**Express Innovation Social Connectors Conversation #2**

We’ve learned how impactful the social connection conversation can be. The Express Innovation Congregations have shared how transformative the social connection conversation is. The value cannot be overstated. It builds community and fosters relationships which are core design principles in our learning models.

We have created the outline and provided the texts to support a meaningful second social connection conversation. Your team will use this recommended tool at your discretion. It can be used at virtually any time during the year. The participants of the group will vary from congregation to congregation. It can be used in the beginning of the year as a catalyst to forge connections and create community. It will be equally effective as a tool to deepen existing connections mid-year or even at the end of the year. In some it will be a mix of veteran and new participants if your model expanded in enrollment. In others, it will be the same participants from last year if your model expanded in frequency. This conversation is designed to work with either variation. Ideal size for a group is between 6-8 people.

Notes for Facilitator – *Welcome group and thank them for joining.  Explain that we will be spending the next 1 - 1 ½ hours together learning some things about ourselves and each other in the context of exploring our children’s and family’s Jewish future together, which is a core principle in our new learning model. Explain that the Hopes and Dreams conversation that some of your parents experienced last year was successful in several ways – of primary importance; it connected parents to each other in a meaningful way to engender cohesion and community of purpose.  It was also a vehicle to bring hopes and dreams to the table and helped capture elements that you (parents) want to be included in the new learning model.  We now have the opportunity to partake in a second conversation.  It will provide a framework to engage the voices of parents for sharing more hopes and dreams as we forge deeper connections between ourselves and build our children’s/ family’s Jewish future together.*

Connection:

1. Facilitator instructs each person to introduce themselves.  Say their name and speaking in the voice of someone in his/her family, name strength or good quality you have.  i.e. I’m speaking as my daughter, who would say that I always manage to find a good side of other people.
2. Facilitator asks each person to think about their family, the family they have today or the family they grew up in, and think about a time that they felt especially together and connected.   Facilitator will ask them to remember the situation and context that made them feel connected. Facilitator should begin then invite responses.  Possible examples (if authentic of course) could be family milestone such as bar/bat mitzvah, special experience such as a trip, extenuating circumstances such as an illness or something more simple such as cleaning up a flooded basement.   Ask each person to share.
3. Facilitator asks the group to name the characteristics that enabled connection in these personal stories. Capture these characteristics on paper; they’ll be a valuable resource as your team builds the new model.
4. Facilitator introduces texts. Facilitator will explain - great things can happen when there is a sense of connectedness and shared purpose.   Let’s look at some examples of things that have happened, decisions that have been made, and actions taken because of feelings of connectedness or a shared purpose.  When you read these pieces, consider: what enables connectedness? What do you learn from examples of people who are driven by connectedness and shared purpose?

The following are short texts in a separate handout.  Have people in groups of 2 or 3 select one and read together.   You may want to assign the various texts to insure that more than one will be reviewed and discussed.   Ask the groups to read these texts thinking about the qualities related to connectedness that they would like to share.

* 1. Sherry Turkle – The Flight from Conversation (excerpts).
  2. Reverend Corey Brooks - A Pastor’s Effort to Improve his Community
  3. Take Them a Meal – The Story of Creating this Website
  4. Kevin O’Donnell – One Man’s Steady Struggle
  5. Moshe - Leader and Family Man

Consider some of the ingredients in these examples that contribute to the strengthening of family and community.   Name them and discuss together.

The goal of learning at [name of congregation] is to foster connectedness and our model will do that. Each of one of us can make a simple commitment to do one thing to increase connectedness in our family, with others, to the congregation. As a group – make a list of possibilities – facilitator should capture these on flip chart paper. Give participants some quiet time to review list and select something for themselves – a simple commitment. (Consider – give each person something to write their commitment on, a magnet for the fridge or card for their wallet).

Facilitator will explain that this list of possibilities will be carefully reviewed by the planning team as the new model of learning is expanded. Thank everyone for coming and participating.