



# CREATING HIGH IMPACT JEWISH LEARNING

A Benchmarking Report of Innovative Capability  
in New York Congregations

A PROJECT OF **THE COLLABORATION TO SUSTAIN INNOVATION:**




**The Experiment in  
Congregational Education**



**THE JEWISH  
EDUCATION PROJECT**

**Leadership Institute**  
Shaping Congregational Leaders and Learners

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**The Collaboration to Sustain Innovation** brings together the complementary capabilities, insights, and experiences of The Jewish Education Project (formerly BJENY-SAJES), the Experiment in Congregational Education (an initiative of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, Hebrew Union College/Los Angeles) and the Leadership Institute (a joint program of HUC and the Jewish Theological Seminary).

The three organizations first formally came together in 2008 to embark on a new joint strategy to sustain innovative Jewish education for the 21st century aimed at creating Jewish learning that makes a demonstrable difference in the lives of children and families. The joint strategy encompasses a coordinated series of programmatic initiatives designed to build congregational capabilities for innovation (the focus of this report); disseminate, resource, and foster adaptation of high impact models of Jewish education; weave rich communal networks; and assess learner impact.

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# Executive Summary

**The world around us is changing at high speed. The economy, technology, the nature of families and children, and learning itself are significantly different than they were just a decade ago. Rapid change presents demands and opportunities for educational leaders seeking to create Jewish learning that is accessible, relevant and meaningful for today's learners. Data about how well congregations design and implement innovation can be especially beneficial to an educational team ready to meet today's challenges.**

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This report is designed to help your congregation use data to advance innovative Jewish education that makes a positive difference in the lives of learners. Small changes in program or curriculum have not proven powerful enough to address the needs of today's learners. Rather, current thinking indicates that new models of Jewish learning that, in some combination, engage the family, attend to the individual, provide lived experience, build relationships and community and redesign the role of the teacher are required. The data in this report enable your team to reflect on the capabilities that are necessary to launch Jewish learning models that can engage and nurture 21st century learners.

The research in organizational change coupled with over a decade of work with congregations in the greater New York area demonstrates that, in order for congregations to make significant change in their models of Jewish education, particular capabilities are required. They include: Vision for Jewish Education, Collaborative Leadership, a Culture of Experimentation, Professional Development, and Committing Resources to Learning. This report explains these capabilities and details where New York congregations stand in relation to each one.

The data in this report stem from a survey conducted in the spring of 2010, commissioned by a partnership comprised of The Jewish

Education Project (formerly BJENY-SAJES), the Experiment in Congregational Education, and the Leadership Institute of Hebrew Union College & The Jewish Theological Seminary (the Collaboration to Sustain Innovation) as part of their work funded by the Jewish Communal Education Task Force of UJA-Federation of New York. Susan Bloom of Bloom Associates and Jim Meier of Arete Corporation designed and implemented the survey and analyzed the results. The Jewish Education Project identified for inclusion in the study 122 Jewish congregations in New York City, Westchester and Long Island that have part-time educational programs. Directors of education in 94 congregations in the New York area completed the survey, yielding a completion rate of 77%.

The survey measured the congregations' openness to educational innovation and capacity to initiate powerful and innovative learning experiences that have positive impact on the Jewish identity of their learners. The findings serve as a quantifiable benchmark of current status. Using responses to questions in the survey, congregations were assigned scores for four of the five capabilities. Average scores were calculated for congregations overall and for subgroups of congregations by size—small/medium/large – and by engagement with innovation.

**Key findings from the survey include the following, grouped by congregational capabilities for innovation.**

**VISION**

- Most congregations have a written vision statement; most of these were developed in the past 3-4 years.
- Most respondents report using a collaborative process to develop their vision.

**COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP**

- Educators at innovating congregations are much more likely to collaborate with their rabbis and lay leaders.

**CULTURE OF EXPERIMENTATION**

- The majority of respondents report that their congregations have an atmosphere where innovation is encouraged and believe there is much to learn from both failure and success.
- Large congregations and innovating congregations are more open to change and somewhat more likely to evaluate their educational initiatives.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CRITICAL COLLEAGUESHIP**

- Almost three-quarters of the congregations build time for professional development into the teachers' contracts.
- A higher percentage of innovating congregations require professional development.
- Teachers at innovating congregations work more collaboratively.
- Large congregations and innovating congregations collaborate to a greater extent with other Jewish organizations.

