

Taking Bold Next Steps

לֹא אֵתָּה בֶן חוֹרִין לְהַבְטִיל מְמִנָּה.

הוא היה אומר, לא עליך המלאכה לגמור,
ולא אתה בן חורין להבטיל ממנה.

He would say, "It is not up to you to finish the work,
yet you are not free to avoid it."

Pirke Avot 2:16



Table of Contents – Taking Bold Next Steps

Page	
Welcome	1
Preparation	2
Orientation Guide for New Laypeople	
Orientation Guide for New Synagogue Professionals	
Activity 2 – The Background on Your Initiative – Sub-team Preparation Guide	
Meeting One:	12
Meeting Plan	
Goals and Outcomes	
Advance Preparation	
Meeting Overview	
Post Meeting Follow-up	
Activities/Text Studies	
Activity 1 – Vision Commentary, Redux – Small Group Discussion Guide	
Blessing for Text Study	
Text Study Aleph – Looking Back, Looking Ahead	
Activity 3 – Reporting on Your Initiative – Sub-team Preparation Guide	
Activity 4 – Reporting on Your Initiative – Educator Preparation Guide	
Meeting Two:	21
Meeting Plan	
Goals and Outcomes	
Advance Preparation	
Meeting Overview	
Post Meeting Follow-up	
Activities/Text Studies	
Activity 5 – The Five Building Blocks of Educational Vision	
Activity 5 – How Far Have We Gone – Facilitator’s Guide	
Activity 5 – How Far Have We Gone – Small Group Discussion Guide	
Text Study Bet – Moses Gets a Peek at the Future	



Meeting Three:

27

Meeting Plan

Goals and Outcomes

Advance Preparation

Meeting Overview

Post Meeting Follow-up

Activities/Text Studies

Activity 6 – Moving Towards Your Vision – Small Group Discussion
Guide

Text Study Gimmel – Joshua’s Turn

Activity 7 – Guardianship Group Models



Welcome

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Regardless of when your congregation last consulted a RE-IMAGINE Guidebook, welcome back to the wonderful world of RE-IMAGINE and ECE! Over the past months or years, you have been experimenting with new kinds of learning for your congregation's children and incorporating these changes, and the processes that led to them, into your educational program and congregational life. Now you find yourselves wanting to keep your momentum going by **taking the next bold steps** in the spiraling series of innovations along in your RE-IMAGINE journey. We are delighted to support you as you move ahead.

We always seem to be able to find wisdom in our Jewish tradition that speaks to us at important moments of our personal and communal lives. In *Pirke Avot* (Sayings of the Ancestors), Rabbi Tarfon says

הוא הִיא אֹמֵר, לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְלָאכָה לְגִמּוֹר, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין
לְהַבְטִיל מִמֶּנָּה.

He would say, “It is not up to you to finish the work, yet you are not free to avoid it...”
(*Pirke Avot* 2:16)

In the context of *Pirke Avot*, the “work” Rabbi Tarfon is addressing is the study of Torah. For our purposes, you can find inspiration in this message as you continue to do the “work” of creating an alternative model for learning Torah in your congregation. It may feel, indeed, like your work is never finished, but completing the work is not your job. What you are engaged in is the fulfillment of your obligation to keep the process vital and ongoing as you continue the journey toward reaching your vision.

Preparation

Your Starting Point

Congregations doing *RE-IMAGINE: Taking Bold New Steps* are starting at different places. You have taken at least one bold step by implementing at least one initiative as you move towards realization of your vision for an alternative model of your religious school. You may or may not have moved further. You will find that this Guidebook acknowledges these different starting places.

No matter how you have arrived at where you are, however, you now are ready to move ahead but are wondering what to do and where the energy and leadership will come from to keep you going. Common questions at this point are:

- How can we take stock of where we are?
- How do we get people to understand that we are not finished?
- What should we be doing next?
- What if our leadership is burned out?
- How do we involve new people?

These three meetings will help you determine the direction in which you want to go and how to take those next bold steps.

Goals and Outcomes for RE-IMAGINE: Taking Bold New Steps

The *RE-IMAGINE: Taking Bold New Steps* process is designed so that, over the course of three carefully-planned meetings, a team from your congregation will:

1. Revisit your vision for an alternative model for your religious
2. Develop a deep understanding of your current initiative and determine how far it has moved you toward realization of your vision.
3. Learn about the Five Building Blocks of Educational Innovation and reflect on how each of these building blocks is addressed in your current initiative.
4. Assess what additional innovations would move you closer to the realization of your vision and choose which to include in your next round of innovation.
5. Consider ways to create a group that will guard and advocate for your vision as your congregation continues its spiral of innovation.

How this work is structured

The *RE-IMAGINE: Taking Bold New Steps* Guidebook is organized into four sections:

- Preparation
- Meeting One—Revisiting Our Vision – 2 hours
- Meeting Two—Assessing Our Progress – 2 hours
- Meeting Three—Growing Our Vision – 2 ½ hours

The three meetings build on each other, so it is important to work through all three. In particular, there are notes and documents from Meetings One and Two that will be used, as indicated, in your deliberations during Meeting Three.

Goals and Outcomes for Meeting One

6. Establish a baseline understanding of previous RE-IMAGINE work and outcomes, including how the vision was developed and how it has guided your decision-making.
7. Bring new people into the RE-IMAGINE process.
8. Begin to plan for engaging new leadership in an on-going project.

Goals and Outcomes for Meeting Two

1. Learn about how your initiative(s) is(are) working.
2. Determine what has been learned from the implementation of your initiative(s).
3. Consider the building blocks of educational vision in order to check the alignment of your initiative(s) to your vision.
4. Measure how far you have come and how far you have yet to go to realize your vision.

Goals and Outcomes for Meeting Three

1. Select your bold next steps.
2. Determine who will assume the leadership responsibilities for this next round of innovation.
3. Determine what kind of guardian group should guard your vision and monitor your innovations' alignment and coherence.

Additional resources

Consultant support

Because of your prior RE-IMAGINE experience, you may find you have few questions about the materials provided to you or about your team process along the way. However, if you do get stuck, or have a particularly challenging question, you are encouraged to contact ECE for support.



Who should be involved

Core participants

As in your RE-IMAGINE experience, you will need a committed layperson who will chair these three meetings, meet with the educator before each one and strategically plan with the educator and/or rabbi. It is possible that the person who has been your chair from the start is the right person to continue doing this work. However, it also is possible that you may be ready for a change. This is a “natural break” in your RE-IMAGINE journey and so you may want to take the opportunity to engage new leadership.

