we call the “parking lot.” During the course of your meetings, ideas or questions will come up that relate to the religious school but which are not pertinent to the discussion at hand. So that these ideas and questions aren’t lost—but also don’t distract the group from its agenda—we suggest you “park” them by writing them on a flip chart or on a board for all to see. You may want to give each participant a small stack of Post-it™ notes so that, when an off-track idea or question occurs to them, they can jot it down and stick it on the parking lot without interrupting the meeting. Keep these parking lot lists and bring them to Meeting Four when you will get a chance to revisit your parking lot to decide how you want to address the ideas and issues you have generated.

Room set-up

Room set-up and coffee set-up (if applicable) may need to be requested in advance. Typically it will be most effective for team members to sit together around one table. At times you may need a flipchart or board (i.e. chalk board or white marker board).

Contacting your Consultant

The times when your consultant can be most helpful are typically when the team chair and educator are preparing for a meeting or debriefing afterward. While preparing for a meeting, questions may arise if something in the Guidebook is unclear or if you are considering a modification to the Meeting Plan but are uncertain about its potential impact on the process. This is an appropriate time to be in touch with your consultant.

As mentioned above, after each meeting the chair and the educator should take time to reflect on the meeting to assess to what extent goals and outcomes were achieved, the team is working well together, and the process is proceeding as expected. When the process or the team seems to be heading off track, your consultant will usually be able to help you strategize an appropriate response to get things back on track. Experience shows that processes like *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* are highly robust; even if not everything goes perfectly, you still can achieve a very worthwhile outcome. But your consultant knows where there are dangerous twists and turns and when a variation is appropriate given your situation. Your consultant is there, “behind the scenes” to help you succeed (not to run the process for you).

Communicating with the Congregation

Teacher recruitment, in many congregational schools, is the sole responsibility of the school principal or education director and it happens over a few harried weeks each year. Once you develop a strategic teacher recruitment strategy, the stage will be set to make teacher recruitment an ongoing responsibility of the whole congregational community. It is never too soon to begin raising awareness within the congregation about this important initiative. Whatever changes or new activities emerge from this focused process, people will embrace them sooner and more fully if they are not taken by surprise.

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As your team works its way through this process, your additional goal should be to build support, or at least a receptive climate, for the strategies you are preparing to recommend. To accomplish this, you'll need to keep the relevant "stakeholders" well-informed about the *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* process as it moves along. Stakeholders within your school and congregation might include current teachers, students, school parents, synagogue staff, Religious School Committee, synagogue Board of Trustees or Directors, the general membership.

What you share with these stakeholders depends on where you are in the process. At the beginning it will be important for people to know what you are doing and who is involved. As you progress, you can share some highlights of some of your discussions or at least what the topics were. As you move further along you can share aspects of your Plan and the promising new strategies you plan to adopt.

You can choose among a variety of media that may be appropriate at various points in the process and for different stakeholders. Options include bulletin articles, emails or letters, reports to the Religious School Committee or the congregation's Board, bulletin board displays, postings on the congregation's website, and—once the Plan is complete—flyers, brochures, or Plan summaries. Some of these might offer opportunities for two-way communication as well. By asking a well-framed question as part of a committee report, the team may gather helpful input to its deliberations.

It's never too early to begin communicating; the most common mistake is waiting until the work is completed before letting anyone know it is even going on. Even simple efforts can yield helpful results in creating a receptive, enthusiastic audience for your Plan.

Preparing the Educator's Report for Meeting One

During Meeting One, the team will have the opportunity to discuss three different, though interrelated, goals of Jewish education:

- The development of cultural literacy,
- Jewish identity formation, and
- Jewish enculturation.

After looking at how these goals are reflected in three hypothetical schools' vision statements and in the *V'ahavta* prayer, the team will be ready to hear from you about the interplay of these three goals in your school.

Assignment

You will have about 15 minutes to present to and discuss with your team the goals of your school program. The following questions will be helpful when preparing and organizing how to present your remarks:

- 1) How would you describe the interplay of these three goals in your school? Give some examples of how your school program reflects each of these goals of Jewish education.
- 2) Which is your school's *primary* goal? What decisions about curriculum, staffing and scheduling have been made with this goal in mind? What evidence do you have from students and/or parents that they understand your primary goal?
- 3) If your school has an existing mission or vision statement, feel free to present that to the team. You can then discuss the extent to which it reflects the three goals of Jewish education provided to you and/or indicates your primary goal.
- 4) What examples can you give of the interplay between your primary goal and the other two goals? Are there times of the year, or certain grades, in which your secondary goals seem more important? How do you manage to maintain the appropriate balance?
- 5) You may find you want to consult with others in your congregation before making a definitive presentation to the team. Your rabbi, religious school committee chair, a veteran and respected teacher or an involved parent might provide valuable direction and insight.

Be aware that this is a time when the team may want to get into a discussion of what your school's overarching goals *should* be. This is an important discussion, but moving in that direction at this point will distract you from focusing on teacher recruitment. If you find your team is interested in raising these kinds of questions about your school, or discussing other

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related though off-topic issues as you go through this process, “park” their ideas in a “parking lot” as described above (actually make a note of them and keep them on file). Prior to the fourth meeting, the chair and educator will review all the items in your “parking lot” and present ideas to the team about how they might be addressed. Keep in mind that ECE has other processes, such as its 18-month RE-IMAGINE Project, that help congregations explore these kinds of broader questions.

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment—Meeting One

Meeting Overview

Welcome and Introduction to ECE, *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment*, and this meeting—10 minutes

Connection—10 minutes

Core Discussion I: Purpose Statements—40 minutes

Text Study: V'ahavta—20 minutes

Core Discussion II: Describing the Right Teacher for the Job—15 minutes

Core Discussion III: Educator's Report—15 minutes

Reflection—5 minutes

Next Steps—5 minutes

Goals and Outcomes for Meeting One

By the end of the meeting, members of the team will:

- 1) Learn about the kind of work they can expect to do together during the series of four meetings through which they will develop a plan for teacher recruitment.

Explore three overarching goals of Jewish education and will discuss your school's primary goal.

Explore how different goals of Jewish education are described in the *V'ahavta* prayer.

Begin to think about the teacher qualities and capacities required to achieve your school's primary goal.

Begin to develop a broad and systemic view of your religious school's direction and needs.

Advance Preparation

Using the guide titled "Preparing the Educator's Report for Meeting One" (found on page 11 at the end of the Getting Started section of this Guidebook), the educator will prepare a short presentation to the team explaining how the three overarching goals of Jewish education are reflected in your school and which one is primary.

Team members will have received and read through two handouts: "The Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE)" (which starts on page 199) and "Goals of *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment*" (found on page 222).

Handouts for Meeting One

Be sure to prepare copies of the following handouts for use during this meeting:

- FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment Roadmap,

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- Purpose Statements Exercise,
- Meeting One Core Discussion Chart,
- Blessing Before Study,
- V'ahavta* Text Study, and
- Prospective Teacher Profiles (3 versions).

Meeting Facilitation Plan

Welcome and Introduction to ECE, *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment*, and this meeting—10 minutes

Introductions

If not everyone on the team knows each other, have them introduce themselves, describing their involvements in the congregation and what interests them about participating in this process.

Share your school's reasons for participating in FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

The educator and/or the chair should explain the rationale for your school's interest in rethinking teacher recruitment and answer any questions from the team. You should organize your remarks around answers to the following questions. A Building Blocks handout is provided on which you should keep a record of your comments for later use.

- In what ways has teacher recruitment been a challenge in the past?
- How many teachers do we need to recruit in an average school year?
- What can we gain by being proactive about finding more excellent teachers?

Explain the Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE)

Team members will have read the handout prior to the meeting. Briefly review key points of the handout and answer any questions. If anyone has questions you are not able to answer, make a note of them so you can get the answers from your consultant.

Explain the goals and process of FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

Team members will have read the goals handout prior to the meeting. Distribute and review the *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* Roadmap which describes how the process will unfold. Encourage the team to consult the roadmap at each meeting in order to note their progress. Introduce the concept of a “parking lot” as a tool to help the team stay focused and on track. Write “Parking Lot” at the top of a flipchart page and post it on the wall in a visible place in the room.

Connection—10 minutes

Explain that, as a way of connecting people to each other and to the work of the meeting, each *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* meeting will begin with a “connection question.” These questions typically will ask each person to share something about him/her self that also relates to the work at hand in the meeting. Ask each person to respond to the following:

Looking back, what is something important that either you, or your children, learned from religious school? If not religious school, then what is something important you have learned from adult Jewish study?

Core Discussion I: Purpose Statements—40 minutes

Using the handout titled “Purpose Statements Exercise on page 24, begin with Part I on the handout. The handout presents three purpose statements, each of which describes a hypothetical school with a different overarching goal. Have someone in the group read aloud each of the statements before discussing the questions that follow it.

In the first column of the **Building Blocks** handout titled “Meeting One Core Discussion Chart” on page 26, describe the goal in the group’s own words. Set the Building Blocks handout aside to be used again later in the meeting.

After all three statements have been read and discussed, discuss the additional questions in Part II of the Purpose Statements Exercise that relate to the interplay of the three goals.

Text Study—V’ahavta—20 minutes

Briefly remind the group about the rationale for including text study in each meeting (see discussion on page 5 in the Getting Started section of this Guidebook and the handout titled “The Experiment in Congregational Education” on page 199).

Refer to the “Blessing Before Study” handout (found on page 28) and have the group recite the prayer together. Ask team members to keep the “Blessing Before Study” handout for use at each meeting.

This text study, on page 28, explores the extent to which the three goals of Jewish education are found in the *V’ahavta* prayer. After reciting the blessing before study, ask someone to read the text aloud. Lead a discussion of the questions that follow the text.

Core Discussion II: Describing the Right Teacher for the Job—15 minutes

Instruct the team to imagine that they are part of an advertising firm. Each of the three congregations described in the Purpose Statements exercise comes to you for advertising advice. Each of them wants to know how best to describe what they are looking for in a teacher so they end up finding the best teachers for their school.

Keeping in mind your previous discussion about the kinds of activity you would expect to be going on at each of these schools, spend about 5 minutes answering the following questions *for each of the three schools* (note: it may be helpful to write these questions on a flipchart for all to see):

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- What does a teacher in this school need to know and be able to do? (Think about the kinds of learning and the subject matter you would expect in each school).
- If you were advertising for a teacher for this school, what words and images would you be sure to use?

Record your team's responses to these questions on the Core Discussion Chart handout and keep the chart to refer back to during Meeting Two.

Core Discussion III: Educator's Report—15 minutes

Now it is time to look at your own school. Your educator will give a report he/she prepared about the interplay of these goals in your school and which one is your school's primary goal.

Identifying your school's primary goal might be difficult and you might be reluctant to even "declare" that you have a primary goal, especially if you feel strongly about the importance of all three goals. Your educator has identified the one she/he thinks is primary; you may or may not agree. If you are finding this discussion challenging, we urge you to work to choose the goal you feel is *most* primary. Doing so will focus your discussions over the next three meetings and, ultimately, will lead to a targeted plan.