**COMMITTED RESOURCES**

- More than half of the congregations report space constraints on their ability to offer educational programs. Innovating congregations are more likely to find space to be a constraint.
- Congregations appear to have similar per-student expenditures at all sizes and levels of engagement with innovation.

On average, larger congregations demonstrated greater strength on each of these capabilities than medium congregations, and medium congregations than small ones. Innovating congregations—congregations engaged in the work of implementing new models of Jewish learning—also scored higher on average than other congregations.

Although many of the innovating congregations are large, a significant number are small and medium congregations, as well. It is significant to note that size does not determine the ability of a congregation to innovate.

## WHAT DISTINGUISHES THE WAY INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS WORK FROM OTHERS?

Innovating congregations involve a wider group of stakeholders to develop their vision statements and are more likely to use their visions. Their educators are much more likely to collaborate with their rabbis and lay leaders as compared to others. Innovating congregations focus on how to identify and measure learning outcomes at a much higher rate than other congregations. A higher percentage of innovating congregations require professional development among teachers. Almost half (as compared to less than a third of others) spend professional development time on involving parents in support of their children's education. Their teachers work more collaboratively on planning student learning. Family educators and teacher leaders are most common at innovating congregations.

The Collaboration to Sustain Innovation encourages you to use this report to understand the congregational capabilities that contribute to innovation, to learn about your own congregation and those in the New York area, to identify areas of strength and for growth in your congregation, and to plan for the future. Ultimately, we hope this report provides information you will find useful in your endeavors to provide Jewish education that makes a positive impact on the lives of Jews in the 21st century.

## CONGREGATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Compared to other congregations innovating congregations, regardless of size...

- involve a wider group of stakeholders to develop their vision statements and are more likely to use their visions
- have educators more likely to collaborate with their rabbis and lay leaders
- focus on how to identify and measure learning outcomes at a much higher rate
- require professional development among teachers at a higher rate
- spend more professional learning time on involving parents in support of their children's education
- have teachers who work more collaboratively on planning student learning
- are more likely to have family educators and teacher leaders



# Introduction



## PURPOSE

This report is designed to help your congregation use data to advance innovative Jewish education that makes a positive difference in the lives of learners in the 21st century. Learning that makes a positive difference in learners' lives requires new models of learning. Through organizational and educational change literatures and the work of The RE-IMAGINE Project, we have learned that launching new learning models requires particular capabilities on the part of congregations: Vision for Jewish education, Collaborative Leadership, a Culture of Experimentation, Professional Development, Communicating Success, and Committing Resources to Learning. This report will help you understand each of these capabilities more deeply and will provide you with information about where New York congregations stand in relationship to those capabilities. Using the information and discussion questions included in the report, the professional and lay leaders of your congregation will be able to consider how to develop or deepen your capabilities and extend your capacity to plan Jewish education that has a powerful impact on your learners.

Our hope is that this report will stimulate conversation and action among professional and lay leadership in the months ahead and will lead to furthering quality educational experiences. As members of the New York Jewish community, we invite you to join this powerful conversation!

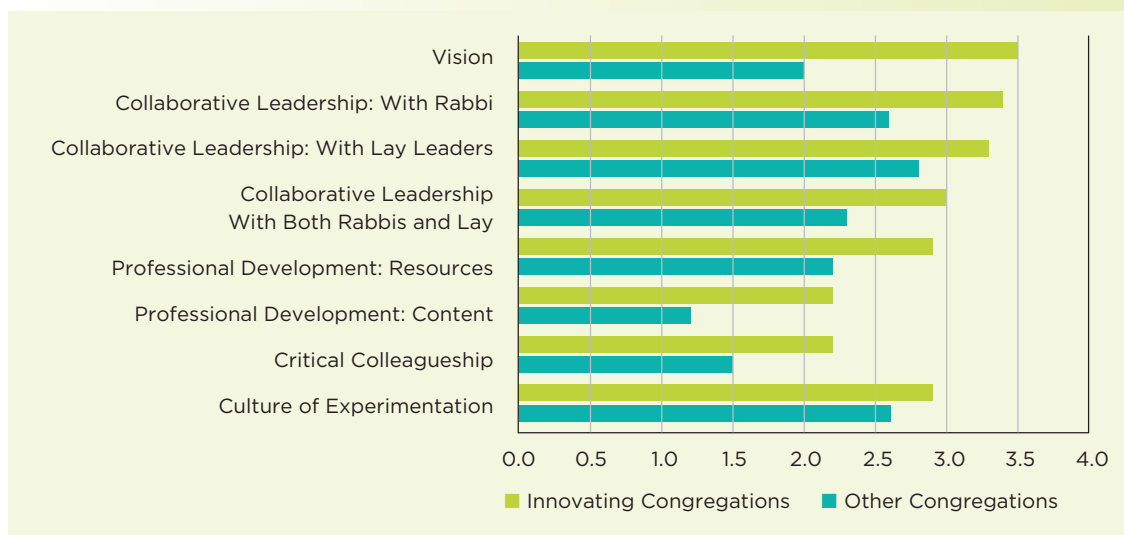
## BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2010, directors of education in congregations in the Greater New York area completed a survey commissioned by the Collaboration to Sustain Innovation – a partnership comprised of The Jewish Education Project (formerly BJENY-SAJES), the Experiment in Congregational Education, and the Leadership Institute of Hebrew Union College & The Jewish Theological Seminary (the Collaboration to Sustain Innovation) – as part of their work funded by the Jewish Communal Education Task Force of UJA-Federation of New York.