Altogether, you will need a group of approximately the same size as your RE-IMAGINE Task Force. At a minimum, the team of people you assemble should include:

- The existing Task Force chairperson or the person who is spear-heading your current innovation(s).
- The person who has been chosen, or may likely be chosen, to oversee your bold next steps
- The previous Task Force chairperson (if there has been a change)
- 1-2 Religious School committee members (who may represent other constituencies being mentioned)
- A teacher who has been involved in the new initiative(s)
- The rabbi
- The educator

Additional participants

There are several categories of people from which you should choose the additional participants. You should include:

- those who WERE involved in RE-IMAGINE, who were an asset to your deliberations and who, for whatever reasons, dropped off along the way
- those who ARE involved currently and have “on the ground” experience
- those whom you believe WILL BE involved in the months and years ahead in the continued realization of your vision

The mix of people will vary based on your circumstances – how far you have progressed, how long it has been since you last met, and who has been involved.

Another option – working within the existing education governance structure

Another option for these three meetings is to work within your existing education governance structure – religious school committee or education board. The particular circumstances of your congregation – how long it has been since you’ve engaged in RE-IMAGINE work, who is currently involved, the current role of the religious school committee/education board – all contribute to this decision.

Whether you choose to create a team outside of the existing governance structure or within it, it is still important to have the right people involved. The people listed above in the core participants should be involved however you choose to constitute a team.

Inviting the team

Once decisions have been made about whom to involve, you need to invite them. You can make phone calls or send a formal letter. In either case you should invite them to participate, briefly describe the task, delineate the time commitment and the meeting dates, and ask 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.

Dear _____,

As you know, we embarked ____ years/months ago on The RE-IMAGINE Project, a strategic process that has led to changes in how our congregation educates our children. I/We would like to invite you to join me/us on a team of select people who will help us think about how to best continue the innovations we have begun so that we may more fully realize the vision that has guided us to this point.

The team will meet three times, using materials developed by the Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE), the same synagogue transformation project that guided and supported us in our initial efforts. In addition, you may be asked to read an article or prepare some thoughts prior to each meeting.

The following dates have been chosen for our three meetings:

I/We hope you will join us in this effort to continue to provide our children, families and entire congregation meaningful and effective Jewish educational experiences. Please let us know your interest by contacting me/us by _____.

I/We look forward to hearing from you.

B’shalom,

Rabbi/Educator/Chair

Once people have agreed to serve on the team, be sure to send them copies of your vision (and goals, if you have them) and a description of your first initiative.



Orienting new people

One thing you can be sure of in synagogue life is that people change their involvements and their levels of involvement on a regular basis. Leadership goes through cycles and professional staff may turnover. One of the challenges of sustaining a culture of innovation in your congregation is managing these changes so that people who step in to fill others' shoes understand and appreciate the essence of the work they are about to assume. Thus, you need to consciously engage new people who you hope will become your next generation of proponents and leaders.

You may not realize it, but over the past years your thinking about Jewish education for children has evolved. In order to involve people who were not on your original Task Force, you need to take some time to "bring them up to speed" so they are familiar with both your vision and its goals as well as how your Task Force did its work and thinks about change. You need to transfer your accumulated learning to them in order to enculturate your next generation of RE-IMAGINE supporters and leadership.

On page 8 you will find a guide to use when designing an appropriate orientation for your new lay people. The format you use will depend on how much information you want to share, who you think should be involved and everyone's availability. If you only have a few people to reach you may want to use the guide to prepare for individual phone conversations or, if you have a group to orient, you may want to ask them all to arrive an hour early for the first meeting.

For a new rabbi or educator, please use the guide on page 9. In this case, you want to be sure that a well-respected layperson, perhaps with the assistance of a continuing rabbi or educator, meets with the new professional to describe both the RE-IMAGINE experience and what his/her particular role should be.

However you decide to orient your new people, just make sure that, before Meeting One, anyone who hasn't been involved before has an inside and in-depth understanding of the RE-IMAGINE experience and what went into developing your vision. You should encourage them to ask questions during the three meetings but also warn them that you may ask to defer a response until after the meeting.

Planning and Facilitating Your Meetings

Plan ahead

We suggest that the chairperson of this group meet in advance of each meeting with the educator to review the flow of the meeting, the required handouts and to delegate responsibilities. You do not need to form a separate Leadership Team for these meetings, although you are welcome to do so.

Keep a record of your meeting

You will want to keep notes of discussions in Meetings One and Two so that they can be used during your deliberations in Meeting Three. The notes you will need for Meeting Three are:

- Responses to Question #3 on the Vision Commentary, Redux Small Group Discussion Guide – Looking Ahead to Learning Experiences in Five Years (Meeting One)
- Responses to the question about goals for achieving your vision from Question #4 on the Vision Commentary, Redux Small Group Discussion Guide (Meeting One)
- Flip chart sheet notes or the notes from the How Far Have We Come? Small Group Discussion Worksheet (Meeting Two)

Your “parking lot”

As you probably already have experienced, many topics come up for discussion during meetings that deserve attention, but are off topic. Keep a running list of these in your “parking lot” so that 1) people’s concerns are acknowledged and 2) the educator and the religious school committee (or any others who might need to be involved) have a list of ideas and concerns they can work from in the future.

Room set-up

Room set-up and coffee set-up (if applicable) need to be requested.

Communicating with Your Congregation

As a result of these three meetings, you will decide in which direction your bold new steps will take you. Keeping your congregation abreast of the kinds of conversations you are having now will begin to develop awareness and support for the future. Informing the congregation, even at this early stage, that more change is ahead, will help prepare and smooth the way for what is yet to come.

Orientation Guide for New Laypeople

In order to bring new people on board to RE-IMAGINE, you need to give them some background about how the project worked, who was involved, the decision-making process and the outcomes. Obviously, you will not be able to walk them through 18 months of meetings, but you should be able to identify the critical discussions, important turning points, and group insights that emerged.

Useful information to share

Use the following questions to help you determine what is most important for your new people to know about what has transpired over the past few years. By having this conversation with new people before Meeting One you will cut back on the amount of time you need to spend during the meeting stopping the discussion to explain language, the process, or your vision.

1. How and why did our congregation get involved with RE-IMAGINE in the first place?
2. Who was on the original Task Force?
3. What were Task Force meetings like? How were they structured? What is text study like? How were the meetings similar to and different from other committee meetings?
4. What were the areas of consensus on the Task Force? What were the areas of disagreement? How were they resolved?
5. How did the Task Force arrive at our congregation's vision for an alternative model of the religious school? Which Significant Issues did the Task Force decide were most critical?
6. Why did the Task Force choose to start implementing this vision the way it did?
7. What did the Task Force learn about our congregation, Jewish education, and change from their work together?