NOTE: Be aware that this is a time when the team may want to get into a discussion of what your school's overarching goals *should* be. This is an important discussion, but moving in that direction at this point will distract you from focusing on teacher recruitment. If you find your team is interested in raising these kinds of questions about your school, or discussing other related though off-topic issues as you go through this process, "park" their ideas in a "parking lot" as described above (actually make a note of them and keep them on file). Prior to the fourth meeting, the chair and educator will review all the items in your "parking lot" and present ideas to the team about how they might be addressed. Keep in mind that ECE has other processes, such as its 18-month RE-IMAGINE Project, that help congregations explore these kinds of broader questions.

Reflection—5 minutes

As a way of closing the meeting and getting a sense of how people are thinking at this point in the process, ask each person to answer the following:

As a result of this meeting, how are you thinking differently about the role of religious school teachers in your school and in your congregation?

You may want to mention that each meeting will close with a reflective question of this type to help the group become aware of its own progress and to notice explicitly the impact their work is having.

Next Steps—5 minutes

In preparation for the next meeting, give each member of the team the "Prospective Teacher Profile..." handout **that corresponds to your school's primary goal**. These can be found on pages 29-34. Before the next meeting, each team member should read all of the prospective

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teacher profiles associated with your school's primary goal. The people described are fictitious, though some of their stories will probably sound familiar.

Assign to each team member one of the profiles to think about in more depth and to be prepared to answer the following questions regarding the assigned profile (these questions also appear on the handout):

- 1) In light of your school's primary goal, what qualities or characteristics are attractive to you about this prospective teacher?
- 2) What pool of potential teachers do you think this person represents? What other groups of people (perhaps at other stages of life, with different backgrounds and interests) do you think your school should consider as pools of prospective teachers?
- 3) Based on the information given, why does it seem this person wants to teach? What are his/her motivations? What does it seem he/she is looking for in a religious school teaching experience?
- 4) What working conditions or experiences do you think could "clinch" a deal with this person to teach in your school? What benefits would he/she find enticing?
- 5) Why, does it seem, this person isn't already teaching? What personal or external obstacles have been in his/her way?

Building Blocks

Reasons for Participating in FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

In what ways has teacher recruitment been a challenge in the past?

How many teachers do we need to recruit in an average school year?

What can we gain by being proactive about finding more excellent teachers?

The Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE)

What is ECE?

The Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE) is the nation's first—and among its most successful—synagogue transformation projects. ECE works with congregations across the movements to strengthen synagogues as critical centers of Jewish life by helping them to become **Congregations of Learners** and **Self-Renewing Congregations**. Founded by Dr. Isa Aron, the ECE is a project of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education at HUC-JIR/Los Angeles. ECE has inspired three books, several research reports and articles. Most recently ECE has worked with congregations in New York, San Francisco, and Kansas City.

What are ECE's Goals and Guiding Principles?

Goals

The ECE focuses its efforts on two goals—to create **Congregations of Learners** and **Self-Renewing Congregations**.

- In a **Congregations of Learners** learning permeates all aspects of congregational life and more people engage in deeper Jewish learning more regularly and with a variety of learning styles.
- **Self-Renewing Congregations** gain increased capacity to envision their future and to anticipate and respond to changing conditions and ongoing challenges by:
 - Being both reflective and proactive,
 - Practicing collaborative leadership,
 - Building community while welcoming diversity, and
 - Balancing tradition and innovation.

Guiding Principles

Jewish learning as a pathway: The ECE believes that Jewish learning is a primary pathway to synagogue revitalization. Thorough congregational revitalization requires re-thinking all the three aspects of a synagogue's purpose (prayer, community, and learning). The ECE believes that—for many congregations—Jewish learning is the most accessible and empowering place to start. And *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* focuses on teachers in the religious school because it is where Jewish learning starts for many children and families.

Adaptation versus replication: The ECE advocates thoughtful adaptation of innovative educational models, not wholesale replication of someone else's program. Rather than simply

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copying so-called best practices, *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* helps congregations adapt and develop strategies that fit their unique circumstances and needs based on understanding not only what other congregations have *done* but, more importantly, how they *think* about innovation.

Inquiry and reflection: Re-imagining aspects of congregational education requires inquiry and reflection. *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* is more than a “fix-it” project. It involves a thoughtful process of strategic thinking and planning. The changes that result may not happen all at once; they are likely to continue to evolve over time. This type of change requires self-reflection, on the part of a team of people thinking about the religious school, the congregation as a whole, and the diverse membership that comprises that congregation. Inquiry and reflection are woven into *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* every step.

Text study is integral: In addition to more common forms of data gathering and analysis, Torah study is integral to the process—serving as a catalyst for a thoughtful, probing analysis of congregational life. In Torah study we encounter an alternative culture, a set of concepts and practices that challenge the preconceived notions of contemporary life. Jewish text study models reflective thinking—a sustained effort to examine beliefs and practices from many angles; a willingness to question all assumptions; a respect for differing perspectives. We believe that there can be no better way to stimulate creative thinking about the Jewish future than exposure to provocative texts from the Jewish past and present.

By Torah we mean Torah in the broadest sense, which includes the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, and modern commentaries and responsa. As such, Torah is the repository of Jewish values and Jewish thinking; it is a record of the Jewish response to the world. In the Jewish tradition, the study of Torah is seen as both an end in itself (*Torah lishma*) and as a vehicle for a number of inter-related goals: enriching the Jewish lives of individuals; creating and sustaining a sense of community; linking local communities to one another and to the Jewish people as a whole. We have found that studying Jewish texts together creates community by establishing connections and relationships that are purposeful and substantive.

Experimentation: We use the term “experiment” (as in the *Experiment* in Congregational Education) for several reasons. First, it invites participants to embark on a journey into uncharted territory. Based on our experiences since 1992, we feel confident of the process through which

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment congregations will be led. Still, each congregation is different, and the outcomes of the process cannot be fully predicted ahead of time.

Secondly, we encourage congregations to experiment with innovative strategies as well as new cultural assumptions—new ways of thinking and working together. By thinking of them as experiments, we give ourselves permission to let go of things that aren’t working without embarrassment or loss of face. Cultivating a culture of experimentation can be critical to long-term success in bringing about meaningful educational change.

A third reason we use the term *experiment* relates to the role of research in our work. Too often in Jewish life, changes are initiated without any provisions being made for documentation. Thus, whatever the project's outcomes, outside observers (and even the key

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actors themselves) are no closer to an understanding of the change process or the determinants of success than they were before. Most *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* projects have been designed to assure that what transpires in the participating congregations (both process and outcomes) will be studied, and that the insights gained from these experiences will be available to congregations that attempt similar reforms in the future.

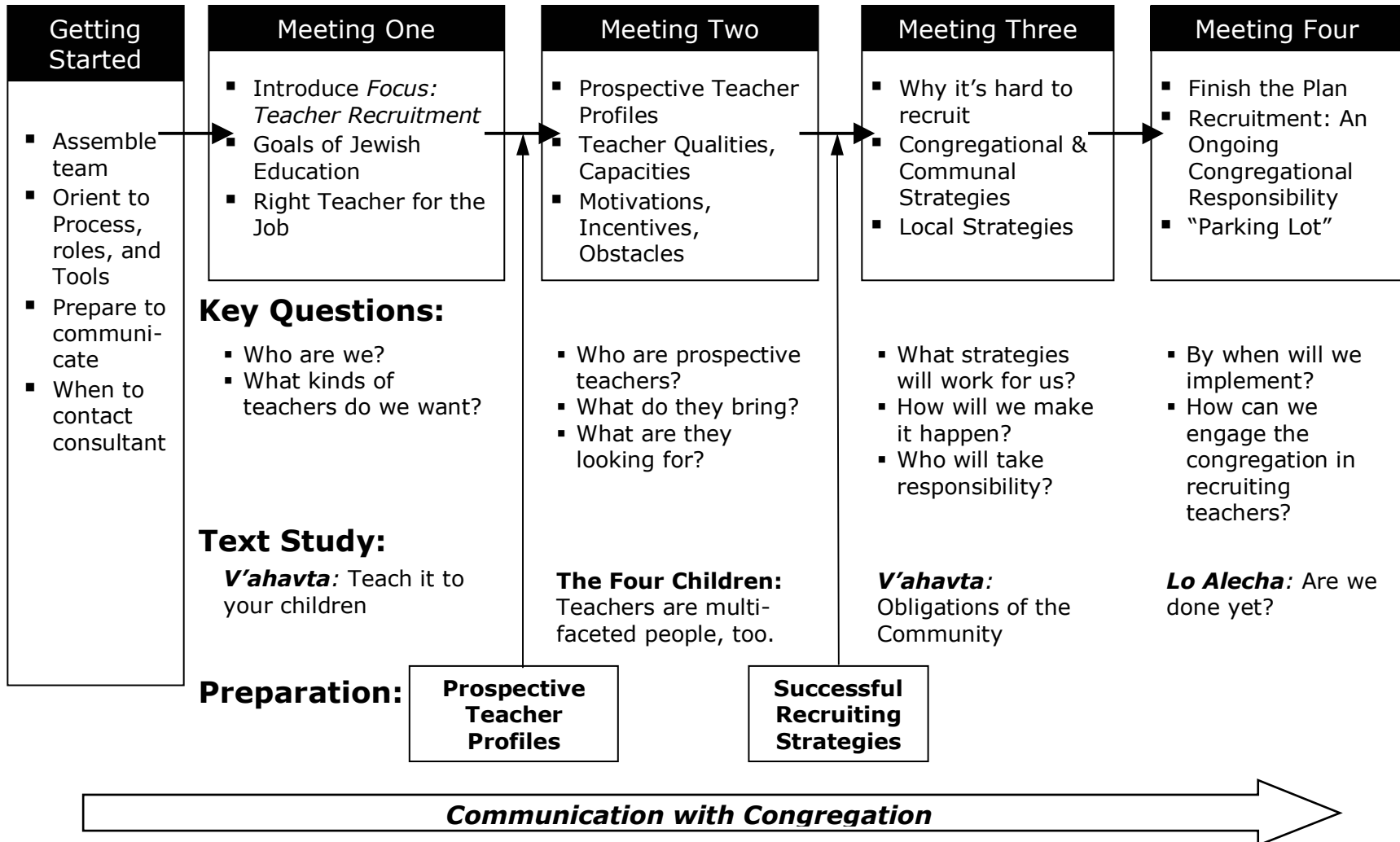
Balancing product and process: As our dual goals suggest, we value—and constantly seek to maintain—a dynamic balance between product and process. We find that some participants in our projects focus largely on working toward a practical, programmatic outcome, such as a new strategy for finding good teachers. They sometimes look for what they assume are the hidden “right answers” they expect us to provide. Others value the deliberative and reflective processes that lead them to question assumptions, to look through new lenses, to debate and redefine goals, to imagine and envision, and to experiment with new and unique answers. We believe the process and the product are inextricably intertwined. When we study a passage of Talmud, we do it not only to learn the outcome of a particular rabbinic legal debate, but to enter into that debate and to wrestle with the values underlying it; to inform our timely decisions with our timeless tradition. Each would suffer without the other. In *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* there are no “right answers;” each congregation must do its own wrestling and reach its own outcomes.

