

Forming Your Leadership Team and Task Force

The work of The RE-IMAGINE Project will be spearheaded by a group of lay and professional leaders who are passionate about the future of Jewish education for your synagogue's children and families. This dedicated group will serve on the RE-IMAGINE Task Force, which is led by the RE-IMAGINE Leadership Team (a subset of the Task Force).

Your Leadership Team

The four to five members of the Leadership Team will generate the momentum and the *ruach* (spirit) for the project. It is their job to plan and track your work, your meetings and your progress. Over the course of their 18-month commitment they can expect to participate in:

- Regular phone calls and emails with your consultant
- Three orientation sessions
- One Leadership Team meeting per month
- One Task Force meeting per month
- Sub-team meetings when needed
- Regular home reading
- Online study and discussions
- One gathering with other RE-IMAGINE congregation Task Forces (Yachdav)
- Two Leadership Development sessions (Chug Limudim)
- Two special learning sessions with peers at other congregations (Roundtables)

Role of the Leadership Team

In addition to being the energy source driving this project for your congregation, it is the Leadership Team's responsibility to see oversee all aspects of this project and to ensure that the Task Force's experience and your congregation's experience is positive and productive. This requires they do the following:

- Communicate with your consultant before and after every Task Force meeting in order to get the most out of the exercises in the Guidebook, learn about what is coming up in the project, and get advice on any issues you are facing. Your consultant has experience working with other congregations and has the resources of the entire staff of The Experiment in Congregational Education at

his/her fingertips. They are an invaluable resource, and you are required to stay in touch with them.

- Prepare for Leadership Team meetings. Each Leadership Team member needs to come to meetings familiar with the suggestions in this Guidebook about planning the next Task Force meeting and prepared to discuss those suggestions.
- Plan for and execute Task Force Meetings. This requires setting the agenda, gathering the resources for the meetings and running the meetings.
- Oversee the work of the Sub-teams (see below)
- Stay attuned to “the pulse” of the Task Force in order to gauge excitement, misunderstanding, resistance or waning interest.
- Engage the congregation in discussion about RE-IMAGINE, including the congregation in general, and special interest groups like the Religious School Committee, parents, and teachers.
- Ensure the implementation of the First Bold Step and the ongoing governance of your vision.

Composition of the Leadership Team

People on the Leadership Team need to have demonstrated a particular passion for Jewish learning in your congregation and need to be people you know can function well as part of a team. You should not try to get demographic representation on the Leadership Team. This is important for the Task Force only. In fact, you will be better off keeping the Leadership Team small (4-6 people) unless you need to add people in order to add specific skills.

On your Leadership Team you will need to have the following:

➔ **Chairperson**

This person will be your lead voice and planner. This will be the person who represents the project to your congregation, so this person should be someone with some stature and proven experience in the educational life of the congregation. This person needs to be able to lead the rest of the team and the Task Force in strategizing and should have a proven track record of getting things done. For example, the Task Force chair will need to:

- Be the public face and champion of the project to the community;
- Influence, as well as communicate to, key people on behalf of the work of the Task Force;
- Be comfortable with process-driven change

- Act as a determined cheerleader and motivator for the work of the Task Force;
- Ensure decisions get made, either through creating a process so decisions can be made or making a decision when needed;
- Model collaborative leadership by having the stature and demeanor to work with others;
- Keep an eye on the bigger picture including the objectives of a specific meeting or of the project itself; and
- Listen to and manage dissention without letting it take over the process.

➔ **Coordinator**

This person is the organization center of the project. This person has three main responsibilities:

1. General administration, which includes organizing meeting logistics, collecting the Task Force Journal entries, monitoring the assignment and completion of Task Force members' pre- and post-meeting work, and making sure that all Task Force members are accessing the Online Learning
2. Communication within the Team, which includes maintaining the flow of information between the Task Force and the Leadership Team

The Coordinator needs to be about two steps ahead of the Task Force so that s/he can help guide its work with an eye to the future. This needs to be a “detail person” who can read people and situations well and can work closely with the Chairperson. The Coordinator needs to be computer-literate and have about 2 extra hours a week to devote to the project. If you have difficulty finding one person who can contribute this much time, you may consider dividing the job between two lay volunteers.

➔ **Synagogue Professionals: Rabbi, Educator and Others**

The professional leaders of your congregation are critical participants in this project. Their presence will contribute substantive expertise and symbolic support. With them involved you will be able to explore new ways of collaboration between lay people and professionals in making decisions that are important to the life of your congregation.

You should include your Educator and Rabbi on the Leadership Team. If your congregation has more than one rabbi, one of them should be a standing member of the Leadership Team. The other(s) can be part of your Task Force. In some congregations it may also be appropriate to include the Cantor or Executive Director or other professionals on the Task Force, or they should be kept informed regularly about the project. Try not to have more than two professionals on the Leadership Team.