The survey measured the congregations' openness to educational innovation and capacity to initiate powerful and innovative learning experiences that have positive impact on the Jewish identity of their learners. The findings serve as a quantifiable benchmark of current status. This report presents overall results of the survey. We present it to congregations as an opportunity to learn about the status of Jewish educational innovation in New York, and to consider future directions in their synagogues.

## CONGREGATIONAL CAPABILITIES

INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



The Jewish Education Project identified for inclusion in the study 122 Jewish congregations in New York City, Westchester and Long Island that have part-time educational programs. The survey completion rate was 77%. The ninety-four participating congregations have the following characteristics:

**Denominations** — Reform congregations comprise 53% of the participants, Conservative synagogues- 32%, Reconstructionist- 5%, and unaffiliated or nondenominational- 9%.

**Size of Congregation** — Participating congregations vary in size from 110 to 2000 member units. They are grouped into three categories for analysis: Small (under 400 member units)- 53 congregations (or 56% of the total), Medium (400-750 member units)- 26 (28%), and Large (over 750 member units)- 15 (16%). Many of the responses vary according to the size of the congregation.

**Geographic Regions** — Survey participants include 24 congregations in New York City, 46 in Long Island, and 24 in Westchester.

**Engagement in Innovation** — The survey includes a small group of 20 congregations that have a track record of innovation in Jewish education. These are congregations that have been engaged in Jewish educational innovation over a period of years, have successfully piloted and implemented new educational models, are creating professional learning communities among their faculty in support of those new models, are measuring the impact of the learning on learners, and are documenting and sharing those innovations with others. The report provides data that allows comparison between these so-called “innovating congregations” and “other” congregations whose efforts fall at many points along the path toward innovation.

Many of the innovating congregations are large congregations, but the group of innovating congregations includes many small and medium congregations, as well. Although a number of them are large, it is significant to note that size does not determine the ability of a congregation to innovate.

## DEFINITIONS: CAPABILITIES TO SUPPORT INNOVATION

The survey sought to measure five capabilities that the Collaboration to Sustain Innovation identified based on experience in The RE-IMAGINE Project and research in the literature on organizational and educational change. This experience and research identified those institutional capabilities that are needed to achieve educational innovation and transformation. Here are the five capabilities:

- **Vision for Jewish Education** – Commitment to a shared congregational vision of learning and learner outcomes.
- **Collaborative Leadership** – Collaborative working relations among clergy, lay leadership and educational director.
- **Culture of Experimentation** – A culture that supports and guides innovation through ongoing experimentation and continual improvement, involving a three-step educational design and delivery process of access to new ideas, adaptation and assessment.
- **Professional Development & Critical Colleagueship** – Learning together with colleagues, in and from their practice, that addresses teaching and learning of Jewish content.
- **Committed Resources** – Prioritizing the resources (financial, physical and human) of the congregation to support the work of innovation.

## SCORES

Using responses to questions in the survey, congregations were assigned scores for four of the five capabilities. Average scores were calculated for congregations overall and for subgroups of congregations by size—small/medium/large—and by engagement with innovation.

Each capability is scored on a 4-point scale. Scores were assigned by giving equal weight to each of the component survey questions regarding that capability. For example, Vision contained four components each of which was accorded one point. Culture of Experimentation contained eight components each of which was accorded one-half point. Whatever the number of component questions, scores were arithmetically converted to a four-point scale. As you read the report, keep in mind that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between the total possible score and the number of component survey questions that contributed to the score.