Goals of FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

-
- 3) Reflect on your religious school and create a plan for recruiting teachers.
 - a) Reflect on the religious school's overarching goals for its students and identify its primary goal. This goal will focus the team's decision-making over the course of the process.
 - b) Identify the teacher qualities and capacities that are needed to achieve the school's primary overarching goal
 - c) Reflect on what motivates religious school teachers to teach and the kinds of incentives that might be effective for both recruiting and retaining teachers.
 - d) Consider a variety of recruitment strategies and evaluate them in light of the school's overarching goal, the challenges they present, and the opportunities to address these challenges that exist within their congregational community.
 - e) Design a plan for teacher recruitment, including a timeline and assignment of responsibilities.
 - f) Explore how the congregation, as a community, can play a role in teacher recruitment.
 - 4) Get a taste of working in a self-guided, reflective process that is grounded in tested organizational principles and Jewish text.
 - a) Engage in ECE's five part meeting structure;
 - b) Work in partnership – lay and professionals
 - c) Drive decision-making from vision and goals
 - d) Through text study at each meeting, experience how Jewish texts can inform and enrich decisions about Jewish life today, and how studying text can create a community of learners.

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment Roadmap

Topics



FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

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Purpose Statements Exercise

Part I: Discuss each Purpose Statement

Please read through each of the purpose statements below and answer the questions that follow.

Purpose Statement of Congregation Aleph

The Congregation Aleph Religious School is dedicated to nurturing a strong Jewish identity in our students. We believe that, in order to become Jewish adults who feel connected with the Jewish people, our students need to engage in learning and activities that make them proud to be Jewish. Living in America, we believe that the greatest gift we can give our students is a deep Jewish identity that they can carry with them throughout their lives.

- 1) How would you describe the goal of this religious school? Which words in this purpose statement signal to you what this school wants to accomplish? Enter your answers on the chart that follows.

Based on this school's purpose, what would you expect to see happening at this school? What kinds of activities would the students engage in? What subjects would be covered?

Purpose Statement of Congregation Bet

At Congregation Bet Religious School, we believe that knowledge is the key to living a meaningful Jewish life. Our students are grounded in the most essential ideas, rituals and beliefs of Judaism. Knowing about the Jewish experience and how we have developed as a people enriches their lives today. Furthermore, we know that being comfortable with Jewish prayers and rituals, Jewish texts and the basic outline of Jewish history, will serve our students well as they become active and committed Jewish adults, regardless of where their lives take them.

- 1) How would you describe the goal of this religious school? Which words in this purpose statement signal to you what this school wants to accomplish? Enter your answers on the chart that follows.

Based on this school's purpose, what would you expect to see happening at this school? What kinds of activities would the students engage in? What subjects would be covered?

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Purpose Statement of Congregation Gimmel

We at Congregation Gimmel Religious School believe that children learn best when they are immersed in a community that models what it teaches. Therefore, in order to enculturate our students into Jewish life, we believe in involving them in the life of our Jewish community and in the Jewish activities that reflect the values and ideals we hold most dear. As they gain comfort with the rhythms and rituals and master narratives of Jewish life, our students become part of the Jewish people.

- 1) How would you describe the goal of this religious school? Which words in this purpose statement signal to you what this school wants to accomplish? Enter your answers on the chart that follows.

Based on this school's purpose, what would you expect to see happening at this school? What kinds of activities would the students engage in? What subjects would be covered?

Part II: Compare Purpose Statements

Now that you have discussed each of these purpose statements and the goals they reflect, consider all of them when discussing the following:

1. In what ways do these purpose statements reflect how you have thought about the purpose of religious school education in the past? How is the language the same or different?
2. Each of these purpose statements describes a different goal of Jewish education. In most schools, all three of these goals co-exist. How do you think they overlap? How might these goals complement each other?
3. What challenges can you imagine might arise when a school tries to achieve all three of these goals?

Building Blocks

Meeting One Core Discussion Chart

	Core Discussion I: Goals Based on the purpose statements, put the goals of each religious school in your own words	Core Discussion II: Describing the Right Teacher for the Job Words and images that describe the kinds of teachers each school needs to achieve its goals
Congregation Aleph		
Congregation Bet		
Congregation Gimmel		

Building Blocks

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Blessing Before Study

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah*

Praised are You Adonai, Ruler of the universe,
Who sanctifies us with mitzvot and commands us
to engage in the study of Torah.

V'ahavta Text Study

After saying the blessing before study, read the following text and discuss the questions that follow.

You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Instruct your children about them. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9, the first paragraph of the *Sh'ma*
Translation from The Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh*,

Questions for Discussion:

1. In what ways, if any, is this translation of the *V'ahavta* prayer different from translations you are used to? If it is different, how does this translation change the prayer's meaning for you?
2. This text suggests different ways in which God expects us to demonstrate being Jewish. What hints are there that the three goals of Jewish education we have discussed—Jewish identity formation, enculturation, and the development of cultural literacy—are reflected here?
3. In this text, which of three goals seems primary? How would you describe the interplay of the three goals in this text?
4. In what ways does thinking about the *V'ahavta* this way change how you think about the prayer? In what ways has this discussion influenced how you think about Jewish education?

Prospective Teacher Profiles

Jewish Identity Formation

Assignment to Prepare for Meeting Two

Please be sure to read all of the profiles on this handout that corresponds to your school's primary goal. Your team leaders will have assigned you one of these profiles to think about in more detail. Please re-read that profile in light of the questions that appear at the end of this handout. Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions at your next meeting

Becca

Becca just returned from a birthright Israel trip in August and is eager to get involved in a synagogue and the Jewish community. An entering senior at a prestigious local university, she had a Bat Mitzvah, but her family wasn't involved in their synagogue and, by high school, she even stopped going to High Holiday services. But she seized the opportunity to go to Israel with birthright, not realizing what an impact it would have on her. She just registered for her first Jewish studies class. She's afraid she may not know enough to be a religious school teacher, but she loves kids and spent one summer working as a tutor in an elementary school's summer program.

Julie

Julie is a new teacher, only out of college one year, and feels fortunate to have gotten a job teaching kindergarten in one of the local elementary schools. She grew up always wanting to be a teacher and, so far, isn't disappointed with her choice. She loves helping children discover their own abilities as they interact with the world around them. Growing up, Julie's family belonged to a synagogue, but she didn't go to religious school. She did, however, go to a summer camp where most of the kids were Jewish and in college she belonged to a Jewish sorority. Also in college she decided she really wants to marry someone Jewish and so she has decided to date only Jewish men. She's always been very proud to be Jewish and thinks it is important to help children, from the time they are very young, to feel the same way.

Rachel

Though Rachel has a degree in computer systems, she is only working part-time in computer sales. Although this arrangement is not ideal for her, nor does she hope it lasts, she has used her extra time to get more involved in the Second Generation group for children of Holocaust survivors in town. Her parents, who survived separately and met in England after the war, were older than most of her friends' parents when she was born and when she was young that's the only way she thought she was different from everyone else. As she got older, she realized that being Jewish meant everything to her and that, from her parents, she learned that the hate of others can serve to make your own identity even stronger. She doesn't know what subject she's really qualified to teach in your school, but she does want Jewish children today to appreciate who they are and to take pride in being Jewish.

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

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Steve

Steve and his wife have just moved to town with their son who is in third grade. Though they haven't been members of a synagogue before, they just joined your congregation because they want their son have a Bar Mitzvah and feel Jewish. When they went to register their son for religious school they got to talking with the educator about their backgrounds. Steve mentioned that, in college, he was a temple youth group advisor. His current accounting job is fairly conventional, pretty much 9-5 with no weekends. Steve has a great sense of humor and comes off as a big teddy bear. He's thinking that teaching on Sunday mornings, when his son has to be there anyway, might be fun.

Beth

Beth and her family are fairly new to the area. Trained in elementary education, the local school district didn't have any openings, so she took a job teaching at the local day school. Working in such a Jewish environment is a big change for her since she grew up in a very small Jewish community and is used to living in places where there are only a few Jewish families. Nonetheless, she has always felt special being Jewish and would like to transmit that feeling to others.

Preparation Questions

After reading all of the profiles for your school's primary goal, re-read the profile you have been assigned in light of the following questions. Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions at your next meeting:

- 1) In light of your school's primary goal, what qualities or characteristics are attractive to you about this prospective teacher?
- 2) What pool of potential teachers do you think this person represents? What other groups of people (perhaps at other stages of life, with different backgrounds and interests) do you think your school should consider as pools of prospective teachers?
- 3) Based on the information given, why does it seem this person wants to teach? What are his/her motivations? What does it seem he/she is looking for in a religious school teaching experience?
- 4) What working conditions or experiences do you think could "clinch" a deal with this person to teach in your school? What benefits would he/she find enticing?
- 5) Why, does it seem, this person isn't already teaching? What personal or external obstacles have been in his/her way?

Prospective Teacher Profiles

Jewish Enculturation

Assignment to Prepare for Meeting Two

Please be sure to read all of the profiles on this handout that corresponds to your school's primary goal. Your team leaders will have assigned you one of these profiles to think about in more detail. Please re-read that profile in light of the questions that appear at the end of this handout. Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions at your next meeting.

Bob

Bob is a sophomore at a local art school. Since he has a car with him at school this year he is able to work off-campus. In high school he was president of his local youth group and a regional officer. He attended many regional youth events and even went to the national convention during his senior year. His synagogue at home had a post-confirmation program in which he participated until he graduated. He's bright and personable and eager to excite kids about being Jewish in the same ways he was excited growing up. At school he recently started hosting Shabbat dinners with friends in his apartment. For the High Holidays he requested a student ticket to your synagogue and comes periodically on Shabbat as well.

Paula

Paula has been teaching math in the local Jewish day school for many years and she and her husband have been synagogue members for a long time, though not very active. At school she was always supportive of the Jewish curriculum, but never went out of her way to do more than she had to. Several years ago a friend talked her into taking an adult Hebrew class at the synagogue which eventually evolved into studying for an adult Bat Mitzvah. Though it was tough, she loved the whole experience—the camaraderie of the class, mastering the letters and demonstrating her competence in front of the congregation. She now has a new appreciation for what her students learn outside of math class and would like to bridge the worlds of math and Jewish studies for herself, and others.