➡ **One or Two Additional Lay Leaders**

There are two additional roles for people on the Leadership Team to play. You must assign these to one of the people listed above or add one or two additional people.

Facilitation – One skill set you should be looking for is meeting facilitation skills. It is critical that 1-2 lay people on the Leadership Team have good meeting facilitation skills. This means that you know them to be people who are able to:

- Allow for multiple voices in a conversation
- Summarize and feedback points of agreement to the group in order to move them ahead
- Diffuse tension
- Productively use the exercise handouts and instructions to guide them
- Gently re-direct difficult people
- Be willing to take a neutral stance during a discussion

Engaging the Congregation in Discussion about RE-IMAGINE – The Leadership Team as a whole is responsible for making sure that the entire congregation is engaged in discussion about RE-IMAGINE. But it is also a good idea to assign the responsibility for planning this discussion to a particular person. He/she is not responsible for doing it all, but for making sure it all gets done. Ideas for engaging in discussion are listed throughout the Guidebook and include writing articles for the Temple Bulletin, holding special sessions with particular groups, and updating and getting input from the Board.

Your Task Force

Your Task Force will do the work of re-imagining your religious school and planning your innovation. It will be composed of 12 to 25 members (including the Leadership Team), and will work for 15 months, which will include:

- One meeting per month;
- Sub-team participation when needed;
- Regular home reading;
- Online study and discussions;
- One gathering with other RE-IMAGINE congregation Task Forces

Composition of Your Task Force

On your Task Force you will need the following:

All members of the Leadership Team and Six or More Laypeople

These should be people who are either current or potential leaders of your congregation who you know are committed to re-imagining your religious school. They should represent a cross-section of constituents in your school and your congregation. Within your synagogue you have people whose professional expertise might be particularly beneficial, specifically those in education or educational leadership, organizational development or human resource development. The Roles and Capacities charts which follow can help you decide exactly whom to invite to join the Task Force. There are three types of people that we strongly recommend you include:

- *A member of the Religious School Committee*
This could be the Religious School Committee Chair or another appropriate committee member
- *At least two religious school or Hebrew school teachers*
These should be faculty members who have demonstrated a commitment to your education programs and congregation and who embrace creative approaches and new thinking about Jewish education. They should also be people who are well-connected and respected within the school community.
- *At least one high school student*
This should be someone who is mature, thoughtful and is/was educated in your school. It is important that this student be articulate and not intimidated around adults while being able to participate productively in a meeting.

Using the Roles and Capacities Chart

The Roles and Capacities Charts on the pp. 9-10 will help you to identify positive, enthusiastic and capable people for your journey of re-imagining the religious school. You should invite people who bring a willingness to see things in a new light, who are passionate about the present and future of the Jewish people and who are comfortable working as part of a team.

Your Leadership Team is likely to be formed first and may already be formed. In putting it together, keep in mind the roles and capacities listed on the charts and be sure to consider what these people bring to your work as you look to create a well-rounded Task Force. To choose your Task Force members, gather together several people who know the congregation's membership well, e.g. the Rabbi, Educator, the Cantor, current or past president. If your Leadership Team is already formed you can include them as well.

With copies of the congregation's membership directory in hand, start at the beginning and work your way through the directory, noting on the chart people you think might be interested and available to work on this project. Relying on the directory is very effective

since it reminds us of people who may not be the most active, but might have indicated interest or demonstrated valuable skills need in the project. List their names at the top of each page of the chart and, below each name, check off which roles (Chart 1) and capacities (Chart 2) each person can bring to the work of the Task Force. Feel free to note any additional roles or capacities not already specified on the chart. You may need to make several copies of each page of the chart in order to list all of your possible participants.

After you have worked your way through the directory, check your chart to see if there are important constituencies or personal capacities that you think are missing. After you have reviewed your list, narrow it down to create a Task Force that reflects the diversity of the congregation and school as well as complementary working styles.

Inviting Participation

Inviting your fellow congregants to join the Task Force should be carefully orchestrated. How people are officially invited to be part of this project depends a lot on the culture of your congregation. Who is the most effective person to “issue” the invitation? The Rabbi? The Cantor? The Task Force Chair? The President? The Educator? Some combination of the above?

Next, how should the invitation be issued? By letter? By phone call? By letter followed up with a phone call? In person? In some congregations, a letter might suffice. In others, a more personal contact is in order.

What do you want the invitation to include? Generally, the more specific you can be, the better the recipient will understand the commitment you are asking him/her to make. Why is the congregation embarking on this project at this time? What are its goals? What kinds of members are being asked to participate? How much time will be involved over how many months? Are meeting dates already determined? If so, you can include them? A written invitation could include some of this information while a follow-up phone call would provide other background as well as an opportunity to answer questions. Your consultant can provide you with sample follow-up letters.

In addition, you can direct prospective participants to ECE’s website. Viewing ECEOnline.org can generate enthusiasm for the project by introducing potential Task Force members to the range of possibilities ahead. You can also share parts of the **Introduction to The RE-IMAGINE Project** packet, which can further assist prospective participants in visualizing how their efforts can make a difference to the future of their children’s education.