Please keep the following cautionary note in mind while examining the scores. The survey results are based on the responses of a single individual in each congregation—the senior educational professional at the time the survey was conducted. It is possible that other people in the congregational community would have had different perspectives and responses to the survey questions.

## Using the Report on “Survey of Education in New York Congregations”

### AUDIENCES

This report, or sections of it, can be used in conversation with your:

- Education Committee
- Task Force on Education
- Executive Committee of the Board
- Board
- Faculty
- Education Cabinet (lay and/or professional)
- Staff Leadership Team

### STRUCTURE

The report is divided into sections according to the five capabilities for innovation. Each section includes:

- A definition of the capability;
- Results from the survey about that capability across all participating congregations;
- A report of average scores for sub-groups within the survey population with charts that display the information in visual form;
- A vignette about a congregation that has demonstrated success with that capability;
- A set of discussion questions; and
- A list of resources to extend your learning.

#### What is a benchmarking report?

This report is a benchmarking report. A benchmarking report provides information to help congregations determine where they stand vs. similarly situated congregations. It is designed to help congregations set goals for their own growth and development.

We recommend that synagogue staff and lay leaders use the results of the report, the questions, the vignettes, and the resources to structure conversations. The Jewish Education Project staff and LOMED consultants are available to help you facilitate discussions and planning based on the report—please get in touch with them. Alternatively, you may choose to have your own staff and/or lay leaders plan and facilitate such discussion and planning.

### WHAT TO DO WITH THIS REPORT

- Understand the five congregational capabilities that contribute to educational innovation and transformation;
- Analyze the findings of the report in each of the categories: What is happening in New York area congregations regarding educational innovation and transformation?;
- Compare and contrast your congregation with averages for particular capabilities for congregations of similar size;
- Consider the stories of success in the vignettes and what you can learn from them for your own work;
- Identify your congregation’s areas of strength;
- Identify areas for potential growth for your congregation;
- Prioritize areas to strengthen in your congregation; and
- Determine a plan for strengthening those areas.

As a benchmarking report, one of the report’s purposes is to allow for comparisons. We urge you to compare your congregation to others of similar size, rather than to congregations of other sizes.

We imagine that congregations will dream of other ways to use this report beyond these suggestions. Please let us know what you come up with!

### **SOME APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH THE REPORT**

**Zoom Lens:** Select a capability of particular interest (a weakness, a strength, something that intrigues people). Have the group read the vignette and respond to it. Consider the findings and compare your congregation to the congregational average and to the average for congregations of similar size. Use the discussion questions to examine your own practice.

**Wide-Angle Lens:** Have the group examine the introduction and the definitions of the capabilities. Ask the group for their opinions on the congregation's strengths and weaknesses/areas for potential growth on each of these capabilities. Then select an area to target, and use a "zoom lens" approach (see above) for that capability.

### **TERMINOLOGY**

Here are definitions/explanations of terms used in the report that may be useful:

**Data:** Data is the Latin plural for datum, which means a given. Data (the plural) are pieces of information, generally gathered in a systematic way. We are more accustomed to numeric data, but some data are qualitative, which means that they can be communicated in words.

**Benchmarking Report:** A benchmarking report provides performance information to help organizations determine where they stand in comparison with similarly situated organizations. Such reports are designed to help organizations set goals for their own growth and development.

**Data-Inspired Leadership:** Using data, along with consideration of values, context and political issues, to deliberate, plan, and take action.

**Score:** A number assigned to measure a particular capability, calculated by tallying points assigned to each component of the capability.

**Mean:** The average of a set of scores (total scores divided by the number of scores).





# Vision for Education

## DEFINITION

Congregations need to have a clear and compelling vision of the desired future for Jewish learning in their congregation, including the purpose(s) of Jewish learning, the nature of the learning experiences they wish to foster, who the learners and teachers will be, and the desired outcomes of the learning for the learners and the congregational community. Without such a vision, efforts may lack direction, energy, and imagination. The process of establishing a common vision also helps create capacity to bring about educational change.

## RESULTS

Most of the congregations that responded to the survey (82%) say they have a written educational vision, and most report that it was developed in the last three to four years. Innovating congregations reported involving a wider group of stakeholders in developing their vision statements. They were more likely than other congregations to include rabbis, cantors, lay leaders, teachers, and students in the process.

Congregations reported most widely the following uses for their vision statements:

- To choose new curriculum;
- To monitor or evaluate educational programs;
- To create new models or structures for education.

