



Facilitator's Guide: Activity 5

Writing Vision Commentary

Usage

This exercise will enable the Task Force to clarify and expound on a draft of a vision for your alternative model of children's Jewish education. Teachers, the Religious School Committee or the board can also perform this exercise in order to show them how your work is coming together and/or to get their input.

Materials

Copy of the draft vision for each Task Force member
 Several volumes of the *Talmud* or *The Commentator's Bible*
 Large Post-it notes in two colors
 Large mural-size paper with the vision written in the center

Grouping of Participants

Small groups of three to five

Time Required

45 minutes

Facilitation

1. The facilitator should review the process by which the draft vision was written. Emphasize that, because you are attempting to make this document as meaningful and clear to the congregation as possible, the Task Force must raise points of clarification and expound on its content, just like the rabbis commented on our core Jewish texts in the *Talmud*. Show and/or pass around copies of the *Talmud* or *The Commentator's Bible* so everyone can see how the pages are laid out with the core text in the center and the various commentaries around the border.
2. For 5 minutes, group members should read the vision individually, making notes to themselves about the words or ideas that trigger two categories of specific reactions. The first category of reaction, to be written on one color post-it, includes anything they find incorrect, unclear or confusing. The second category of reaction, to be written on a different color post-it, includes explanations, connections to other aspects of synagogue life, an elaboration on a particular point or a personal perspective on a part or the whole document. These explanations and perspectives should serve to make the vision statement clearer to those who are reading it for the first time.
3. In small groups, Task Force members should then take about 10 minutes to share with each other their two categories of reactions, deciding which they think might

be the most common among congregants hearing or reading the vision for the first time.

4. At the end of the small group discussion, everyone should place their post-its on the mural paper with the vision in the middle. The points of clarification post-its can be placed down one side, while the commentary post-its should be placed around the text of the vision. This creates a commentary on the vision that visually resembles a traditional page of text with commentary.
5. Give the Task Force a few minutes to look at what has been posted before reconvening as a large group. When you reconvene, the facilitator should ask the group to identify the most relevant reactions and discuss any issues that need to be resolved. A member of the Vision Sub-team should keep a record of the comments made so that they can be considered when making revisions in preparation for the final vision statement. You should not try to rewrite the vision statement as a Task Force, rather this discussion is about giving input to the Vision Sub-team for them to make revisions.
6. At the end of this exercise you need to have an important discussion. This exercise reflects the culmination of months of work on a vision for your children's learning. It is important to get some immediate conditional consensus—leaving some room for further emendations—before you move on. Remind the Task Force of the definition of a vision from the last meeting: “a compelling, organizing image of a desired future state of an organization.” Restate for the Task Force the key ideas in your vision statement and be sure to make explicit what there is strong agreement about and what points the Task Force still needs to resolve. The Vision Sub-team will have time to work in the second half of the meeting to incorporate feedback. Mention that if they are ready, they will present another draft before you leave. Otherwise, discuss a process for finishing the work by email so that it is completed by the next meeting.

Record-Keeping

Display the vision with these commentaries (you probably will want to have them formatted to maximize their visual appeal) in a hallway or on a bulletin board. You might invite others in the congregation to add their own comments to these sheets. A member of the Vision Sub-team should keep a record of the comments made so that they can be considered when making revisions to prepare the final vision statement.



Alternative Model Sub-team Facilitator's Guide: Activity 5

Method One: Linear and Logical

From Vision to Goals to Alternative Models

Usage

Vision statements should be written in language that is inspirational, emotional, and descriptive. But this somewhat poetic language can often be difficult to translate into the next steps that the Task Force must take in order to achieve the vision. The purpose of this exercise is to articulate goals from your vision in order to make it easier for you to bridge the gap from your vision statement to your alternative model. You will then narrow the full list of goals to those that are reasonable to achieve with your first alternative model

This method should be used by people who like logical and linear thinking rather than visualization or visual/tactile processes.

Materials

Copies of the handout From Vision to Goals to Alternative Models

Time Required

About 45 minutes

Facilitation

Part I – Parsing the Vision Statement – 15 minutes

A goal will help you translate your vision into action and help determine where to put your effort as you seek to achieve your vision. The best goals are:

- *Reasonable*, i.e. given your abilities and resources they are possible
- *Actionable*, i.e. they refer to something that happens
- *Measurable*, i.e. it is possible, when looking back, to determine how much progress has been made toward achievement of the goal.

First, in small groups the Task Force should parse your vision statement into individual phrases. Then each small group should turn each of its phrases into a goal. Write the goals by taking each idea and translating it from inspirational terms to more concrete terms.

You are likely still working with a draft version of the vision statement. Use the most advanced version of the vision statement that has been agreed upon up to this point. This may include changes that were made during the vision commentary exercise.

A sample vision statement and set of parsed phrases is included below and on the handout in order to guide the Task Force in its work.

