 Temple Beth Sholom Roslyn

*As you look at each model, we encourage you to keep the following questions in mind:*

* *What aspects of this model align with your visionary description?*
* *What does not?*
* *What intrigues you about this model?*
* *What questions do you have about this model?*

**Background**

Temple Beth Sholom (TBS) is a Conservative congregation located in Roslyn Heights, NY on Long Island. It is about 60 years old and has 900 member households. There are about 275 students in the education program in k-7 and about 100 in the high school program. TBS also has a thriving preschool and day camp. Active lay leaders support a tightly integrated professional team.

**Creating a Vision**

Temple Beth Sholom joined the second cohort of The RE-IMAGINE Project of New York in 2004. The congregation was ready to begin experimenting with new methods of educating children. The RE-IMAGINE Project Task Force created a vision of children’s education which strives to create lifelong learners who life a Jewish life at home, at the congregation, and in the greater community. The vision also includes components of a partnership with the congregation and parents, an emphasis on mitzvoth and Shabbat, and the desire to create a variety of learning experiences.

**A New Model of Education**

The TBS Implementation Team chose to move in two directions towards their vision. First, they wanted to implement a new model of children’s education which included building Jewish memories into the learning on Shabbat. The second initiative was a Morei Derech program (or Jewish Life Coach) to begin to educate congregants in general about living a Jewish life.

**Piloting a New Model of Children’s Education**

The first step in implementing the vision was to pilot a new Shabbat program on Friday nights and Shabbat morning, along with a Sunday afternoon tikkun olam project. This program, called Taste of Shabbat, for 3rd and 4th grade families, had the following goals:

* make space for more family time
* include family programming as part of school schedule
* connect families with other temple families in the same grade and in the larger Temple Beth Shalom community (on Shabbat, in particular)
* ngage in family *chesed* community projects
* enable families to feel comfortable in services by creating more family friendly services on Shabbat morning
* integrate art, drama, music into curriculum
* engage in varied Shabbat/holiday experiences as a way to build community

Families came once per month on Friday night and once per month on Shabbat morning. When they came on Shabbat morning, there was no Sunday school that week. Instead, there was an optional Sunday afternoon tikkun olam project. Over 80% of the families enrolled in the pilot program.

See Appendix I for a description of the pilot program.

**Rolling out the New Model for Children and Families**

Due to the success of the initial pilot, TBS continued its implementation and completely restructured the religious school like the pilot. Shabbat and tikkun olam experiences are now part of the way that children’s education happens in 3rd through 6th grade. There are 10-12 Shabbat experiences per year and matching Sunday tikkun olam projects.

The congregation’s leaders stressed that the new model was not an attempt to fit more education into fewer hours. Rather, it is designed to infuse Jewish education with those special moments—at home, in Israel, in family settings—that The RE-IMAGINE Project Task Force members had talked about as the decisive points on their own Jewish journeys. The restructured school seeks to create Jewish memories—to create “less *tuchas*time” and more family learning experiences.

Even within classroom time the same idea applies. For example, instead of having students sitting in their chairs and opening their *siddurim*(prayer books) to study *tefillot*(prayers), the Beth Sholom curriculum coordinator and principal developed a *kahal braira*(community of choice). Students can learn *tefillah*musically with percussion instruments or develop an understanding of its meaning through art projects.

Temple Beth Sholom also expends a lot of effort collecting and integrating congregant feedback. Lay leaders create surveys and talk to participants by phone on a regular basis. Feedback is then integrated into the programming.

**Restructuring Professional Leadership**

At the same time that the pilot was expanded, Temple Beth Sholom restructured the professional leadership of its children’s education program. There is now a Director of Lifelong Learning who oversees all education programming, including early childhood. This has led to more seamlessness and cooperation among programs. For example, when the bar and bat mitzvah preparation program was run by the religious school, day school families did not think that they needed to attend. Now they see themselves as participating in the congregation’s bar and bat mitzvah preparation program and see it as something for them.

**Preparing Teachers**

In 2007, Temple Beth Sholom joined the RE-IMAGINE Professional Learning Project of the Experiment in Congregational Education. When they restructured their children’s education program by moving Shabbat and cutting teacher contact hours to five instead of six, they continued to pay teachers for one hour per week of teacher professional development. In this project they were able to design the professional learning to take place during this time. The professional learning environment was meant to be supportive and instructive of the kind of learning environment that they were expected to create in their classrooms. In addition, because all teachers meet together, they are able to share lesson plans and ensure less overlap between Shabbat and midweek programming. This sharing is supported by a Curriculum Coordinator who works with all teachers.