Mimi

It's been a while since Mimi set foot in a classroom, but it feels like it was yesterday. She was an elementary school teacher for 22 years and taught religious school for part of that time, but that was already 20 years ago. She remembers her students loved it when they divided into teams and played Hebrew baseball on the board. Of course, this was all before computers became part of the classroom and she readily admits that she's fairly computer-illiterate. Nonetheless, she loves children and knows that they thrive in a classroom where the teacher is nurturing and has high expectations of the students. Last year, after her husband died, she began coming to synagogue every Shabbat morning to say *kaddish*. About halfway through the year she began attending the rabbi's Torah study group where she's connected with a new group of friends.

Larry

Larry, his wife and children moved to town this year so that he could help take care of his aging parents. Larry grew up in your congregation and has always felt extremely connected to it. This is where he celebrated his Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation. He fondly remembers a few years ago when he and his siblings hosted an Oneg Shabbat in the Social Hall in honor of his parent's 50th wedding anniversary. He loves coming into the building and seeing names of old members and faces of new ones who are so familiar to him. And he's coming into the building regularly now that he's joined a weekly adult education class. Though he had to take a pay cut to move back home, he feels that the experience of having his children grow up near their grandparents and within a warm and caring congregational community is invaluable. For him, teaching in the school would be one way he could give back to a place that gave him so much.

Adam

For Adam, teaching is his second career and he feels fortunate that he can financially afford to do what he loves. The only thing better to him than teaching public school would be to teach in a Jewish environment. Since moving to town most of the friends he has made have been through Jewish activities. He's part of a young singles *chavurah* that meets once a month to celebrate holidays. He attends services almost every Shabbat, alternating which synagogues he attends, and getting to know people at each. He just volunteered to coordinate the JCC's Mitzvah Day. He would love the opportunity to involve Jewish kids, especially teenagers, in Jewish life and see them become vital members of the Jewish community.

Preparation Questions

After reading all of the profiles for your school's primary goal, re-read the profile you have been assigned in light of the following questions. Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions at your next meeting:

- 1) In light of your school's primary goal, what qualities or characteristics are attractive to you about this prospective teacher?
- 2) What pool of potential teachers do you think this person represents? What other groups of people (perhaps at other stages of life, with different backgrounds and interests) do you think your school should consider as pools of prospective teachers?
- 3) Based on the information given, why does it seem this person wants to teach? What are his/her motivations? What does it seem he/she is looking for in a religious school teaching experience?
- 4) What working conditions or experiences do you think could "clinch" a deal with this person to teach in your school? What benefits would he/she find enticing?
- 5) Why, does it seem, this person isn't already teaching? What personal or external obstacles have been in his/her way?

Prospective Teacher Profiles

Development of Jewish Cultural Literacy

Assignment to Prepare for Meeting Two

Please be sure to read all of the profiles on this handout that corresponds to your school's primary goal. Your team leaders will have assigned you one of these profiles to think about in more detail. Please re-read that profile in light of the questions that appear at the end of this handout. Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions at your next meeting

Jamie

Jamie wishes she'd been available to teach religious school during college, but she didn't have time between her school work and the internships that she depended on for helping to pay tuition. As a Jewish Studies major, she thinks she would have had a lot to teach the students. This fall she will begin graduate work in Jewish philosophy and, since she's on a fellowship, her work schedule finally would allow her to teach Sunday mornings. Though she's never taught in a classroom setting, she's the oldest of 5 children in her family and has always been around lots of younger cousins. Her passion for Jewish learning led her get involved in a student/faculty chavurah that meets off-campus. She is anxious to explore further her own Jewish roots while helping teenagers explore theirs, as well.

Tali

Tali is Israeli-born, but has lived in the United States for 12 years with her husband and children. Though they have been members of your congregation for three years, most people don't know that when she was in the Israeli army, and for several years afterwards, she taught Hebrew to new immigrants. It frustrates her that American Jewish children rarely think of Hebrew as a living language, though she realizes that there is barely enough class time during the week to teach anymore than reading. She thinks she would like to teach Hebrew in your school, but is not sure she can abide by the slow pace at which the students learn.

Scott

Scott's dad was a European history buff, and Scott grew up hearing stories of kings and queens, wars and alliances, royal passions and palace intrigue in ways that made him feel like he was part of the action. To this day, Scott will tell you that the best thing he ever did was spend the year after college working on an archeological dig in Israel. There, history came alive for him in ways he knows most people never experience. A few years ago he fortunate enough to take a two-week trip to Spain where he traced the lives of Jews during the Golden Age and the stories of their expulsion shortly after. Managing a store during the week leaves his weekends free and he would love to share his passion for Jewish history with the next generation. Plus, he could use the money.

Wendy

Wendy has a reputation in the Jewish community for being a tough, yet good, teacher. For the past eight years she has been teaching Bible to 6th, 7th and 8th graders in the local Orthodox day school. She is one of those teachers who students dread at the beginning of the year and love by the end. Wendy attended day school herself growing up and credits it with kindling her passion for Bible, commentaries and *Midrash*. Although she knows she is passing her passion for Jewish texts onto her day school students, it frustrates her that so many Jewish children don't have the same opportunities to discover the richness and the connection buried in these texts. She feels strongly that, even if religious school students haven't mastered Hebrew, they are still capable of—and they deserve to—engage with Jewish texts in a dynamic and meaningful way. Now that her own children are in high school she has more time to test her theory in the religious school setting.

Sherry

Sherry has always loved to read, so it's no surprise she has been a reading specialist in public schools for the past 10 years. Her favorite books are classic mysteries and she loves to reflect on well-written characters' motivations and the roles they play in the intricately evolving plots. Not surprisingly, then, she's a wiz at Bible study and finds that reading bible stories as literature enhances their meaning to her. For her, studying the bible as both literature and a sacred text, with all the various commentaries intended to answer some questions but never all, is very much like reading a mystery novel. And the fact that we use the lessons of these stories to guide our lives just makes the whole experience even better.

Preparation Questions

After reading all of the profiles for your school's primary goal, re-read the profile you have been assigned in light of the following questions. Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions at your next meeting:

- 1) In light of your school's primary goal, what qualities or characteristics are attractive to you about this prospective teacher?

What pool of potential teachers do you think this person represents? What other groups of people (perhaps at other stages of life, with different backgrounds and interests) do you think your school should consider as pools of prospective teachers?

Based on the information given, why does it seem this person wants to teach? What are his/her motivations? What does it seem he/she is looking for in a religious school teaching experience?

What working conditions or experiences do you think could "clinch" a deal with this person to teach in your school? What benefits would he/she find enticing?

Why, does it seem, this person isn't already teaching? What personal or external obstacles have been in his/her way?

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment—Meeting Two

Meeting Overview

Connection—10 minutes

Text Study: The Four Children—15 minutes

Core Discussion I: Teacher Qualities and Capacities—25 minutes

Core Discussion II: Prospective Teacher Profiles—30 minutes

Core Discussion III: Understanding Teacher Motivations, Incentives and Obstacles—30 minutes

Reflection—5 minutes

Next Steps—5 minutes

Goals and Objectives of Meeting Two

By the end of the meeting, members of the team will:

- 1) Be introduced to the meeting’s focus on recognizing teachers’ varying qualities and capacities as well as teachers’ diverse reasons for wanting to teach religious school by studying a text about The Four Children, from the Passover *seder*.

Reflect on teacher qualities and capacities, identifying those that are necessary in order to achieve your school’s primary goal and those that are necessary regardless of your goal.

Explore what draws people to religious school teaching and, yet what obstacles they may face.

Begin to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues that impact teacher recruitment, including prospective teachers’ needs, congregational support and the school’s commitment to teacher development.

Advance Preparation

Prior to the meeting, each team member will have read through all the prospective teacher’s profiles associated with your school’s primary goal and will be prepared to answer questions relating to one of the profiles.

Remember to make a “parking lot” for off-topic ideas or questions and to have a copy of the *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* Roadmap available to remind team members where you are in the process.

Handouts for Meeting Two

Be sure to prepare copies of the following handouts for use during this meeting:

- Text Study—The Four Children, page 40

- ❑ Teacher Qualities and Capacities That Match the Goal of [your primary goal], pages 41-43
- ❑ Teacher Qualities and Capacities Regardless of your Primary Goal, page 44
- ❑ Prospective Teacher Profiles—Pools, page 45
- ❑ Teacher Motivations, Incentives and Obstacles, page 46
- ❑ Assignment for Meeting Three, page 47
- ❑ Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies...” (four different versions), pages 48-55
- ❑ Question Guide for Contacting Nearby Congregations Regarding Teacher Recruiting (one or two copies for people to whom this will be assigned), page 56
- ❑ Question Guide for Contacting Your Central Agency for Jewish Education Regarding Teacher Recruiting (one copy for person to whom this will be assigned), page 57

Meeting Facilitation Plan

Connection—10 minutes

As a way of starting the meeting by connecting people to each other and to the work of the meeting, ask each person to respond to the following:

Our tradition likens teaching a child to giving birth to that child (Talmud Sanhedrin, 19b). In what ways do you think this is true? What personal experience have you had with this kind of relationship, either as a teacher, a student or a parent?

Text Study: The Four Children—15 minutes

This text study on page 40 will introduce the idea that prospective teachers are multi-dimensional and have varying strengths and needs. Refer to the “Blessing Before Study” handout and have the group recite the prayer together. After reciting the blessing before study, ask someone to read the first text aloud. Lead a discussion of the question that follows the text. Ask someone else to read the second text aloud and then lead a discussion of the questions that follow it. If appropriate, summarize people’s responses to the last question as a way of bringing closure to the discussion and transitioning to Core Discussion I.

Core Discussion I: Teacher Qualities and Capacities—25 minutes

At the last meeting, on the Core Discussion Chart **Building Blocks** handout, you described three goals of Jewish education and the kinds of teachers needed to achieve each of those goals.

From among the three handouts titled “Teacher Qualities and Capacities That Match [each primary goal],” found on pages 41-43, choose the one that matches your school’s primary goal (that you identified during Meeting One) and distribute it to the members of the team. Also distribute the handout entitled “Teacher Qualities and Capacities for All Teachers

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

Page 37

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment, a project of the Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE), sponsored by UJA-Federation of New York

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Regardless of Your Primary Goal”, found on page 44. Then facilitate a discussion following these steps:

- 1) Check to see if the words and ideas related to your primary goal on the Core Discussion Chart from Meeting One also are listed on the Teacher Qualities and Capacities chart for your goal. If not, add them.
- 2) Review the new list and the Teacher Qualities and Capacities Regardless of Your Primary Goal list. As a team, do you agree that these are the qualities and capacities you need your teachers to have? If you think something should be removed or added, do so.
- 3) Next to each quality or capacity, check off on the chart whether it is:
 - a) A *prerequisite* for a teacher at your school,
 - b) A quality or capacity that *someone in your school or congregation* can help your teachers develop (e.g. the educator, the rabbi, a mentor teacher, a congregant who is a child psychologist, or someone involved in the public schools),
 - c) A quality or capacity that *someone outside of your school* can help your teachers develop (e.g., at a central agency for Jewish education, a nearby university, a visiting expert).