Useful materials to share and explain

- The ECE Roadmap (from your RE-IMAGINE Guidebook)
- Why Study Text? Handout (from your RE-IMAGINE Guidebook)
- ECE Adaptation Guide (from your RE-IMAGINE Guidebook)
- Your vision (also going to all participants)
- A description of your first initiative (also going to all participants)

Orientation Guide for New Synagogue Professionals

A new rabbi or educator to your congregation initially works very hard to absorb as much about your congregational culture as quickly as possible while also mastering the many tasks required of him/her. Orienting this person to the work and process of RE-IMAGINE is important because of the unique role he/she has in the congregation. Ideally, discussion of your RE-IMAGINE work was part of this person's interview process and you were able to hire someone who you know is open to new possibilities, understands what you are trying to achieve, and who is thoughtful about organizational function and structure.

Below are topics that should be discussed with a new rabbi or educator prior to Meeting One:

- The structure of the RE-IMAGINE journey
 - The roadmap
 - The 6-part meeting structure
 - Text study
 - Online learning
- The “Big Ideas” of RE-IMAGINE
 - Collaborative leadership—Give some examples of how that has worked so far
 - Significant Issues and Underlying Assumptions
 - Role of vision in decision-making
- Your vision
 - What went into its creation
 - What it represents for your congregation
 - How it has already had an impact on your decision-making
- This synagogue professional's unique role
 - What you need this person to do—and not do
 - How you hope this person will collaborate with laypeople and other staff involved in innovation
 - Ways in which you hope this person will support the vision facilitate the on-going work
 - How you can structure this person's involvement so that his/her time is used most effectively

Handouts to share with a new rabbi or educator:

- The ECE Roadmap (from your RE-IMAGINE Guidebook)
- Why Study Text? Handout (from your RE-IMAGINE Guidebook)
- ECE Adaptation Guide (from your RE-IMAGINE Guidebook)



- Your vision (also going to all participants)
- A description of your first initiative (also going to all participants)



Sub-team Preparation Guide: Activity 2 The Background on Your Initiative

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Thank you for agreeing to prepare a report that describes the background on your initiative. The purpose of this report is to remind returning Task Force members and tell new team members about how the initiative was chosen and what were the expectations at the time.

Try to answer the following questions. You may need to speak to other former Task Force members in order to jog your memory or look at documentation of the discussions. You will have about 10 minutes to deliver your report and to take questions, so plan on hitting the highlights.

- Which other initiatives were considered?
- Why was this initiative chosen?
- In developing this initiative, you chose to pull one of the following levers for change – who are the learners, who are the teachers, where does the learning take place, and when does the learning take place. Which lever(s) was pulled in the first initiative and why?
- How did you expect this initiative would move you toward your vision?
- What goals were you trying to achieve and/or what were considered indicators of success?
- What was the expectation about the next steps after launching this initiative?

Meeting One—Revisiting our Vision

Meeting Plan

Welcome – 5 minutes
Connection – 15 minutes
Core Discussion I – 40 minutes
Text Study – 20 minutes
Core Discussion II – 25 minutes
Reflection – 10 minutes
Next Steps – 5 minutes

Notetaker:

Facilitator(s):

Goals and Outcomes

1. Establish a baseline understanding of previous RE-IMAGINE work and outcomes, including how the vision was developed and how it has guided your decision-making.
2. Bring new people into the RE-IMAGINE process.
3. Begin to plan for engaging new leadership in an on-going project.

Advance Preparation

- Prior to the meeting, the new people (laypeople and/or professionals) need to be oriented to what transpired during your previous RE-IMAGINE experience, following the guides provided.
- Upon acceptance of the invitation to participate in these three meetings, everyone should receive a copy of your vision (and goals if you have them) as well as a description of your first initiative.
- 1-2 people who participated in the initial Task Force need to prepare a background report to present to the team on how the first initiative was formulated and chosen. A handout is provided for preparing this report is on page 11.
- Handouts for each person:
 - Looking Forward flowchart (from the Guidebook)
 - Vision Commentary, Redux worksheet Discussion Guide
 - Blessing before study
 - Text study

Meeting Overview

Welcome (5 minutes)

The chair should welcome everyone to the meeting and thank them for agreeing to participate in process of deciding which next bold steps your congregation should take in order to realize its vision of an alternative model of Jewish education for your children. You can give a quick overview of the purpose of each meeting.

- Meeting One – Revisiting the Vision and the Choice of Our Initiative
- Meeting Two – Assessing Our Progress
- Meeting Three – Determining the Bold Next Steps

Connection (15 minutes)

To connect people to each other and the work at hand, first ask the people who are new to RE-IMAGINE to introduce themselves by name and to answer the following questions:

When do you remember first hearing about RE-IMAGINE? What did it sound like it was about? What do you think it has accomplished?

Next, ask those who were on the original Task Force to introduce themselves by name and to answer the following questions:

What do you remember thinking and feeling about RE-IMAGINE at the very beginning? What were the highlights of the experience? What did the Task Force accomplish of which you are particularly proud?

If there is time, you can invite the new people to ask the veterans about their experiences on the Task Force. If questions or comments arise about your actual programs or an evaluation of their success, you can post them in the parking lot and remind people that they will be addressed at a later date. There will be time in Meeting Two to assess your accomplishments.

Core Discussion I—Vision Commentary, Redux (40 minutes)

One of the basic tenets underlying the RE-IMAGINE process is that changes you make in your educational program should be driven by the alternative model for your religious school that you described in your vision. Therefore, in order to plan ahead for future innovations, it is critical to revisit your vision, reflecting on it with wiser, experienced eyes.

(Some congregations developed just a vision during their RE-IMAGINE journey. Others also derived goals from their vision. Whichever documents you have, work with them at this time.)

Last time you offered commentary on your vision the Task Force looked at a draft version and commented on it with post-its. Now you have an opportunity to look at it again, after

you've had a chance to "live" with it for awhile, in order to reflect on its meaning and how it has been used to guide your work. This exercise has three parts:

Part 1—Allow about 5 minutes for each person to answer the questions on the Vision Commentary, Redux worksheet.

Part 2—Divide in groups of 3-4 people each and allow about 10 minutes for people to share and compare their responses.

Part 3—Reassemble as a large group. The facilitator should lead a brief discussion, focusing on

- how, to date, the vision has informed the changes that have occurred in your congregation, and
- what the goals are going forward.

NOTE: Be sure to collect the individual worksheets. The responses to the 3rd question – Looking Ahead to Learning Experiences in 5 Years – should be collated for use in Meeting Three. You should also document the responses and discussion about goals going forward for use in Meeting Three.