Your consultant can provide you with samples of welcome letters sent by congregations that have already participated in the project.

Agreeing to Full Participation in the Project

Each Task Force member, including those on the Leadership Team, will be asked to sign a letter of agreement which can be found on page 11. It is important that each member of the Task Force realizes that this project is the result of a significant investment being

made in your congregation by your Board of Trustees and by the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, an anonymous donor of the Jewish Funders Network, and the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Los Angeles. In return, it requires a serious commitment of their time. If you would like to print this letter on your congregation's stationary, you can find a copy of it on the Online Resource Center in the Guidebook Resources for RE-IMAGINE Congregations section. Please send copies of the signed letters to your consultant.



Activity 1

Task Force Roles and Personal Capacities

Chart 1: Desired Roles

<i>List Names here</i> →											
Desired Roles											
Current lay leader in school											
Future lay leader in school											
Current lay leader in congregation											
Future lay leader in congregation											
Educator											
Rabbi											
Newer school parent											
Long-time school parent											
Former lay leader in school											
Former lay leader in congregation											
Active parent volunteer											
Parent of child(ren) in preschool											
Parent of child(ren) K-2											
Parent of child(ren) 3-7											
Parent of child(ren) post-Bnei Mitzvah											
Teacher											
Member of synagogue Board											
Member of Religious School Committee											
Advocate for children's education within congregation											
Interested/involved in Jewish adult learning											
High school student											
Single parent											
Parent of day school student											
Other											



Activity 1

Task Force Roles and Personal Capacities

Chart 2: Desired Personal Capacities

<i>Repeat Listed Names here →</i>										
Desired Capacities										
Thoughtful, reflective										
Enthusiastic										
Able to see the big picture										
Attends to details										
Asks challenging questions										
Able to create harmony when disagreements arise										
Jewishly knowledgeable										
Professional background in education										
Professional background in “process” (from business or social work)										
Demonstrated commitment to synagogue										
Well-connected within school community										
Passionate about Jewish education										
Other										



Activity 2

Agreeing to Full Participation in the Project

Dear _____,

Thank you for agreeing to serve on <congregation name>'s RE-IMAGINE Project Task Force. Members of the Task Force represent a cross-section of our school and congregation and have demonstrated a commitment to our congregation's education programs and to the congregation as a whole. Working as part of the Task Force requires a willingness to embrace new thinking about Jewish education and an ability to work comfortably and productively as a part of a team. As a member of The RE-IMAGINE Project Task Force, you will come to know the individuals sharing this experience with you, to trust them and to appreciate the unique gifts that each one brings to this journey of reflection, inquiry, and action.

The first step in getting ready for your journey is to complete the attached letter of participation confirming your commitment to participate in the project. The letter is intended to provide you with details about The RE-IMAGINE Project and your role and responsibilities as a member of the Task Force, the group of lay and professional leaders spearheading its work. Please make sure to read through it carefully. Each of the elements described is important to our successful completion of the project.

We look forward to sharing this exciting journey with you.

Sincerely,

Task Force Chair
(or some combination of LT members)

Rabbi

Educator

RE-IMAGINE Project Task Force Member Letter of Participation

Project Description:

The RE-IMAGINE Project guides congregations on a journey to re-imagine their K-7 religious schools. By following the project roadmap, congregations create a new vision and implementation plan for educational innovations, explore new ways of working and thinking, build capacity for future change, and enhance Jewish leadership skills. Resources provided participating congregations include phone, email, and in person consultation, The RE-IMAGINE Guidebook, the Alternative Models of the Religious School Online Learning Experience, three orientation sessions for Leadership Team members, a gathering with other congregational teams, and leadership workshops. The Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE) will conduct evaluation research to capture and assess the effectiveness and impact of the project.

Task Force Member Commitments:

I recognize that by accepting this invitation, I accept the following commitments on behalf of my congregation:

1. To attend monthly Task Force meetings over a fifteen-month period;
2. To actively engage in Task Force meeting exercises as laid out in The RE-IMAGINE Project Guidebook and guided by our Leadership Team;
3. To attend one off-site meeting of all congregations' Task Forces;
4. To complete the work of the Online Learning Experience, including submitting online reflections, which will take an additional 60-90 minutes between meetings for each of three sections, and to use the Online Resource Center where directed;
5. To participate, if asked, in Sub-teams formed for specific purposes during the project;
6. To speak up during meetings in a way which demonstrates *kavod* (honor), bringing my skills, interests, and perspectives, but also carefully listening to fellow Task Force members and keeping the best interests of the congregation in mind; and
7. To work together to create a new vision for children's religious education, an alternative model that reflects the needs and goals of our congregation, and a first bold step towards the vision created in the project.

My signature below confirms my commitment to participate in the RE-IMAGINE Project as described above.

 Task Force Member Signature

 Date