One final step: Looking over all the qualities and capacities you want your teachers to have, ask each person to put a star next to the three that he/she considers the most important. Lead a discussion of your team members’ choices and try to reach a consensus about the team’s top three or four.

Bring closure to this discussion by telling the team something like: “By completing this chart, we now have a comprehensive picture of the qualities and capacities we are looking for in our teachers. Also, by identifying our priorities, we have begun to set the agenda for developing our teachers in the future.”

Core Discussion II: Prospective Teacher Profiles—30 minutes

Go around and have each team member present the profile they read in preparation for the meeting, addressing **just the first two questions** that appeared at the end of the profiles:

1. *In light of your school’s primary goal, what qualities or characteristics are attractive to you about this prospective teacher?*
2. *What pool of potential teachers do you think this person represents? What other groups of people (perhaps at other stages of life, with different backgrounds and interests) do you think your school should consider as pools of prospective teachers?*

After all the profiles have been presented, lead a discussion of the following and keep notes from the team’s discussion on the **Building Blocks** handout titled “Prospective Teacher Profiles—Pools”:

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- Of the pools of prospective teachers these profiles represent, which exist in our community?
- What other groups of people (perhaps at other stages of life, with different backgrounds and interests) do we think our school should consider as pools of potential teachers?
- Which two or three of these pools are most likely to yield the best teachers for our school?

Core Discussion III: Understanding Teacher Motivations, Incentives and Obstacles—30 minutes

Now it is time for team members to discuss **the last three questions** that appeared at the end of the profiles they read between meetings one and two:

1. *Based on the information given, why does it seem this person wants to teach? What are his/her motivations? What does it seem he/she is looking for in a religious school teaching experience? (Motivations)*
2. *What working conditions or experiences do you think could “clinch” a deal with this person to teach in your school? What benefits would he/she find enticing? (Incentives)*
3. *Why, does it seem, this person isn’t already teaching? What personal or external obstacles have been in his/her way? (Obstacles)*

As team members respond, keep a record of all the responses on the **Building Blocks** handout titled “Teacher Motivations, Incentives and Obstacles” and found on page 46. In addition, keep a running list of the incentives in front of the group, either on a flip chart or on a board (i.e. chalk board or white marker board).

When everyone is finished reporting on their profiles, review the list of incentives with the group and put a check next to those your school and congregation currently offer to their fullest extent (e.g., full synagogue membership is given to all teachers, your salaries are better than those at other religious schools in your area).

Be sure to save all of your notes and to include the checked incentives in the notes you save.

Reflection—5 minutes

As a way of closing the meeting and getting a sense of how people are thinking at this point in the process, ask each person to respond to the following:

What have you learned so far that you think is very important for our team to keep in mind when creating a teacher recruitment plan for our school?

Next Steps—5 minutes

Handout to each team member a copy of the handout titled “Assignment for Meeting Three” on page 47 along with the four handouts on pages 48-55 titled “Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies...” Review the assignment for everyone (see below).

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Assign one or two members of the team to the additional assignment (see below). Give those people the appropriate Question Guides (for contacting other religious schools or a central agency). These can be found on pages 56 and 57.

Assignment for everyone

- 1) In preparation for the next meeting, give everyone on the team all four “Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies...” handouts, each of which presents a set of strategies that congregations or communal agencies have developed to address an operative assumption about teacher recruitment. Assign everyone to read all four of these handouts. These are on pages 48-55.

Ask each team member to identify (before the next meeting) 2-3 strategies that they think would be effective in finding new teachers for your school. They should be prepared to defend their choices based on three criteria:

- a) The pools of potential teachers available in your community (discussed at this meeting)
- b) The incentives your congregation offers (discussed at this meeting)
- c) The obstacles to teacher recruitment experienced by your congregation (presented during Meeting One)

Instruct team members that if, during their reading, they think of additional strategies that they think would work, to jot them down to discuss with the team at the next meeting.

Additional assignment for 1-2 people

Ask one or two people on the team also to find out how other religious schools in your area find new teachers. If you have a central agency for Jewish education in your community, like a Bureau of Jewish Education, find out how they help congregations find teachers. Give them the appropriate “Question Guide...” handout to guide a conversation to uncover how they think about pools of prospective teachers, incentives to teaching, and what their operative assumptions are about the obstacles they face. These are on pages 56 and 57. This additional information needs to be gathered and organized to be presented and discussed at the next meeting as well.

NOTE: If lay members of the team are assigned these tasks, we suggest that the educator provide contact names and make an introductory call or email to the appropriate contacts at nearby congregations and/or the central agency to pave the way and set a context for the team member’s inquiry.

Text Study—The Four Children

After saying the blessing before study, read the following texts and discuss the questions that

The Torah alludes to Four Children: One Wise, One Wicked, One Simple, and One Who Does Not Know How to Ask. What does the wise child say? “What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the laws which the Lord our God has commanded you?”...What does the wicked child say? “Whatever does this service mean to you?”...What does the simple child ask? “What is this?”...As for the child who does not know how to ask, you should prompt that child as it is said: “You shall tell your child on that day, saying: It is because of this, that the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.”

From the Passover Haggadah

follow.

- 1) This excerpt from the haggadah suggests that children, or adults for that matter, who come to the seder have four different personalities or attitudes. With which child do you most identify when you attend a seder?

A Haggadah for the Four Children in Each of Us

The Wise Child in Us that seeks depth and multiple answers

The Rebellious Spirit in Us that demands personal relevance for the traditional text

The Simple Curiosity in Us that listens and looks with wonder

The Non Verbal in Us that does not know how to ask but wants to experience

From the back cover of *A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah*,
by Noam Zion and David Dishon

How does this text change your thinking about the traditional Four Sons? In what kinds of situations are the wise, rebellious, simple and quiet sides of you most likely to appear?

Think about your teachers. Would you want your teachers to exhibit any one of these traits over the others? Why or why not?

What challenges does thinking about prospective teachers as multi-dimensional human beings present when thinking about teacher recruitment?

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Building Blocks

Teacher Qualities and Capacities That Match the Goal of Jewish Identity

Teacher Qualities and Capacities	Prerequisites for all our teachers	Qualities and capacities we can develop with "inside" resources	Qualities and capacities we can develop with outside resources
Have a strong sense of pride in being Jewish			
Are familiar with Jewish heroes and the contributions they have made to society			
Are aware of Jewish current events			
Are good Jewish role models			
Have a contagious enthusiasm for Jewish celebration			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

NOTE: Save this chart to use in a discussion during your next meeting.

Building Blocks

Teacher Qualities and Capacities That Match the Goal of Jewish Enculturation

Teacher Qualities and Capacities	Prerequisites for all our teachers	Qualities and capacities we can develop with "inside" resources	Qualities and capacities we can develop with outside resources
Are active in the life of the congregation and the Jewish community			
Can teach parents and families			
Regularly attend services			
Are engaged in the rhythms and concerns of Jewish life			
Have relationships with students and their families outside the classroom			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

NOTE: Save this chart to use in a discussion during your next meeting.

Building Blocks

Teacher Qualities and Capacities That Match the Goal of Developing Jewish Cultural Literacy

Teacher Qualities and Capacities	Prerequisites for all our teachers	Qualities and capacities we can develop with "inside" resources	Qualities and capacities we can develop with outside resources
Have adult experiences studying Torah and other Jewish texts			
Understand the basics of prayer book Hebrew and have a general idea about what the prayers mean			
Understand the order of the daily and Shabbat service			
Know holiday and life cycle rituals			
Are familiar with the key events of Jewish history			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

NOTE: Save this chart to use in a discussion during your next meeting.

Building Blocks

Teacher Qualities and Capacities for All Teachers, Regardless of Your Primary Goal

Teacher Qualities and Capacities	Prerequisites for all our teachers	Qualities and capacities we can develop with “inside” resources	Qualities and capacities we can develop with outside resources
Can plan engaging lessons			
Attuned to individual student’s strengths and needs			
Relate well to children			
Communicate well with students and parents			
Know how to manage a classroom			
Welcome supervision			
Have a sense of humor			
Work well with other adults			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			
Other:			

NOTE: Save this chart to use in a discussion during your next meeting.

Building Blocks

Prospective Teacher Profiles--Pools

-
- 1) Of the pools of prospective teachers these profiles represent, which pools exist in our community?

What other groups of people (perhaps at other stages of life, with different backgrounds and interests) do you think our school should consider as pools of potential teachers?

Which two or three of these pools do you think are most like to yield the best teachers for our school?

Building Blocks

Teacher Motivations, Incentives and Obstacles

Motivations:

Incentives:

Obstacles:

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

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Assignment for Meeting Three

Assignment for everyone

- 1) In preparation for the next meeting, please read **all four** of the “Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies...” handouts. Each handout presents a set of strategies that congregations or communal agencies have developed to address a different operative assumption about teacher recruitment.

In preparation for the next meeting, please identify 2-3 strategies that you think would be effective in finding new teachers for your school. You should be prepared to defend your choices based on three criteria:

- a) The pools of potential teachers available in your community (discussed at this meeting);
- b) The incentives your congregation offers (discussed at this meeting); and
- c) The obstacles to teacher recruitment experienced by your congregation (presented during Meeting One).

As you read, if you think of additional strategies that you think would work, please jot them down to discuss with the team at the next meeting.

Additional assignment for 1-2 people

If you are one of the people assigned to gather additional information, please use the applicable Question Guide handout (you should receive it from your team leader or educator). You may be asked to contact other religious schools in your area to learn about how they find new teachers. If you have a central agency for Jewish education in your community (like a Bureau of Jewish Education) you may be asked to find out how they help congregations find teachers. Check with your educator to find out who are the appropriate people to contact. He/she also may make an introductory contact to pave the way for your inquiry.

Use the provided Question Guide handout to guide a conversation to try to uncover how they think about pools of prospective teachers, incentives to teaching, and what their operative assumptions are about the obstacles they face.

Once you have completed the conversations, you can use the Question Guide to organize the information you have gathered to be present it for discussion at the next meeting.

Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies #1: Strategies That Make Potential Teachers Available

One possible reason it may be difficult to find good and well-suited teachers is that people whom you know would be good, and who are interested in teaching, may face logistical constraints that make it difficult for them to be available.

The following strategies, actually employed in congregations and communities around North America, help make potential teachers available:

Babysitting Service Temple Sholom, Scotch Plains, NJ (Reform)

The educator knew there were stay-at-home moms or parents, who worked part-time and did not have full-time child care, and who were capable and interested in teaching Hebrew school on Tuesday afternoons. In her own words, she realized, “To get the teachers I wanted, I was going to have to help them.” The decision was made that the congregation would line up babysitters and would provide onsite space and supplies. The teachers paid the babysitters directly, thereby absolving the congregation of payroll and liability issues. For adult school volunteers with young children, baby sitting is provided free of charge.

The educator estimates that $\frac{3}{4}$ of her faculty avail themselves of babysitting and credits this option for the low rate of faculty turnover in recent years.