Text Study—Looking Back; Looking Ahead (15 minutes)

Near the end of his life, Moses chose Joshua to assume leadership of the Jewish people. This text imagines what it was like for Joshua to spend time with Moses during these final days.



Core Discussion II—Exploring Your Initiative's Roots (25 minutes)

Give everyone a chance to read through the description of the Task Force's first initiative.

Have 1-2 people who were on the original Task Force report to the team about how the first initiative was formulated and chosen. A guide for this is on page 11.

Open the floor for questions and comments. Veteran Task Force members may want to add their own thoughts. Encourage those newly involved to ask questions about the process of arriving at the initiative and how the chosen initiative fit into the Task Force's vision of the future. Again, this is not a time to evaluate the initiative, just to understand it. Questions or comments about the actual implementation and functioning of the initiative may be put on your parking lot list for later review.



Reflection (10 minutes)

Pose the following question to get a sense of what the group is thinking and feeling at this point in the process:

What did you learn about how decisions were made in The RE-IMAGINE Project? What did you learn about how we are trying to think differently about how we educate our children?

The facilitator can wrap up this exercise by pointing out the principles of vision driven change, collaborative leadership that helped drive the process, and the new educational principles that are included in your vision and initiative.



Next Steps (5 minutes)

Announce the time and place of the next meeting.

☞Form sub-team to report back on your initiative

Choose a sub-team of 2-3 people who will prepare to report back at the next meeting about your initiative. Their report should answer the following questions: What is happening? What is the experience like for the students, the teachers and the families (if applicable)? A guide for this sub-team is on page 19.

☞Educator's report on your initiative

A discussion of your initiative at the next meeting would not be complete without hearing your educator's perspective. There is a guide for the educator to follow when preparing his/her remarks on page 20.

Post-Meeting Follow-up

Collection of notes

- Collate responses to question #3 on the Vision Commentary, Redux worksheet (What Learning Experiences will Look Like in Five Years) for use in Meeting Three.
- Document the discussion of the goals for achieving the vision going forward

Communication Ideas

Alert your congregation to the fact that your group is meeting to discuss how you are taking the next bold steps towards your vision. You might also want to share with them, again, your original written vision.

The Blessing Before Study

To be recited before every text study

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסֹק בְּדִבְרֵי 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.

Please note that God's Hebrew name appears on this page. As a sign of respect, instead of discarding it after use you may prefer to store it in a geniza—a place where printed materials containing God's name and old ritual objects are collected in preparation for ritual burial.



Text Study – נ – Aleph

Looking Back; Looking Ahead

After saying the blessing before study, read the following text and discuss the questions below in small groups.

Near the end of his life, Moses chose Joshua to assume leadership of the Jewish people. This text imagines what it was like for Joshua to spend time with Moses during these final days.

At night, when the last of the tribes and their elders had dispersed, we would sit together in his tent. He had spoken all day before the Tent of Meeting, speaking to each tribe in turn, saying the words the Lord had given to him.

“Words,” he would often say to me as we sat by a small fire, “our God is a God of words, and we will be a people of words.” And indeed, because I stood by him all these days, hearing the variations and the repetitions of words, I, as much as anyone who heard him, felt how the words were founding our wilderness travail into a story and building the bulwarks of our law.

And he was very old in those days, very old. There were few beside him who had survived since the holocaust of Passover night. Aaron was gone. Miriam was gone. He was alone now, this small man. I was always surprised standing next to him at his slightness, but now in his great age he seemed to grow frail. He had been a father to me, and increasingly now in his exhaustion I felt I was the son upon whom he leaned. With a touch of mirth he would call me his staff, sometimes his right hand, his Benjamin. Yet in spite of this intimacy he was always Moses, the mysterious man whom we knew and never knew, and whom we obeyed in the belief that in obeying him we obeyed his God that was still becoming our God. We were still in many ways a servile people...

Dr. Peter Pitzele, Joshua's Moses, Learn Torah With... (5755), p. 334

Questions for Discussion:

1. Which do you prefer—reading an actual text from the Torah or this kind of text that imagines a biblical character's experience? What is gained and lost in each?
2. How would you explain the phrase “his God that was still becoming our God?” What does this suggest about the process of change?
3. What personal experience do you have with either passing on or receiving a legacy?
4. To what extent have the “words” of your vision given your congregation a “story” and “bulwarks” that adequately explain and support what you ultimately hope to create?

Background

Peter Pitzele, a psychotherapist, developed a method of text study called bibliodrama in which participants to explore the psychological and emotional lives of biblical characters.





Sub-team Guide: Activity 3

Reporting on Your Initiative

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the sub-team of 2-3 people that will report back at the next meeting about your initiative. This report should answer the following questions: What is happening? What is the experience like for the students, the teachers and the families (if applicable)? There are a number of ways in which you can gather this information. In order to collect feedback from a variety of perspectives you should choose more than one of the following:

You could “visit” and observe your initiative. This is possible when there is a particular day and time when it is possible to see your initiative in action. Not all initiatives lend themselves to this kind of observation. If this is your choice, ask yourselves these questions during your visit:

- Who are the learners and what are they doing?
- What is the subject matter?
- What is the teacher’s role? What is the nature of his/her interactions with the learners?
- How would you describe the learning environment?

You could personally interview those touched by your initiative. This may be done in person or over the phone. You will want to talk with students, parents and teachers. Your conversations need not be longer than 20 minutes, but they should touch on the following:

- From your perspective, what is different about this educational experience?
- How would you describe the student/teacher/family interactions? Are they the same as or different than they were before? Please give examples.
- What do you think is the value of this kind of educational experience for you? What do you think its value is for our teachers, our students, our families and our congregation?

You could conduct an internet survey. Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com) and Zoomerang (www.zoomerang.com) are free survey services that might meet your needs. Written surveys can be a quick way to gather information, though it is less nuanced than data collected in person. Keep in mind that writing survey questions is an art and requires a very clear understanding of what it is you want to learn. You should contact ECE if you decide to do a survey. We have some standard survey questions to use and may even have data from our own research into your congregation.

Whatever method you use to collect information, collate your data and be prepared to present it to the team clearly and coherently. You may want to prepare a handout with key points or highlights to accompany your presentation. Check your use of judgmental language to ensure that it is balanced. For example, if 55% of people like something, saying “more than half the people liked it” is more appropriate than saying “almost everyone loved it.”



