

MASA, Temple Shaaray Tefila

NEW YORK CITY, NY

WHO ARE THE LEARNERS? THE TEACHERS?

- Children in grades K-3 and their parents
- MASA coordinator, three additional teachers, one with song-leading experience
- Babysitting provided for younger siblings
- Older siblings can participate but must still attend regular religious school in the appropriate grade

The coordinator brings family education experience to the model. Teachers bring informal education experience, not necessarily classroom experience.

WHEN DOES THE MODEL TAKE PLACE?

- Core program meets on Sunday from 3:30-5:30, approximately 2x a month for a total of 18 sessions
- Additional sessions take place on Holidays and Shabbat morning/afternoon
- Hebrew tutoring for third grade is at individual family's convenience mid-week or Sunday mornings

WHERE DOES THE MODEL TAKE PLACE?

- At the synagogue on Sundays, Shabbat and Holidays
- Almost always in larger gathering space instead of classroom
- Hebrew tutoring also at synagogue
- In families' homes for Shabbat dinner once or twice a year
- Some off-site gathering depending the chosen track

Being able to utilize larger spaces in the synagogue provides opportunities for more creativity. Projects can be more sophisticated as well.

HOW IS THE LEARNING DESIGNED?

- Families choose one of two tracks offered each year that they want to explore
- Each track focuses on a particular theme
- Learning more informal in nature

- Parents learning together with their children
- Parents and children also engage in parallel learning for 45 minutes of the Sunday session.

Learning tracks thus far include Celebrations, Jewish Super Heroes and Heroines, and Shalom in the Home. Topics are rotated from year to year. Next year a Jewish New York track will be one of the two offered. Hebrew tutoring will be offered next year to support children going into the third grade, the year that Hebrew instruction begins in the regular religious school model.

WHY IS THE LEARNING DESIGNED THIS WAY?

- MASA grew out of the congregation's process during its participation in The RE-IMAGINE Project.
- Core elements of the congregation's vision for education included connecting Jewish learning to Jewish living, providing opportunity for intergenerational learning, and providing the opportunity for choice around when learning took place and what the content would be.

The addition of a Hebrew tutoring component at the learner's convenience is another example of providing choice for families within the structure of MASA.

KEY FIRST STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION

- In year one, only one track offered. In years two and three, two tracks offered.
- A brochure created with a clear calendar and learner outcomes.
- Interested families reached out to friends to join them.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR MASA

- Two governance groups in the first two year.
- MASA Initiative Sub-Team attended to the bigger picture.
- Celebrations Advisory Sub-Team organized and collected feedback from participating parents.

Currently the MASA Initiative Sub-Team serves both of the functions of the original teams.

BUDGET/RESOURCES

- A Coordinator hired for MASA.
- Additional teachers required – currently 3.
- Dinners and fees for trips off-site.
- More sophisticated projects for families mean higher costs per lesson.

It is worth noting that the student-teacher ratio in MASA is much lower – 1-4 instead of 1-16. Also, this year families with children in the 3rd grade will pay a two-day a week religious school fee vs. the one-day a week fee other MASA families will pay.

INTEGRATION OF MASA FAMILIES AND LARGER CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNITY.

- MASA families participate in congregation-wide holiday celebrations and events including Mitzvah Day.
- MASA added a grade each year so that families could remain in the model as their children grew.
- Hebrew tutoring for 3rd grade children will happen concurrently with tutoring for 6th and 7th grade.

IMPACT ON LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONGREGATION

- Some families having Shabbat dinner more regularly and making Friday night into a family night.
- Increased connection to the congregation for others.
- Connections between participating families especially strong.
- Adding a grade level each year increases the level of impact across the board.

The nature of impact varies among participating families. Those who chose to participate in the Celebrations track tend to appreciate the social component of MASA. Families in the Jewish Super Heroes and Heroines track tend to appreciate the content component of the model.