Transportation Service Westchester Jewish Center, Mamaroneck, NY (Conservative)

Being located in the suburbs of New York City, the congregation knew that there were highly qualified teachers associated with their movement who lived in the city and were willing to teach, but for whom transportation was a problem. The school had tried offering teachers a *per diem* travel allowance, but the time spent commuting by train was a burden for many. The congregation decided to provide a car service from Manhattan that runs several times on Sundays and on mid-week Hebrew days. It is paid for by the Parent Association.

This has proved to be an attractive bonus when interviewing new teachers and has made it possible to find substitute teachers more easily.

Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies #2: Strategies That Open Doors Between Congregations and Potential Teachers

One possible reason it is difficult to find good and well-suited teachers is that there may be no simple and effective mechanisms for congregations to advertise (or otherwise publicize) their openings and for those who might be interested in teaching to express their interest. Without being able to find each other, congregations and potential teachers both lose out.

The following strategies, actually employed in congregations and communities around North America, open doors between congregations and potential teachers:

Craig's List

Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA (Reform)

In order to find teachers who brought “energy and vitality and activism” to the classroom, the educator placed ads in the job placement section of Craig’s List, an all-purpose website that is used in many communities by many people in their 20’s and 30’s. For a monthly listing fee, the congregation was able to tap into an interesting pool of good candidates, many of whom were relocating or underemployed.

Finder's Fee

Kerem Shalom, Concord, MA (unaffiliated)

Instead of running costly ads in the paper advertising for teachers, the educator decided it would be more cost-effective to pay existing teachers \$50 for referring someone who is ultimately hired and still working out by October 15th of the school year. They have found that teachers who come to the school by referral come in with a more positive attitude and an already-established relationship with the faculty. Through their personal connection, they have a clearer sense of what will be expected of them, which makes starting up in the fall much easier. In addition, the school has found that it now has more people interested in teaching than there are openings.

Help Your Community/Change Your Life

Colorado Agency for Jewish Education, Denver, CO

Knowing that, on a local college campus, there were Jewish students with a wealth of energy and knowledge, a community grant was received to hire a part-time coordinator to recruit and match up students on campus with congregational schools in the area. Working through Hillel and a booth on campus, students were recruited and supported in their teaching by monthly teacher training sessions offered on-campus.

Teacher Link

Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education (ACAJE), Philadelphia, PA

This communal agency created a computerized teacher database (*Morim Match*) through which people looking for teaching positions can register. The information can be accessed by local education directors. In addition, the ACAJE Director of Teacher Recruitment is involved in recommending matches based on knowledge of applicants and schools. Advertisements for the program are run in the local Jewish newspaper and flyers regularly are distributed to rabbis and educators.

This is one part of a comprehensive teacher recruitment and development program run by the agency. Salaries for the 14-hour/week Director and 8-hour/week Assistant are paid through a grant.

Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies #3: Strategies That Prepare Those Who Are Interested, Yet Under-Qualified

One possible reason it is difficult to find good and well-suited teachers is that, sometimes, people who are willing and available are not always fully qualified to teach. They may be weak in Jewish knowledge or in pedagogy. They may lack experience in the classroom or they may not know what it means to work collaboratively with others. Nonetheless, their interest and dedication could make them valuable additions to your faculty.

The following strategies, actually employed in congregations and communities around North America, prepare those who are interested, yet under-qualified:

Congregant Teaching Institute Congregation Beth Am, Los Altos Hills, CA (Reform)

In need of teachers who were comfortable teaching parents in a family education program, the educator realized that the best pool of potential teachers for their school were congregants who were committed to Jewish education, yet had no training in education and little or no training in Jewish content. A six-month program was designed during which the participants attended a two-hour session every other week. The educator and a congregant, who was a teacher trainer for the public schools, divided up the responsibilities so that half of the training was focused on teaching skills and half was spent applying the skills to a lesson and learning the Judaic content of that lesson. After completion of the six months participants were placed in classrooms.

Florence Melton Adult Mini-School Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago, Chicago, IL

Aware of two congregations in suburban Chicago that were anticipating a critical need of teachers, the Board of Jewish Education (BJE) offered a Florence Melton Adult Mini-School program (two hours a week for 30 weeks for two years) in conjunction with a Teacher Enrichment Program (three hours on each of ten Sunday afternoons for two years). Enrollment in the Melton program was highly subsidized jointly by the BJE and the congregations as was the opportunity to participate in the Melton Israel Seminar. In addition to making this intensive commitment, participants had to agree to teach for at least two years in either congregation if positions were available.

Miluim Beth El Congregation of South Hills (Conservative) and Agency for Jewish Learning, Pittsburgh, PA

This program was developed in order to increase the level of teacher education and to help recruit teachers. *Miluim* was originally designed as a six-week program with sessions of 1½

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hours and was held at the same time as religious school on Sunday mornings. The program included classroom visitations and observations as well as work on lesson planning. Upon completion of the program the participants felt ready to be classroom teachers and already had ideas of what they wanted to accomplish in their classrooms.

Substitute Training Workshop Congregation B'nai Israel, Bridgeport, CT (Reform)

Rather than asking congregants “out of the blue” to consider teaching in the religious school, the educator decided to run a two-hour Sunday morning session once or twice a year during religious school hours designed to introduce potential teachers to the prospect of teaching. The session is designed to be low-key and consists of some classroom leadership exercises as well as discussion about child development. Participants are encouraged to share their own interests as well as their concerns.

Instead of the educator approaching people cold and getting excuses why they can't teach, the educator has found that making an initial commitment to one Sunday morning is attractive to prospective teachers. Instead of meeting with resistance, he finds that his conversations with prospective teachers now focus on what is possible.

V'shinantam L'vanecha Solel Congregation of Mississauga, Mississauga, Ontario (Reform)

Since the inception of the congregation, teachers in the religious school have always been congregants. This was originally borne out of necessity since the congregation was located an hour away from the main Jewish center of Toronto. In order to prepare congregants to be teachers, a series of workshops were developed to train them, both those who had formal teacher training and those who did not.

During the three hours of school on Sunday mornings, those in the teacher training program study together for one hour and then assist in classrooms with veteran teachers. By the spring they begin teaching parts of the class. Retention rate is very high and the teachers have become their own *chavurah* within the congregation.

The teacher training program is open to high school students (10th and 11th grade) who also become part of this sub-culture within the congregation. Many of these students go on to teach with another adult or serve as *b'nai mitzvah* tutors.

The culture of the congregation is now such that congregants feel that the future of “my kid's” Jewish education depends on me. The congregants are committed to making the congregation survive and thrive.

Parallel Education Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, TX (Reform)

Wanting to re-establish the traditional role of *Shaliach Tzibur U'Morei Tzedek* (someone who can lead services and teach) with status within the congregational community, a six-week

FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment

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class is offered by the educator on Saturday mornings before services during the congregation's Torah study class.

The sessions were designed so that participants could see the subject being taught, reflect on the teaching, and have an adult exploration of the topic. A typical class would begin by experiencing a conflict or problem and exploring the conflict first as the students would and then as adults. Then the group would step back and look at the meta-level to discuss the role of conflict in teaching.

The philosophy of the program is that in order to teach, you have to learn in the ways that you want things taught. In addition, the idea is to treat potential teachers as learners on their own educational journeys. As a result, each group has developed its own identity and sense of community.

Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies #4: Strategies That Create Full-Time Teaching Opportunities

One possible reason it is difficult to find good and well-suited teachers is that some of the best, most qualified, and professional teachers are only interested in full-time career opportunities that provide both status and benefits. Because they seek full-time employment during the week, they often are not available to teach on weekday afternoons or on the weekends.

The following strategies, actually employed in congregations and communities around North America, create full-time teaching opportunities:

Full-time Teaching I Temple Emunah, Lexington, MA (Conservative)

Wanting to develop teachers who were able to meld formal and informal learning and were talented and committed, the congregation hired two full-time people who, working with the educator, taught 12-14 hours per week and assumed a host of other responsibilities that would otherwise have been handled by part-time employees or not at all. These include advising a youth group and leading a youth Shabbat service. In addition, these full-time teachers coordinate retreat programs, family education, and youth programming for High Holidays.

Often recent college graduates, these teachers see themselves, and are perceived by others, as serious educators. Because they are onsite all the time, they have the experience and time to develop curricula thoughtfully and establish deep relationships with families.

Full-time Teaching II Central Synagogue, New York NY (Reform)

Having struggled with teacher retention and wanting teachers who would invest themselves in the school community, the congregation decided (as the result of a strategic planning process for education) to create full-time teaching positions. These opportunities are not seen by the congregation as life-time careers, but rather as a fertile training ground for people in their late 20s and 30s who will use this as a stepping stone to other work in Jewish education.

The cost of hiring full-time teachers has been covered by increasing religious school fees and through generous donations by four congregants. The administrative benefits have been many. There is less need for substitute teachers, parent-teacher communication is better in both quantity and quality, better classroom materials are being developed and a real collegiality has developed among the full-time teachers through working together everyday

onsite. In addition, these teachers have developed important relationships with other congregational staff that has benefited the overall staff morale.

Renaissance Educators

Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston, Boston, MA

Using grant monies, and with additional support from participating congregations and Hebrew College, the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston (BJE) coordinates the Renaissance Educators program which is designed to allow congregations to hire full-time people who are considering a career in Jewish education. After going through a process of clarifying their vision, congregations are invited to combine a number of jobs within the congregation and create a job description that is designed to address its unique educational goals and needs. The Renaissance Educators do a variety of jobs; usually there is some teaching, some youth or family education, and some administration. The job descriptions are designed to provide “across-the-board” exposure so participants begin to understand what being a Jewish educator is all about.

In addition, all participants must participate in professional development and create an individualized learning plan. Funds are provided for participants to take 21 credits at Hebrew College, the equivalent of half of a Masters degree.

Question Guide for Contacting Nearby Congregations Regarding Teacher Recruiting

Before contacting the congregation(s), check with your educator regarding the appropriate person to speak to at each nearby congregation. When you reach that person, explain that a small team at your congregation is taking a fresh look at how you recruit teachers for your congregational religious school. As part of that project, you have been asked to gather information about how other congregations in the area approach teacher recruitment. Let them know that the conversation likely will take about 10 minutes and ask if they'd be willing to go ahead now or would like to schedule a different time. Be sensitive to the fact that some congregational schools may feel like they compete for the available pool of good teachers so you may encounter some initial hesitance to share information.

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to discuss your congregation/school's approach to teacher recruitment. I will have questions about the pools from which you look for teachers, the incentives you offer to attract teachers, and the obstacles you face in trying to attract good teachers for your school's needs.

Questions

- 1) When you recruit teachers for your school, what are the pools from which you try to find teachers? [If necessary, add:] For example, do you try to attract college students, congregants, public school teachers? What other kinds of people do you think of as pools you can tap?