Educator's Guide: Activity 4 Reporting on Your Initiative

As the synagogue professional closest to your initiative's implementation, you have a unique perspective. You have seen the initiative develop and know, first hand, about how those involved are responding to it. Please use the following questions to guide your remarks to the team about your initiative. It would be helpful if you could answer each of these questions by considering the four commonplaces: learner, teacher, content and context/milieu/learning environment

1. From your perspective, what are the successes of this initiative? What evidence do you have to support this?
2. From your perspective, what are the greatest challenges this initiative presents? What evidence do you have to support this?
3. In what ways has this initiative had an impact on the rest of your educational program and your congregation?
4. How has this initiative moved you closer to the RE-IMAGINE vision?

Remember that you will only have about 10 minutes to make your presentation, so make sure to focus on the highlights.

Meeting Two—Assessing Our Progress

Meeting Plan

Welcome – 5 minutes
Connection – 15 minutes
Core Discussions – 65 minutes
Text Study – 20 minutes
Reflection – 10 minutes
Next Steps – 5 minutes

Notetaker:

Facilitator(s):

Goals and Outcomes

1. Learn about how your initiative(s) is(are) working.
2. Determine what has been learned from the implementation of your initiative(s).
3. Consider the building blocks of educational vision in order to check the alignment of your initiative(s) to your vision.
4. Measure how far you have come and how far you have yet to go to realize your vision.

NOTE: This meeting focuses on discussion of your initiative. Some congregations doing *RE-IMAGINE: Taking Next Bold Steps* may have moved beyond their first initiative, either by expanding it or by developing and implementing a second or third initiative. Thus, wherever the Guidebook says “initiative” in the singular, you should understand it to mean all of the initiatives, in all of their forms, that your congregation has implemented as a result of your RE-IMAGINE experience.

Advance Preparation

- A group of 2-3 people will visit your initiative and talk to key people (parents, students, teachers) using the Sub-team Preparation Guide on page 19.
- Handouts:
 - The Five Building Blocks of Educational Innovation diagram
 - Text Study

Meeting Overview



Welcome (5 minutes)

Welcome everyone back and explain that at this meeting you will hear several reports about your initiative and then deliberate about how far your initiative has moved you toward full realization of your vision. Be sure to thank the sub-team and the educator for the time they put in since the last meeting to prepare their reports.



Connection (15 minutes)

To connect to each other and the work at hand you can ask this question:

What evidence do you have that people in your congregation have been positively impacted by your initiative? In what ways is the impact consistent with what is called for in your vision?



Core Discussions

➤ Reports from the Sub-team and Educator (20 minutes)

A small group who “visited” your initiative since your last meeting will report on what they learned. The report from your educator should follow. When they are finished there might be people on the team who want to add some information. It is important that you keep any conversation informational, and not evaluative.

➤ Processing the Reports (45 minutes)

Background

Having heard about what is happening with your initiative from different perspectives, your team has the information it now needs to assess the extent to which your initiative is moving you towards full realization of your vision. You will do this by looking at **alignment**, the process by which an educational innovation is developed or modified so that all parts of the educational system supporting the innovation pull in the direction of the vision.

Why is this important? Aligning your innovation to your vision makes sense to everyone involved—those who design your innovation, those who “deliver” your innovation and those who “receive” your innovation. When you align your energies, your decision-making and your actions with your vision your efforts have a clear direction and everyone can focus together on your ultimate goals.

One way of measuring alignment is to look at your innovation from different perspectives. There are five building block which you need to plan and assess educational innovations. These five building blocks are:

- **Curriculum**—the content, who is involved in developing it, and the factors and perspectives taken into consideration during its development

- **Infrastructure**—who will provide oversight and management, the budget, the human and financial resources available to put towards your model and the necessary logistical arrangements
- **Structure**—who are the learners, who are the teachers, when and where do learning take place
- **Teaching**—what teachers need to know and how they can best learn it
- **Leadership**—who is responsible for ensuring the alignment of the model as well as being its advocate within the larger congregational system

In addition to alignment you need to pay attention to **coherence**, the process by which an educational innovation is developed or modified so that all of its building blocks integrate with each other. It is not enough for each dimension to be aligned with the vision; the building blocks must align with each other, thus creating a coherent system.

A diagram of the five building block, on which arrows indicate how each dimension needs to align with the vision and lines suggest coherence, is provided as a handout.

NOTE: It is very important to realize that it takes years for a congregation to achieve full alignment and coherence. Your first initiative is your first step. Typically, congregations choose to work with the structural building block first and your initiative may reflect this. You may still have work to do in that area, and/or you may be ready to begin working in another area. This is your next bold step. There will be others down the road.

Exercise

In small groups, participants will process the reports they just heard by thinking about your initiative using the Five Building Blocks of Educational Innovation diagram, the discussion guide and the worksheet provided. They will look at how each building block is currently aligned to the vision and then think of ways that it can become more aligned.. They should focus their efforts on the first three building blocks on the worksheet unless specific progress has already been

When the small group discussion time is up, the team should reconvene and each group should share their answers to the 2nd question. Post five flip chart sheets around the room, each titled with one of the building blocks of educational innovation. The responses should be recorded on the appropriate sheet. They will be revisited in Meeting Three.

As a wrap up, ask the team to look at the notes on the sheets around the room and think of them as the possible building blocks for your bold next step. If it has not already been noted, you may want to introduce the concept of coherence at this time.



Text Study—Moses Gets Peek at the Future (20 minutes)

In this midrash Moses finds that the future looks very little like the past but he is comforted by leadership's faith in the original vision.



Reflection (10 minutes)

Pose the following question to get a sense of what the group is thinking and feeling at this point in the process:

What are the lessons about change and the process of experimentation that you think your congregation has learned as a result of the implementation of your initiative?



Next Steps (5 minutes)