Sample Vision Statement Parsed into Actionable Statements

VISION: Our Temple will serve as a Jewish home away from home for each of its congregants. On Shabbat, on special holidays and throughout the year, its sanctuary and rooms will be filled with people of all ages actively engaged in Jewish learning and living. With Torah at the center of its life, its children and families shall be offered a religious education that fosters the formation of a strong Jewish identity.

As a community in which the views of all congregants are respected, our Temple will be a place where any question can be explored, and where the search for answers are in itself the journey. Through the diverse and enriching activities of its congregants, our Temple will link its members to the larger Jewish community.

PARSED VISION STATEMENT:	GOAL STATEMENTS: Realization of the vision can happen when
Our Temple will serve as a Jewish home away from home...	Learning takes place at the Temple There is an atmosphere of warmth, comfort and welcoming created by staff and participants
...for each of its congregants.	Learning spreads beyond the traditional school population to the entire community.
On Shabbat, special holidays and throughout the year...	Learning is connected to specific events in Jewish time so that learners experience Jewish time within the learning environment
...its sanctuary and rooms...	Learning takes place in the sanctuary and in other rooms
...will be filled with people of all ages...	Participants include congregants, parents, and children
...actively engaged in Jewish learning and living.	Learning includes the opportunity to engage in Jewish acts of study, prayer and/or <i>tikkun olam</i>
With Torah at the center...	Learning Torah is a critical element
...children and families will be offered a religious education that fosters the formation of a strong Jewish identity.	Learning focuses on identity formation as a critical outcome
As a community in which the views of all	Learning focuses on exploration and

congregants are respected, our Temple will be a place where any question can be explored, and where the search for answers is in itself the journey.	questioning
Through the diverse and enriching activities of its congregants, our Temple will link its members to the larger Jewish community.	Congregants will share their experiences outside of the Temple in order to connect to the larger Jewish community

Part II – Sharing and prioritizing – 30 minutes

If you did this exercise in small groups, have each small group share its parsed statements and goals. When all the groups have shared, look for repetitions or overlaps. If there are significant disagreements to be worked out, these need to be dealt with.

Choose which three to five of the parsed vision statements/goals you would like to be the hallmark of your first alternative model of children’s Jewish education. These might be the ones that bring you closest to the vision, or those that make the boldest change. At the least you should feel that if you achieve these goals, congregants will have a sense that something significant has changed and a gain a real experience of what life is like in the new vision.

Part III – Brainstorming – 15 minutes

In the next 15 minutes, the group should brainstorm ideas for models which might achieve the goals. Use the worksheet found on page 47, and give each Sub-team member a few minutes to answer the questions. Make sure to think back to the alternative models that you saw on the Online Learning Experience. Are there any from there that you could adapt to your situation? Think back to the discussions that you have had in Task Force meetings. What are some of the ideas that have resonated in discussions? This will be the last part of the exercise that you do at the Task Force meeting. Once each Sub-team member has finished writing, share your responses. See if there are any common themes that lead to a model idea or a partial model idea.

Part IV – Share your Thoughts with your Consultant

At the end of the Task Force meeting you may or may not be completely have three models that you feel good about. You should bring your work together with the work of other members of the Sub-team who might have been trying other methods for describing alternative models. At this point you should meet with your consultant who can bring to bear the resources of the ECE to help you.

Part V – Choose and Write Up Three Models to Share with the Task Force

You will either need to reconvene the Sub-team or assign a few people to draft the alternative model descriptions. A template for the descriptions can be found on page 56

Record-Keeping

All of the notes from your discussions, including the parsed vision statement and goals, the priorities that you picked among the goals, the complete list of brainstormed ideas, and the final versions should be turned in to the coordinator.



Alternative Model Sub-team Discussion Guide: Activity 5

Method One: Linear and Logical

From Vision to Goals to Alternative Models

Sample Parsed Vision Statement and Goals

VISION: Our Temple will serve as a Jewish home away from home for each of its congregants. On Shabbat, on special holidays and throughout the year, its sanctuary and rooms will be filled with people of all ages actively engaged in Jewish learning and living. With Torah at the center of its life, its children and families shall be offered a religious education that fosters the formation of a strong Jewish identity.

As a community in which the views of all congregants are respected, our Temple will be a place where any question can be explored, and where the search for answers are in itself the journey. Through the diverse and enriching activities of its congregants, our Temple will link its members to the larger Jewish community.

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...its sanctuary and rooms...	Learning takes place in the sanctuary and in other rooms
...will be filled with people of all ages...	Participants include congregants, parents, and children
...actively engaged in Jewish learning and living.	Learning includes the opportunity to engage in Jewish acts of study, prayer and/or <i>tikkun</i>

	<i>olam</i>
With Torah at the center...	Learning Torah is a critical element
...children and families will be offered a religious education that fosters the formation of a strong Jewish identity.	Learning focuses on identity formation as a critical outcome
As a community in which the views of all congregants are respected, our Temple will be a place where any question can be explored, and where the search for answers is in itself the journey.	Learning focuses on exploration and questioning
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