What attracts teachers to teach in your school? What incentives or "benefits" do you offer or do you think help convince teachers to reach an agreement to teach in your school? [If necessary give examples of what you mean by incentives such as free or discounted congregational membership, higher salaries than other congregations or unique professional development opportunities].

What obstacles do you find get in your way when trying to attract good teachers? And what personal or external obstacles do you find seem to keep prospective teachers from committing to teach?

Thank the individual for taking the time to answer your questions.

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Question Guide for Contacting Your Central Agency for Jewish Education Regarding Teacher Recruiting

Before contacting the central agency, check with your educator regarding the appropriate person with whom to speak. When you reach that person, explain that a small team at your congregation is taking a fresh look at how you recruit teachers for your congregational religious school. As part of that project, you have been asked to gather information about how the central agency approaches and assists congregational schools with teacher recruitment. Let them know that the conversation likely will take about 10 minutes and ask if they'd be able to go ahead now or would like to schedule a different time.

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to discuss your agency's approach to, and role in, supporting teacher recruitment. I will have specific questions about the pools from which teachers can be recruited, the incentives that may be offered to attract teachers, and the obstacles you think prospective teachers face in committing to become teachers.

Questions

- 1) First, can you give me a general idea of what programs or services the central agency has in place today to assist congregations in their efforts to recruit teachers? If you would rather refer me to materials or information on a web site, that would be helpful, too.
- 2) When you help congregations in our area recruit teachers for their schools, what are the pools from which you (or they) try to find teachers? [If necessary, add:] For example, do you try to attract college students, congregants, public school teachers? What other kinds of people do you think of as pools that congregational schools can tap?

In your experience, what attracts teachers to teach in a congregational school? What incentives or "benefits" do they offer or do you think help convince teachers to reach an agreement to teach in a congregational school? [If necessary give examples of what you mean by "incentives" such as free or discounted congregational membership, higher salaries than other congregations or unique professional development opportunities].

What obstacles do you find get in the way when trying to attract good teachers? And what personal or external obstacles do you find seem to keep prospective teachers from committing to teach?

Thank the individual for taking the time to answer your questions.

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FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment—Meeting Three

Meeting Overview

Connection—10 minutes

Text Study: The Obligations of the Community—20 minutes

Core Discussion I: Analyzing Teacher Recruitment Strategies—20 minutes

Core Discussion II: Designing a Teacher Recruitment Plan—50 minutes

Reflection—15 minutes

Next Steps—5 minutes

Goals and Objectives of Meeting Three

By the end of the meeting, members of the team will:

- 1) Share and reflect upon what they learned about different recruitment strategies since the last meeting.

Through studying a commentary on the *V'ahavta* prayer, explore what it means for a community to be responsible for teaching—and finding teachers for—its children.

Map out a plan for teacher recruitment, identifying target populations, individual strategies, the steps required to accomplish each strategy and who is responsible for what.

Advance Preparation

Prior to the meeting, each team member will have read all four “Existing Teacher Recruitment Strategies...” handouts, each of which presents a set of strategies that congregations or communal agencies have developed to address an operative assumption about teacher recruitment. Each team member will have identified—and should be prepared to defend—at least 2-3 strategies that they think would be effective in finding new teachers for your school.

In addition, one or two team members will have been assigned to contact other religious schools in your area and, if applicable, a central agency for Jewish education, to learn about how they approach teacher recruiting. They should be prepared to present what they learned.

Remember to make a “parking lot” for off-topic ideas or questions and to have a copy of the *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* Roadmap available to remind team members where you are in the process.

Handouts for Meeting Three

Be sure to prepare copies of the following handouts for use during this meeting:

- Text Study: The Obligations of the Community, page 64
- Recruitment Strategy charts (two included here, use as many as you need), pages 65-66

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Meeting Facilitation Plan

Connection—10 minutes

As a way of starting the meeting by connecting people to each other and to the work of the meeting, ask each person to respond to the following:

*Based on our conversations so far, what can you see **yourself** doing—in the near future and over the next year—to help our congregation with teacher recruitment?*

Text Study: The Obligations of the Community—20 minutes

These texts, on page 64, expand on the *V'ahavta* prayer and spell out the obligations we have to teach our children, our grandchildren and the community's children.

Refer to the “Blessing Before Study” handout and have the group recite the prayer together. After reciting the blessing before study, ask someone to read each of the texts aloud. Lead a discussion of the question that follows the text. If appropriate, summarize people's responses to the last question as a way of bringing closure to the discussion and transitioning to Core Discussion I.

Core Discussion I: Analyzing Teacher Recruitment Strategies—20 minutes

Ask each team member to present the 2-3 strategies they think would be most effective in helping find the best teachers for your school. Urge each person to support his/her choices by speaking about how the strategies address:

- The **pools** of potential teachers available in your community (discussed at Meeting Two);
- The **incentives** your congregation offers (discussed at Meeting Two); and
- The **obstacles** to teacher recruitment experienced by your congregation (presented during Meeting One).

As team members present their preferred strategies, keep a running list on a flip chart or board (i.e. chalk board or white marker board). Based on the preferences of each team member, or other strategies that team members suggest, lead a group discussion to decide which of the strategies you would like to try for next year. Instead of voting, try reaching a consensus or try modifying the strategies so they contain elements important to each team member.

Choosing your strategies requires that the team consider several factors. The available pools of prospective teachers will be fairly simple to determine. As you think about the incentives you currently offer, remember that they might mean more to some prospective teachers than to others. Be clear about what you are offering teachers as you think about how best to reach them. You may also realize that there are additional incentives you could offer that would make your teaching positions more appealing. Factoring in the obstacles you face may involve not only examining your success with teacher recruitment in the past, but it may also require you to try to anticipate challenges in the future. The issues faced in one community are not always the same as those faced elsewhere.

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Furthermore, it is best that you be as realistic as possible about your capacity to achieve your goals. Although you are not being asked to assign responsibilities yet, be honest with yourselves about how many people, beyond those on your team, you will be able to enlist in helping you implement your strategies.

Finally, don't be afraid to try something no one else has done. Your congregation's situation is unique and you are the best judges of both what is needed and what will work in your community.

Core Discussion II: Designing a Teacher Recruitment Plan—50 minutes

There are several steps you need to take to design a recruitment plan that meets your needs and puts your resources to their best use. Your comprehensive plan will be developed over two meetings. Some of the plan will be developed at this meeting, additional work will be completed between meetings and the final pieces will be put in place at the next meeting. Your completed plan will consist of the following:

- The recruitment strategies you want to use (you will identify these in this meeting)
- For each strategy,
 - The steps required to make it happen (this meeting);
 - Who is responsible for each step (this meeting);
 - The deadlines by which each step needs to be accomplished (next meeting)
- A plan for engaging your congregational community in teacher recruitment throughout the year (to be discussed in the next meeting);
- An appendix containing all of the other Building Blocks pages you have developed throughout the process.
- An optional step is to summarize the insights from the Building Blocks pages into an Introduction to the plan that sets out, in narrative form, the insights your team has gained and the conclusions they've reached regarding:
 - Your reasons for creating a teacher recruitment strategy for your congregational school,
 - The primary goal of your religious school,
 - The qualities and capacities that make a teacher the right teacher for your school, given its primary goal and those expected regardless of goal,
 - The most promising pools from which to seek teachers for your school, and

- The mix of motivations, incentives, and obstacles that affect your school’s ability to attract prospective teachers.

Begin leading the team through the steps toward creating the teacher recruitment plan:

Step #1: Enter the team’s decisions from Core Discussion I into the Recruitment Strategy chart

Prior to the meeting, you will need to make multiple copies of the blank chart provided on page 66. Designate one chart for each strategy that the team selected and fill in the name of that strategy in the blank at the top of the page. If you have the capability in-house (or at a local copy store) you may want to enlarge several of these pages to poster size and tape them to a wall for all to see as you complete the charts.

Step #2: Break down each strategy into manageable steps

In some cases you may have a one-step strategy (i.e., make a phone call). Most likely, your strategies will each have several steps. Through discussion with the team, identify those steps and enter them in the left-hand column of the chart. There is room for six steps per strategy; this is intended only as a guide. Use additional pages as needed.

Step #3: Chart responsibilities

Accomplishing your recruitment plan will require the coordinated efforts of many different people. Lead a discussion with your team to determine who will be involved in each step in your plan (for each strategy) and the nature of their involvement. The chart lists the people who will most likely be involved. Feel free to add or delete titles or names in light of how your work will be organized. Involving people not on your team is a good way to get others to take ownership of teacher recruitment.

When doing Responsibility Charting, “involvement” in a task is identified in one of four ways, indicated by four letters:

- **R** stands for the person (or people) **Responsible** for taking action;
- **A** stands for the person (or people) who must **Approve**;
- **C** stands for the person (or people) who must be **Consulted**;
- **I** stands for the person (or people) who must be kept **Informed**.

The team’s discussion of the plan in this meeting will stop at this step and resume in the next meeting.

Step #4—Set deadlines

After this meeting, the team chair and educator should draft deadlines and create a timetable for your plan. They will present their work to the team for discussion at the next meeting (see next steps, below).

Reflection—15 minutes

As a way of closing the meeting and getting a sense of how people are thinking at this point in the process, ask each person to respond to the following:

In what ways is the work we have laid out for ourselves different from how you have worked in congregational committees in the past? What is more challenging about organizing our work this way? What will it take to support this level of coordination in our congregation? What might be the pitfalls?

Next Steps—5 minutes

Let the team members know that they have no specific preparation for the next meeting (unless you choose to assign to a team member other than the chair or educator the optional assignment listed and number 3 below).

Also let them know what you—the educator and team chair will be doing in preparation for the next meeting. You have two assignments, and an optional third:

- 1) Finish the Recruitment Strategy charts by drafting deadlines for the steps of each strategy in your plan. In doing so, you need to consider the school and congregational calendars, upcoming vacations and holidays. You may find it helps to work backwards from when you would like all of the strategies implemented. Create an overall timeline for your plan and be prepared to share and discuss it at the next meeting.
- 2) Over the past three meetings the team has “parked” in your “parking lot” subjects that you believe deserve more deliberation. Doing so during this process would have sidetracked your thinking and efforts. Now is the time to revisit that list and make decisions about how and when you want to address each topic as you look ahead. Be prepared to recommend to the team how you think these issues should be addressed and which one (at least one) you would like to address first.

Some examples of what you might find in your parking lot are:

- a) What should the goal(s) of our school be? What could we do to refocus what we do in our school?
- b) Given the strengths we would like to develop in our faculty, what experiences could we provide for them that would develop their talents in these areas?
- c) What additional incentives do we want to offer our teachers? How can we make this happen?

As you think about how to address any of these issues, it may help to consider these questions:

- d) Which stakeholders in our congregation should be part of this conversation?

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- e) What have we learned from the process of *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* that could help us structure and plan out the conversation?
- f) In what ways will decisions made regarding this issue impact other aspects, policies or people in our congregation? What could we do to temper this impact?