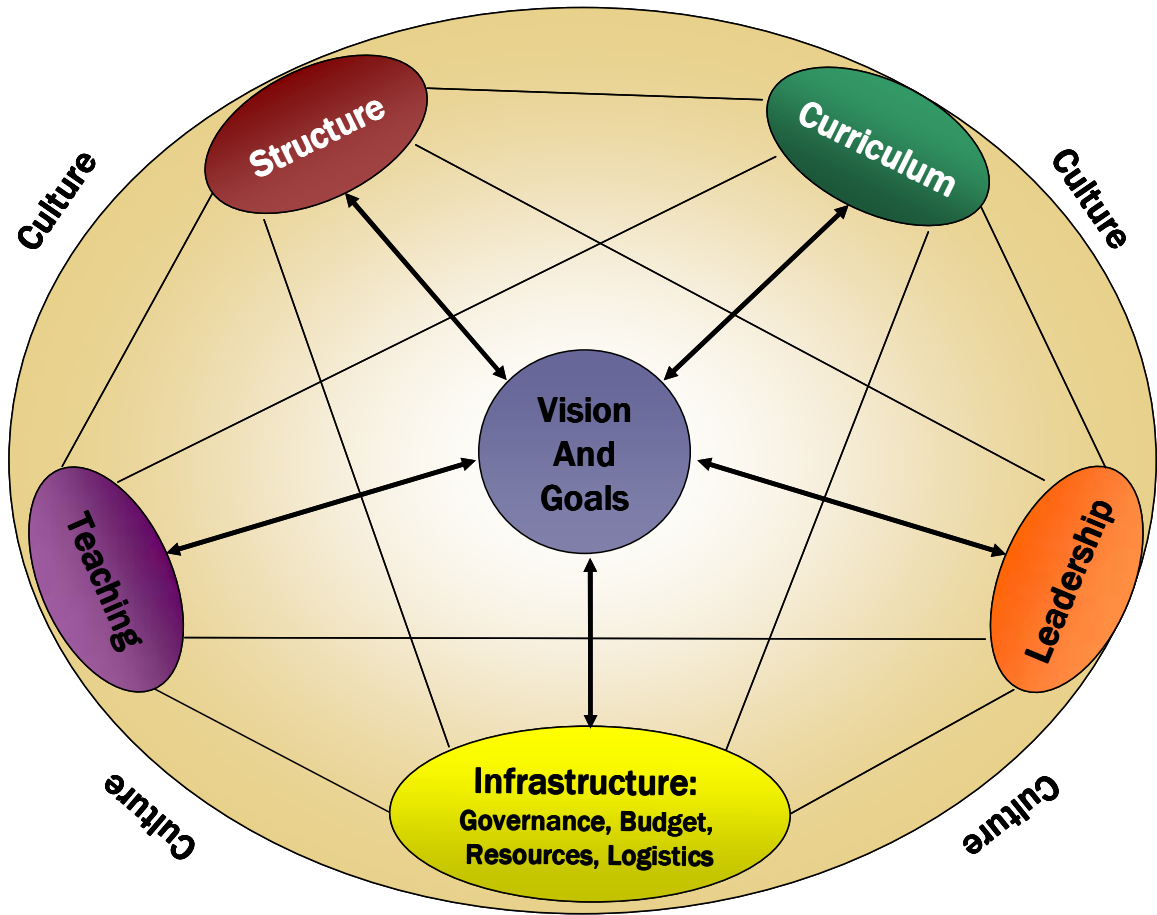
Announce time and place of your next meeting

Post-Meeting Follow-up

Collect groups' worksheets; compile the flip chart sheet notes



The Five Building Blocks of Educational Vision





Facilitator Guide: Activity 5

How Far Have We Come?

Having just heard reports from several viewpoints about your initiative, you now have an opportunity to look at your initiative from some additional perspectives.

Your vision (goals) is the inspiration for the alternative model of religious school education that you are in the process of bringing to life. To be successful and thoughtfully designed, every educational innovation must have its five building blocks aligned with your vision. Refer to the Five Building Blocks of Educational Innovation diagram as you read through the descriptions below. (You may be familiar with this from your work in RE-IMAGINE.)

The five building blocks of your alternative model are:

- **Curriculum**—the content, who is involved in developing it, and the factors and perspectives taken into consideration during its development
- **Infrastructure**—who will provide oversight and management, the budget, the human and financial resources available to put towards your model and the necessary logistical arrangements
- **Structure**—who are the learners, who are the teachers, when and where do learning take place
- **Teaching**—what teachers need to know and how they can best learn it
- **Leadership**—who is responsible for ensuring the alignment of the model as well as being its advocate within the larger congregational system

Your group has been given a worksheet that lists these five building blocks along with two questions for you to discuss regarding each:

- In what ways is this dimension of your educational innovation, so far, aligned with your vision?
- What else needs to happen in your congregation so that this dimension of your alternative model will be fully aligned with your vision?

As a group, start with the first question. Your answers will get you thinking about your vision based on the reports you just heard and will paint a more detailed picture of how far you have progressed to date.

Then move across the chart answering the 2nd question. You will share these answers with the whole team when you reconvene.



Small Group Discussion Guide – Activity 5
How Far Have We Come?

Work across the chart, first discussing your answers to the first question (your progress to date) before moving onto the second question (what might be in your future). You will be asked to share you answers to the second question with the rest of the team.

					(optional for discussion in this meeting)

NOTE: Please save this sheet and bring it to the next meeting.





Text Study ■ - Bet

Moses Gets a Peak at the Future

After saying the blessing before study, read the texts below and discuss the questions that follow each one.

In the following text, Moses is given a chance to fast forward to the Rabbinic Era to glimpse how the vision of Judaism that he spoke to the people at Sinai is alive in the future.

R. Judah said in the name of Rav: When Moses ascended on high, he found the Holy One affixing crowns to letters.

Moses asked, “Lord of the Universe, [why use crowns to intimate what You wish]? Who hinders Your hand [from writing out the full all of Torah’s precepts]?”

God replied, “At the end of many generations there will arise a man, Akiva ben Joseph by name, who will infer heaps and heaps of laws from each tittle on these crowns.”

“Lord of the Universe,” said Moses, “permit me to see him.”

God replied, “Turn around.”

Moses went and sat down behind eight rows [of R. Akiva’s disciples and listened to their discourses on law]. Not being able to follow what they were saying, he was so distressed that he grew faint. But when they came to a certain subject and the disciples asked R. Akiva, “Master, where did you learn this?” and R. Akiva replied, “It is a law given to Moses at Sinai,” Moses was reassured. He returned to the Holy One and said, “Lord of the Universe, you have such a man, yet You give Torah [not by his hand] but by mine?”

God replied, “Be silent – thus has it come to My mind.”

Talmud Tractate Menachot 29b

1. Why was Moses not able to follow the conversation of the disciples?
2. Why was he reassured when Akiva said that the law was given to Moses at Sinai? How else could he have reacted?
3. What was Moses’ attitude towards Akiva?
4. If you come back to visit your religious school in the next generation, do you expect to be able to recognize it compared to today? How will it feel if you? If you can’t?
5. What wisdom will the next generation of leaders have that you can’t have today? What wisdom will you want to share with them?

Meeting Three—Determining the Next Bold Steps (Longer Meeting)

Meeting Plan

Welcome – 5 minutes
Connection – 10 minutes
Core Discussion I – 55 minutes
Text Study – 20 minutes
Core Discussion II – 40 minutes
Reflection – 10 minutes
Next Steps – 10 minutes

Notetaker:

Facilitator(s):

Goals and Outcomes

1. Select your bold next steps.
2. Determine who will assume the leadership responsibilities for this next round of innovation.
3. Determine what kind of guardian group should guard your vision and monitor your innovations' alignment and coherence.