**Developing a New Model for Adults**

When the formal part of The RE-IMAGINE Project came to an end, the congregation’s board of education took the leadership for ensuring implementation of the educational vision and began to address adult education. The first step in building adult education is the creation of the Morei Derech (teachers of the path) Beth Sholom Project. This program has created a cadre of lay “life coaches” (*morei derech*) to serve as mentors for those*dorshei derech*(pursuers of the path) wishing to learn and deepen involvement in Jewish life. The program is designed to meet the needs of new learners while providing a new leadership path for the congregation—one that will develop leaders who recognize on-going Jewish learning as part of their responsibilities to themselves and their community.

**Moving Forward: 2009-10 and Beyond**

Temple Beth Sholom is very proud of what they have been able to accomplish in education. But they also realize that they have not yet reached their vision. More adults will need to go through the morei derech and dorshei derech programs. Professionals also have begun to think about ways to bring the same kind of change to the congregation’s large and popular day camp.

As in so many congregations during these times, the economy presents considerable challenges. The restructured school is expensive as are the salaries of quality professionals. The board has had to cut costs but trustees and professional leaders have tried to inform those kinds of decisions with the congregation’s vision. For example, the board changed the congregation’s Yizkor book format so that people can make a donation for a page or half page to write a short biography of their loved one. While the impetus for this came from the need to generate revenue, the board hopes it will also promote the congregation’s sense of community.

The leadership team has concerns about the sustainability of its change efforts especially during this economic downturn, yet is full of hope and new ideas. They see evidence of change even in the way different teams come together to schedule events.” The calendar is now vision driven, and there’s a sense and spirit of cooperation.”

# Appendix I

# Shabbat Pilot Program

# Pilot Overview:

The pilot initially targeted families in Grades 3 and 4 with plans to expand to Grades 5 and 6 in the second year. Families who opted into the program attended special programs one Friday night and one Shabbat morning each month. The program included family study and a special mishpakha service where the children actively participated in the Torah reading and study portions of the service. On those weekends with a Shabbat morning program, regular Sunday classes were cancelled and families had the option of participating in achesed project on Sunday morning.

On those weekends when there was no Shabbat morning program, students attended children-only Sunday classes from 9 am – 12 noon. In addition, they attended a children-only class one time during the week for two hours, either on a Tuesday or a Wednesday.

# Vision & Goals:

Temple Beth Shalom is dedicated to the pursuit of lifelong Jewish learning. Built on the principles of Torah, we strive to inspire learners at every age to live a vibrant Jewish life in the home, within the congregation and in the greater Jewish community.

The goals for the pilot are intended to answer the articulated needs of families to:

make space for more family time

include family programming as part of school schedule

connect families with other temple families in the same grade and in the larger Temple Beth Shalom community (on Shabbat, in particular)

engage in family chesed community projects

enable families to feel comfortable in services by creating more family friendly services on Shabbat morning

integrate art, drama, music into curriculum

engage in varied Shabbat/holiday experiences as a way to build community.

# Structure

## Who are the learners?

Families of 3rd and 4th grade students (to be expanded to Grades 5 and 6 in the second program year)

### Participation Requirements

#### Parents and Families:

Friday evenings once a month, Shabbat mornings once a month and an optional chesed program one Sunday a month

#### Children:

In addition to the above programs, students attend Sunday morning classes from 9 am – 12 noon when there is no Shabbat morning family program and midweek classes one day a week from 4 – 6 pm. (Students in the regular three day a week program attend two hours on Sunday and two hours twice during the week.)

### First Year Pilot Enrollment statistics:

Grade 3 families: Out of a potential of 33 families, 28 have opted into the Zra’im program.

Grade 4 families: Out of a potential of 35 families, 28 have opted into the Shorashim program.

Chesed programs: These are voluntary programs. Attendance has been between 95-100% of families participating in Z’raim and Shorashim.

The remainder of the students (5 in grade 3 and 7 in Grade 4) are in the traditional three day a week school track. Due to the low numbers, the congregation will most likely not offer the traditional track next year.