An optional step to prepare for Meeting Four and create a more polished final Teacher Recruitment Plan is to draft a narrative Introduction that consolidates and summarizes the insights captured and decisions made in the Building Blocks pages completed up to this point in the process. You can assign this step to the chair or educator, to another team member (perhaps one with a talent for writing clearly), or you can take the option to compile a legible set of the Building Blocks sheets into an appendix to the Plan instead of creating a narrative summary. If you do assign this task to someone, the narrative should capture:

- g) Your reasons for creating a teacher recruitment strategy for your congregational school,
- h) The primary goal of your religious school,
- i) The qualities and capacities that make a teacher the right teacher for your school, given its primary goal and those expected regardless of goal,
- j) The most promising pools from which to seek teachers for your school, and
- k) The mix of motivations, incentives, and obstacles that affect your school's ability to attract prospective teachers.

Text Study: The Obligations of the Community

After saying the blessing before study, please read the texts and discuss the questions that follow.

1. **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them to your children...**

From *V'ahavta* prayer

2. **Just as a parent is obligated to teach a child, so, too, is a parent obligated to teach a grandchild, as Deuteronomy 4:9 commands “and you shall teach them to your children and grandchildren.”**

Furthermore this charge is not contained to one's children and grandchildren alone. Rather, it is a mitzvah for each and every wise person to teach all students, even though they are not his [or her] children as Deuteronomy 6:7 states: “and you shall teach them to your children...” The oral tradition explains: “Your children, “these are your students, for students are also called children, as II Kings 2:3 states: “and the children of the prophets went forth.”

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:2*

Questions for Discussion

- 1) According to Maimonides' interpretation of the *V'ahavta* prayer, who are the “children” and who are the “teachers”?
- 2) How might one feel or think about one's student differently than one feels or thinks about one's child? What, to you, indicates that your congregation thinks of its students as its children?
- 3) What does Maimonides' interpretation suggest should be the role of the community (and the congregation) in guaranteeing children's education?
- 4) What do you think should be the community's responsibility for finding “wise” people to be our children's teachers? To what extent have you thought in the past about this being the community's—and not just the school's—responsibility?

Background

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, a.k.a. Maimonides, a.k.a. Rambam (1135-1205 CE)

One of the great Jewish philosophers of all times who was a physician and lived in Moorish Spain, the Middle East, and North Africa. He compiled the *Mishneh Torah*, a code of Jewish law, and wrote the *Thirteen Articles of Faith* and *Guide for the Perplexed*.

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Building Blocks

Recruitment Strategy

Target Prospective Teacher Pool(s):

STEPS	WHO IS R, A, C, OR I?								DEADLINES
	Religious School Committee	Educator	Rabbi	Board	Other:	Other:	Other:	Other:	
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
R=Responsible A=Approve C=Consulted I=Informed									

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Building Blocks

Recruitment Strategy

Target Prospective Teacher Pool(s):

STEPS	WHO IS R, A, C, OR I?								DEADLINES
	Religious School Committee	Educator	Rabbi	Board	Other:	Other:	Other:	Other:	
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
R=Responsible A=Approve C=Consulted I=Informed									

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FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment—Meeting Four

Meeting Overview

Connection—10 minutes

Core Discussion I: Finishing Your Plan—10 minutes

Text Study: Are We Done Yet?—15 minutes

Core Discussion II: Understanding Ongoing Teacher Recruitment—25 minutes

Core Discussion III: Revisiting Your “Parking Lot”—20 minutes

Reflection—20 minutes

Next Steps—20 minutes

Goals and Objectives of Meeting Four

By the end of the meeting, members of the team will:

- 1) Finish their Teacher Recruitment plan by incorporating the deadlines that were drafted by the chair and educator and (if completed) the narrative Introduction.

Through text study, explore the value of teacher recruitment as a communal responsibility.

Brainstorm ideas about how teacher recruitment can become a year-round responsibility for your congregation.

Based on recommendations from the chair and educator, decide which “parking lot” issues will be addressed in the near future.

Reflect on the *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* process and will affirm their commitment to it being a systematic, year-round, communal effort.

Consider the steps they can take to insure that their work will engage your congregational community.

Advance Preparation

The chair and educator will have drafted deadlines for the various steps of the strategies that are part of your Teacher Recruitment Plan.

The chair and educator will prepare recommendations for how the school and congregation should address issues that were “parked” during this process.

The chair, educator, or another team member may have completed the optional Introduction narrative summarizing the insights and conclusions from the accumulated Building Blocks sheets. Alternatively, a legible set of the Building Blocks sheets should be compiled for inclusion in an appendix.

Remember to make a “parking lot” for off-topic ideas or questions and to have a copy of the *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* Roadmap available to remind team members where you are in the process.

Handouts for Meeting Four

Be sure to prepare copies of the following handouts for use during this meeting:

- Text Study: Are We Done Yet?, page 71
- Ideas for Involving Our Congregation in Teacher Recruitment, page 72

Meeting Facilitation Plan Connection—10 minutes

As a way of starting the meeting by connecting people to each other and to the work of the meeting, ask each team member to respond to the following:

What is exciting to you about our developing teacher recruitment plan? What concerns do you have?

Core Discussion I: Finalizing Your Plan—10 minutes

Review with the team the deadlines and the timeline the chair and educator drafted since the last meeting. Make adjustments, as necessary, based on discussion and summarize orally what’s been agreed to. If a narrative summary has been prepared, distribute it to the team and ask them to offer any suggested edits or changes via email or post-meeting conversation.

Text Study: Are We Done Yet?—15 minutes

This text, on page 71, explores our obligation to participate in work that is never-ending. Refer to the “Blessing Before Study” handout and have the group recite the prayer together. After reciting the blessing before study, ask everyone to read the text. Lead a discussion of the questions that follow the text. The last question provides a transition into Core Discussion II, which begins with a summary review of the team members’ responses.

Core Discussion II: Understanding Ongoing Teacher Recruitment—25 minutes

Because teachers are critical members of your congregational community, thinking strategically about who they should be, where you are most likely to find them and how you are most likely to entice them to join your faculty are concerns that deserve—and require—attention for more than a few months a year. Because most congregations, however, delegate this responsibility to only one person (the educator) who often has only the summer to fill faculty openings, changing how you “do business” will take time and patience. The idea of engaging the congregational community in ongoing teacher recruitment will likely be new for most people, but it *can* become part of your congregation’s life.

Review the ideas in the previous paragraph with the full team and review the team’s responses to the last question of the text study: How can individuals in your community—and the process of recruitment—be enriched by thinking about teacher recruitment as an ongoing

and communal obligation? What concrete suggestions do you have for how this could happen?

Choose two or three of the ideas you brainstormed. For each of these ideas, discuss the following:

- Who, in the congregation, needs to be involved in making this happen? What kind of coordination between the professional staff and the laity is required?
- What procedures or mechanisms, if any, need to be in place in order for this to happen smoothly throughout the year?
- By this time next year, how will you know if your congregation, as a community, is engaged in teacher recruitment?
- What are the necessary first steps for seeing that each of these ideas is implemented?

Enter your ideas on the **Building Blocks** handout chart titled “Ideas for Involving Our Congregation in Teacher Recruitment.”

Core Discussion III: Revisiting Your “Parking Lot”—20 minutes

This is an opportunity for you, as the chair and the educator, to review with the team the issues that have been set aside over the course of the last three meetings for future consideration. It is not expected that you will resolve these issues at this time. Rather, you (the chair and educator) will recommend how these issues should be addressed and discuss your recommendations with the team. Out of this discussion should come some consensus about what should be addressed in the near future.

There are a number of projects and resources available that can help structure your thinking about broader issues or congregational education and guide your consideration of new possibilities. For example, ECE’s RE-IMAGINE Project helps congregations rethink what religious school education means to the life of the congregation and helps congregations consider and experiment with new models of learning. Isa Aron’s book, *Becoming a Congregation of Learners*, provides ideas for how congregations can think about and reposition the place of learning in congregational life.

Reflection—20 minutes

As a way of closing the meeting and getting a sense of how people are thinking as they reach the formal conclusion of the *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment* process, ask each person to respond to the following:

As a result of participating in the FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment process, how are you thinking differently about teacher recruitment? What did you like about this process? What aspects of it did you find challenging? What did you learn—either information or as a result of the process—that you think would be valuable to another area of congregational life?

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Next Steps—20 minutes

- 1) Assign a team member or the chair and educator to compile all of the final materials (Building Blocks or narrative Introduction, Recruiting strategies with timelines, and Ideas for Involving the Congregation into one document—your Teacher Recruitment Plan.
- 2) Share with the congregation what your team learned as a result of *FOCUS: Teacher Recruitment*. Give a report to the synagogue board and the religious school committee. Write an article for your synagogue bulletin.
- 3) Start work on implementing your Teacher Recruitment Plan immediately. While your energy is high and your creative juices are flowing, take the steps necessary to begin implementing your chosen strategies.
- 4) Talk individually to the people in the congregation—either professionals or lay—who you think are critical to teacher recruitment in the future. Share with them what you have learned. Let them know how you think they can help. Get them “on board” by involving them in some of your first steps.

In Six Months

To measure both your progress and your success, reconvene the team in six months (you should probably choose a date now). Be sure you have a copy of your plan with you. Ask the educator to prepare a report that includes an assessment of recruitment, interviewing and hiring going into the school year as well as the strengths and weaknesses of your newest faculty. Discuss the ways in which your congregation is more aware of and/or involved in teacher recruitment than it was in previous years. Identify ways in which targeted teacher recruitment is planned in the months ahead.

Text Study: Are We Done Yet?

After saying the blessing before study, read the text below and answer the questions that follow.

He [Rabbi Tarfon] would say, “It is not up to you to finish the work, yet you are not free to avoid it...”

Pirke Avot, Sayings of the Ancestors, 2:16

- 1) In the passages of *Pirke Avot* that precede this one, the “work” Rabbi Tarfon refers to is Jewish learning. What other kinds of work can you think of that obligate you and are never-ending?
- 2) Personally, what are the frustrations inherent in this kind of “work?” On the other hand, what are the long-term personal benefits of being part of an ongoing process?
- 3) How does the nature of this kind of “work” change over time when more than one person is responsible for moving it toward completion?
- 4) In what ways is teacher recruitment this kind of work? How can individuals in your community—and the process of recruitment itself—be enriched by thinking about teacher recruitment as an ongoing and communal obligation? What concrete suggestions do you have for how this could happen? Be sure to write your responses on a flip chart or board.

Background

Pirke Avot is a concise collection of sayings, likened to “pearls of wisdom,” from generations of rabbis who lived between circa 200 BCE – 200 CE.

Rabbi Tarfon was a second generation sage of the Mishnah (ca. 80-120 CE) who lived in Lydda (Lod).

Ideas for Involving Our Congregation in Teacher Recruitment

Ideas	Who needs to be involved?	What procedures need to be in place?	What will we take as evidence of our success?	What should be our first steps?
#1				
#2				
#3				