Advance Preparation

- Compile the information from the flip chart sheets from Meeting Two (see Handouts/Notes on next page)
- If not already determined, the chair and educator should discuss who is best suited to assume responsibility for the bold next steps that are decided at this meeting. Based on their discussion, they may want to approach several team members before the meeting about the possibility of assuming this leadership.

- Handouts/Notes:
 - Meeting One – Looking Ahead to Learning Experiences in Five years – Notes from Question #3 on the Vision Commentary Redux Small Group Discussion Guide
 - Meeting One –Goals for Achieving the Vision – Notes from Question #4 on the Vision Commentary Redux Small Group Discussion Guide
 - Meeting Two – Flip chart notes – What else needs to happen in our congregation so that each dimension of the alternative model will be aligned to the vision? From How Far Have We Gone?
 - Meeting Two - Small Group Discussion Worksheet (Meeting Two)
 - The Five Building Blocks of Educational Innovation handout (from Meeting Two)
 - Text study
 - Moving Toward Your Vision – Small Group Discussion Guide

Meeting Overview

Welcome (5 minutes)

Welcome everyone and explain that at this meeting you will make decisions about how to continue growing your vision and discuss ways in which you can continue to support your RE-IMAGINE work in the future.

You can also spend some time reviewing some of the major concepts that you've discussed in the past two meetings:

- Your vision and how it lives in the first initiative
- How you chose the first initiative and which of the structural levers it pulls
- What the expectations for next steps were when you decided on your first initiative

Connection (10 minutes)

To connect to each other and the work at hand you can ask this question:

What excites you about taking your RE-IMAGINE next bold steps? What concerns, if any, do you have about where this is all going?

Core Discussion I—Determining Our Bold Next Steps

↻ Small Group Discussions – Brainstorming Bold Next Steps (25 minutes)

Each person should have the following handouts:

- Compiled notes from Meeting One
- Compiled notes from Meeting Two
- Five Building Blocks of Educational Vision diagram
- Moving Toward our Vision in Five Building Blocks handout

Explain that the objective of this exercise is to use the discussion to date as a base of ideas for brainstorming ideas for the next bold step toward your vision for an alternative model of children's education. The team will break into small groups. Each group should make recommendations about which next bold steps your congregation should take in order to continue moving toward your vision. Their recommendations will be organized according to the Five Building Blocks of Educational Vision.

Go over each of the handouts in order to make sure that each person understands what they have.. Go over the ideas listed on the handout for how your vision might grow in each building block area. Add examples specific to your vision, if possible.

Before breaking into small groups, remind the team of the following:

- In order to fully realize your vision for an alternative model of religious school, you eventually will need to address all five building blocks. What is not addressed now will need your attention down the road.

- Whatever your small group recommends will be *in addition* to what you already have going on. You may need to modify your current initiative by tweaking it or expanding it, but you have made too much progress to consider scrapping it in favor of something else altogether.
- Be careful to not recommend more—or less—than you think is feasible and will have impact.

➤ **Large Group Discussion – Deciding Bold Next Steps (30 minutes)**

When the small group discussion time is up, reconvene the team. Ask each group to share their recommendations. Keep a running list of the recommendations on a board or flip charts in view of everyone.

At this point you need two decisions from the team: 1) What should be our bold next steps? and 2) Who is responsible for organizing the effort to follow through?

Look over the list of recommendations. Note where there is repetition and/or overlap. Whittle down your list so that you have some clearly articulated choices.

Your team knows best how many bold next steps your congregation can manage simultaneously. You know this based on your knowledge of your first initiative and your congregation. Do not underestimate your need or ability to move ahead. On the other hand, be careful to not tackle more than is feasible.

Try to reach a consensus about which of the recommendations you accept. If necessary, take a vote.



Text Study—Joshua’s Turn (20 minutes)

As a reward for his optimism and faith in God, Joshua was one of two men in his generation allowed to enter the Promised Land. Both you and Joshua know that sometimes you have a deeper appreciation for a job after you have been away from it for awhile.



Core Discussion II—Ongoing Leadership and Guardianship

➤ **Ongoing Leadership of the Bold Next Steps (10 minutes)**

Now that you know WHAT your bold next steps are, you need to determine WHO is going to take responsibility for seeing that it all happens. You already may have determined the leadership for your bold next steps. It is possible that the chairperson of these three meetings has already assumed responsibility for what comes next. Or, you may want to have someone on your current team volunteer to take the reins. You want to be sure that you have the right person for the job. For this reasons, you may want to approach before the meeting several people who you think have the personality and skills to handle this kind of responsibility to put “the bug in their ears.” This could help you avoid ending up with a lone volunteer who you think is ill-suited to this kind of work.

Whoever assumes leadership responsibility, it is up to them, in conjunction with the educator and rabbi, to determine how to proceed. These are not questions for your team now. After this meeting they will answer questions such as

- Can this work proceed with the leadership people and structure already in place?
- Is there need for a new Task Force with a new Leadership Team?
- Is there another kind of group or committee that would be better?
- Who should be contacted about getting involved?
- Who will be responsible for estimating the resources needed and then finding those resources – people, dollars, space, materials?

➤ **Background on Guardianship of the Vision**

Whether your next bold steps constitute your second round of innovation, or your third or fourth, you can see how this process of returning to the vision, assessing how you have moved your congregation towards your vision and then further growing the vision is a process you can repeat over and over again, as you generate new and deeper ways of enacting your vision. This spiral of innovation is one of the hallmarks of an open, forward-moving educational culture. You can repeat this process every time think you are ready to move ahead, closer to your vision, deciding how you want to proceed by determining which dimension of educational innovation to address.

As your initiatives multiply it becomes critical to establish a group whose job it is to guard the vision and keep this spiral of innovation going. Who is in this group and how it functions will be determine by your synagogue structure and culture. This might be a sub-group of the Task Force, of the Religious School committee or of the synagogue board.

This group might be responsible for on-going evaluation of your initiatives in which case they would then facilitate channeling that feedback back to those in charge of your programs, with recommendations for changes.

This group might be responsible for ensuring that parents, teachers, students and the congregation-at-large are all clear about what is happening and why. In this case, they would promote and explain your vision, serving as your cheerleaders and advocates.

In the past, all these roles might have been expected from the educator. Moving these responsibilities to laypeople is an intentional shift. Broadening the ownership of your educational program will benefit everyone involved.

➤ **Discussion and Decisions about Guardianship (30 minutes)**

A handout that describes different guardian group models is on page 38. Since this is the last exercise you will do in *RE-IMAGINE: Taking Bold Next Steps* you may like the idea of doing it all together. Much will depend on the size of your team.