## When is the learning taking place?

### Frequency (Days/Hours per week/month)

Families attend two Shabbat programs per month: one on Friday night and one on Shabbat morning. On the weekends when Shabbat morning programs take place Sunday morning classes are cancelled and replaced with an optional chesed program. On weekends where there is no Shabbat morning program tudents come for three hours on Sunday (as distinct from the two hour program for the regular 3 day a week students).

### Sample Schedule:

Friday night program:

6:15-6:30: Nosh/Hors D’oevres

6:30-7:15: Family study

7:15-8: Mishpakha service (open to entire congregation)

8: 00: Oneg Shabbat with Kiddush and nosh

Shabbat morning program:

9:30-10:15: Family study

10:15-10:30: Nosh

10:30: Mishpakha service led by the Assistant Rabbi with active participation of the students in the Torah reading and study portion of the service.

12 noon: Kiddush/motzi/cookies and sit down lunch for the entire congregation (people come together from the multiple Shabbat services)

Chesed program:

The schedule varies, depending upon the project:

9:-10:30 3rd grade

10:30-12: 4th grade

Arrive and begin with 15 minute text study

Project: Approximately 1 hour (unless it is out of the building in which case the programs goes later)

Wrap up and reflection: 10-20 minutes

**Where is the learning taking place?**

### Space

Family study: Grade 3 meets in the library; Grade 4 meets in the youth lounge: sit in “kehilla” style (room set up in C so everyone can see each other)

Curriculum

The children’s classroom content is value based and is taught through the weekly Torah portion (Parashat HaShavua). The family component of the curriculum is written by the Religious School director and focuses on the values she chooses from the week’s parasha.

# Teaching

## Who are the teachers?

There are special teachers for the Shabbat component of the program who are assisted by the children’s regular Sunday/weekday classroom teachers.

## Characteristics:

The teachers are Conservative Jews and were very carefully screened and chosen. One is a past religious school principal who has led Junior Congregation in the past and one is a teacher by profession and is now a university professor. Both teachers have had experience in intergenerational education. Each group has an assistant teacher. These assistants are the children’s regular classroom teachers.

## Job Description/Expectations:

The Shabbat teachers write the lesson plans and are required to submit them to the Assistant Rabbi. The Rabbi then reviews them and provides feedback to the teachers. In particular, she looks at the traditional sources and commentaries to be taught. 

## Training:

The Shabbat staff meets once a month to brainstorm the topics and content so as to ensure that the content is sufficiently distinct from that being taught in the children’s regular classes. The Assistant Rabbi observes the Shabbat teachers at each of their programs and provides feedback.

# Leadership

## Professional Leadership:

### Role of Educator:

The congregation has two educators: the Director of Lifelong Learning and the Religious School Director who work collaboratively. The role of the Director of Lifelong Learning is to attend to the implementation and work with the congregation’s overarching educational vision and goals and to oversee the experiential education portions of the congregational program. The Religious School director focuses on curriculum design and implementation in the Religious School.

### Role of Clergy:

This congregation of 900 families is served by three rabbis and a cantor. The senior and assistant rabbis are most intimately involved with the program. The primary role of the senior rabbi is in both advocacy and content support and less in the day to day implementation. The assistant rabbi is hands on both in terms of her work with the Shabbat teachers and her role of teacher of the parent segment of the program. The two rabbis alternate in leading the mishpakha service. The cantor and third rabbi ae not yet involved but would be happy to do so should the need arise.

## Lay Leadership

**Role of the Committee:**  
The program is under the auspices of the congregation’s Board of Education. It was initially conceived by an ad hoc committee that emerged from the ReImagine project and was then turned over to the Board of Education. The Vice President of Education reports monthly to the congregation’s Board of Trustees. In addition, the synagogue’s president sits on the Board of Education. The professional staff report regularly to the Board of Education and bring any issues or concerns that arise to the group. An ad hoc evaluation committee is being formed that will be populated by members of the ReImagine task force.  
**Congregant Resources:**  
Key parents are asked to provide positive testimonials and anecdotes about the program; 

# Infrastructure

Budget

### Fees to participants:

The program is part of regular congregational dues and religious school tuition despite the fact that is does cost more than the regular religious school program. 

### Congregational Expenses:

This is the program’s first full year and the total costs are not yet known. The major expenses are the Shabbat teacher salaries, food/nosh upon arrival, feeding the children on Sundays because their program is now three hours long and buses for those chesed projects that occur off site. All of the funds are being taken from the religious school and operating budgets of the congregation.