First read through the handout, then discuss the questions at the bottom and then make decisions about how you want to organize and structure your guardian group. If in small groups you discuss the information on the handout and then reconvene the entire team, ask each group which aspects of which models they thought would work best in your congregation. Try to build consensus as the groups report. If you end up with more than one recommended model, you may want to vote. Keep in mind that, like all your other innovations, after you lived with the model you choose for a year or two you may want to modify it so it better meets your needs.



Reflection (10 minutes)

Pose the following question to get a sense of what the group is thinking and feeling at this point in the process:

What do you think is important for the leadership of your next round of innovation—your bold next steps—to remember as they work to continue to fully realize your vision?



Next Steps (10 minutes)

- Be sure that everyone is clear about what they volunteered for
- Assure everyone that they will hear about things moving ahead in the near future.
- Thank everyone for participating in *RE-IMAGINE: Taking Bold Next Steps*

Post-Meeting Follow-up

- See that the leadership of your next round of innovation schedules a meeting in the next two weeks.
- See that those outside this team who need to understand and/or be part of the guardian group receive the necessary orientation and that a guardian group meeting is scheduled within two months.



Communication Ideas

Though you do not have many details to share, this is the time to announce to your congregation that you will be moving ahead with enacting your vision and that the planning will begin soon. Describe your next round of innovation in broad strokes. Be sure to acknowledge those who participated on the team and support you have received from your synagogue professionals. It is most important that your congregation be aware that the spiral of innovation is on-going so they can get ready for what is yet to come.



Small Group Discussion Guide: Activity 6
Moving Towards Your Vision

	Ways to move toward your vision	Your recommendation for moving toward your vision
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust the day, time, location or frequency • Adjust the number of students, grades • Adjust the role of teachers or parents • OTHER: 	
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust the subjects, quantity or scope of material covered • Engage different people in determining curriculum • Adjust curriculum by factoring in new criteria such as community building if this fits with your vision • OTHER: 	
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change leadership or the role of leadership • Clarify the process by which alignment and coherence will be monitored • Adjust how the stakeholders are kept in the loop • OTHER: 	
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust responsibilities • Adjust the budget • Identify and engage different human and financial resources • Adjust the logistical arrangements • OTHER: 	
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust what teachers need to know • Adjust how teachers prepare • Adjust the methods that teachers use in the classroom • Adjust the type of teachers • OTHER: 	

Text Study  Text Study  - Gimmel
Joshua's Turn

.....

After saying the blessing before study, read the texts below and discuss the questions that follow each one.

Part I

In preparation for entering the Promised Land, Moses sends out 12 scouts to enter the land to assess what awaits them. Ten scouts return describing treacherous obstacles. Two scouts, Joshua and Caleb, disagree and are distressed by the others' report.

וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נּוּן וְכָלֵב בֶּן-יִפְנֹה מִן-הַתְּרִים אֶת-הָאָרֶץ
קָרְעוּ בְּגָדֵיהֶם: זֹנִיאוֹמְרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֲתָהּ טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד מְאֹד:

And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, of those who had scouted the land, rent their clothes and exhorted the whole Israelite community: “The land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will bring us into that land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and give it to us; only you must not rebel against the Lord.

Numbers 14:6-7

1. What does it take to see the positive when others only see negative?
2. When does focusing on the positive seem naïve?
3. What other attitudes, or beliefs (in addition to the belief that if God is pleased with you things will go well) can help determine the outcome of an effort?

Part II

The Israelites chose to believe the majority, yet negative, report and refuse to enter the land. God is angry and punishes all of them, except for two.

כִּי כָל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרְאִים אֶת־כְּבֹדִי וְאֶת־אֲתֹנֹתַי אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי
בְּמִצְרַיִם וּבַמִּדְבָּר וַיִּנְסוּ אֹתִי זֶה עָשָׂר פְּעָמִים
וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי: אִם־יִרְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָם
וְכָל־מְנַאֲצֵי לֹא יִרְאוּהָ:

בַּמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה יִפְּלוּ פְּגָרֵיכֶם וְכָל־פְּקֻדֵיכֶם לְכָל־מִסְפְּרֵיכֶם מִבֶּן
עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְנֹמְעָה אֲשֶׁר הִלִּינְתֶם עָלַי:
אִם־אַתֶּם תִּבְּאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יָדֵי לְשַׁבֵּן
אֶתְכֶם בָּהּ כִּי אִם־כָּלֵב בֶּן־יִפְנֶה וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נּוּן:

None of the men who have seen My Presence and the signs that I have performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, and who have tried Me these many times and have disobeyed Me, shall see the land that I promised on oath to their fathers; none of those who spurn Me shall see it...of all of you who were recorded in your various lists from the age of twenty years up, you who mutter against Me, not one shall enter the land in which I swore to settle you—save Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

Numbers 14:22-23, 29-30

4. What do you think it must have felt like for the Israelites to have traveled for months, only to be denied entry into the Promised Land?
5. What are the disadvantages and advantages of having this generation die off before ever having a chance again to enter the land? What experience and wisdom is lost? What perspective is gained?
6. What must it have been like for Caleb and Joshua to have been the only Israelite men over the age of twenty to live for the next 40 years? Would you have rather lived or died off with the rest of your friends, family and peers?



Discussion Guide: Activity 7

Guardian Group Models

Below are five descriptions of groups in congregations whose job it is to guard and advance their vision of an alternative model of religious school. Read each, focusing on the Who, Why and How of each model. Discuss in your small group the questions that follow and be prepared to share your ideas when the whole team reconvenes.

Congregation Aleph

The original Task Force remains, with some turnover in participants, and becomes the guardian group. It meets twice a year. New initiatives and the leadership for each are spun off of this group.

Congregation Bet

An Education Steering Committee exists which meets monthly. It assesses how the congregation is doing enacting its vision and regularly commissions new working groups or Task Forces to tackle new ideas. It is comprised of the chair(s) of education committee(s), education staff, the synagogue president and members-at-large who are on a six-month rotation.

Congregation Gimmel

A Learning Council meets quarterly. It consists of 1-2 representatives of the congregation's different educational projects plus some assorted others. In addition to guarding the vision, this group looks for ways to coordinate what is happening in different areas with each other.

Congregation Dalet

The Religious School Committee has assumed responsibility for guardianship of the vision. Over the past few years there has been quite a bit of overlap between the committee and the original Task Force. This has enhanced the role of the Religious School Committee and has sent a clear message about the importance of our innovations to our overall program.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What kind of group should serve as the guardians of your vision? Is there an existing group or committee that is the logical choice?
2. Who should be part of this group?
3. How often should they meet?
4. What should be their mandate?