Although the majority of congregations also reported using their visions to make hiring and budgetary decisions, these uses were much less common than the practices listed above. This is a surprising finding given that budgets are a concrete expression of an educational vision.

## SCORE

The summary score is based on the presence of a vision statement in a congregation, whether the vision was developed collaboratively by professionals and lay people and the extent to which the vision is used in making decisions in the congregation. On average, congregations scored 2.3 out of a possible 4 points. Innovating congregations scored an average of 3.5 out of 4 possible points, compared to 2.0 for other congregations.

## VIGNETTE

While participating in The RE-IMAGINE Project, Temple Beth Sholom of Roslyn (TBS) brought a team together to develop an educational vision for the congregation. Thirty-six people from across the congregation, representing all ages and stages, interests, professional and lay leadership, participated in the visioning process, dedicating TBS to the pursuit of lifelong Jewish learning. Writing the vision like a page of Talmud, the team included community, mitzvot, family involvement, learning opportunities, and Shabbat as pillars of their vision.

The vision acted like a compass for the congregation's work and they used it regularly to guide their work. TBS proudly posted the vision on its website for all of its members and the world to see. They returned to the vision to explore how they might restructure their congregational and educational systems to make the vision a reality.

Following the visioning process, TBS created a new position – Director of Lifelong Learning – to help them fulfill their vision. The director oversees all education at TBS, ensuring

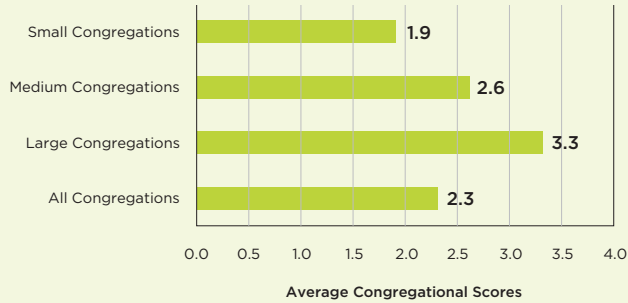
## CALCULATING SCORES

Score for Vision (0-4) is calculated by giving equal weight for each of the following elements:

1. Does your congregation have a written statement of its vision or mission for education?
2. Was the vision submitted to the researchers?
3. What was the extent of collaboration on developing the vision?
4. To what extent is the vision used to make decisions?

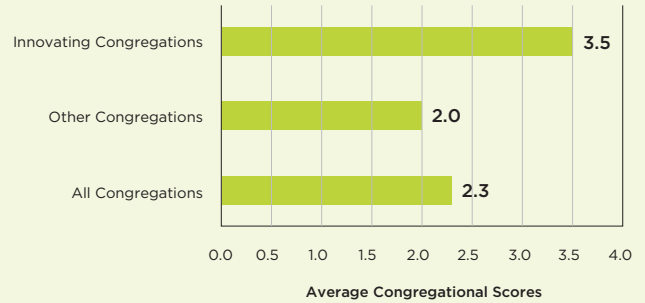
## VISION

### BY CONGREGATIONAL SIZE



## VISION

### INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



that learners at all stages of life have learning opportunities available to them. Additionally, the congregation created a new model of Jewish education called the Moreh Derech Beth Sholom Project. In this project, families are linked to

Jewish life coaches – trained members of the congregation – to help them navigate their Jewish journeys.

**Temple Beth Sholom** is a large Conservative synagogue on Long Island. [Learn more about them at www.tbsroslyn.org.](http://www.tbsroslyn.org)

## RESULTS

- Most congregations have a written vision statement; most were developed in the past 3-4 years
- Most respondents report using a collaborative process to develop their vision

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Has your congregation articulated a vision for Jewish education?

### IF YES:

1. When was your vision written? Who was involved in writing the vision statement?
2. Does the vision reflect your congregation's collective imagination about a future for Jewish education that is better than the present? Is it expressed in a way that is easily understood and inspires enthusiasm and commitment? Does it clarify direction and engender hope? In what ways might your vision be revisited? Who should be involved?
3. For what purposes do professionals and lay leaders in your congregation use the vision? For what other purposes could/should they use the vision?

### IF NO:

1. Who in your congregation makes decisions about education? Who else should be involved in making educational decisions?
2. What do you want education in your congregation to look like? Who will the learners be? Where and when will learning take place? What will be the nature of the learning experience? What impact will it have on learners?
3. What are first steps you can take to begin a visioning process for education in your congregation?



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Nanus, Burt, *Visionary Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995).

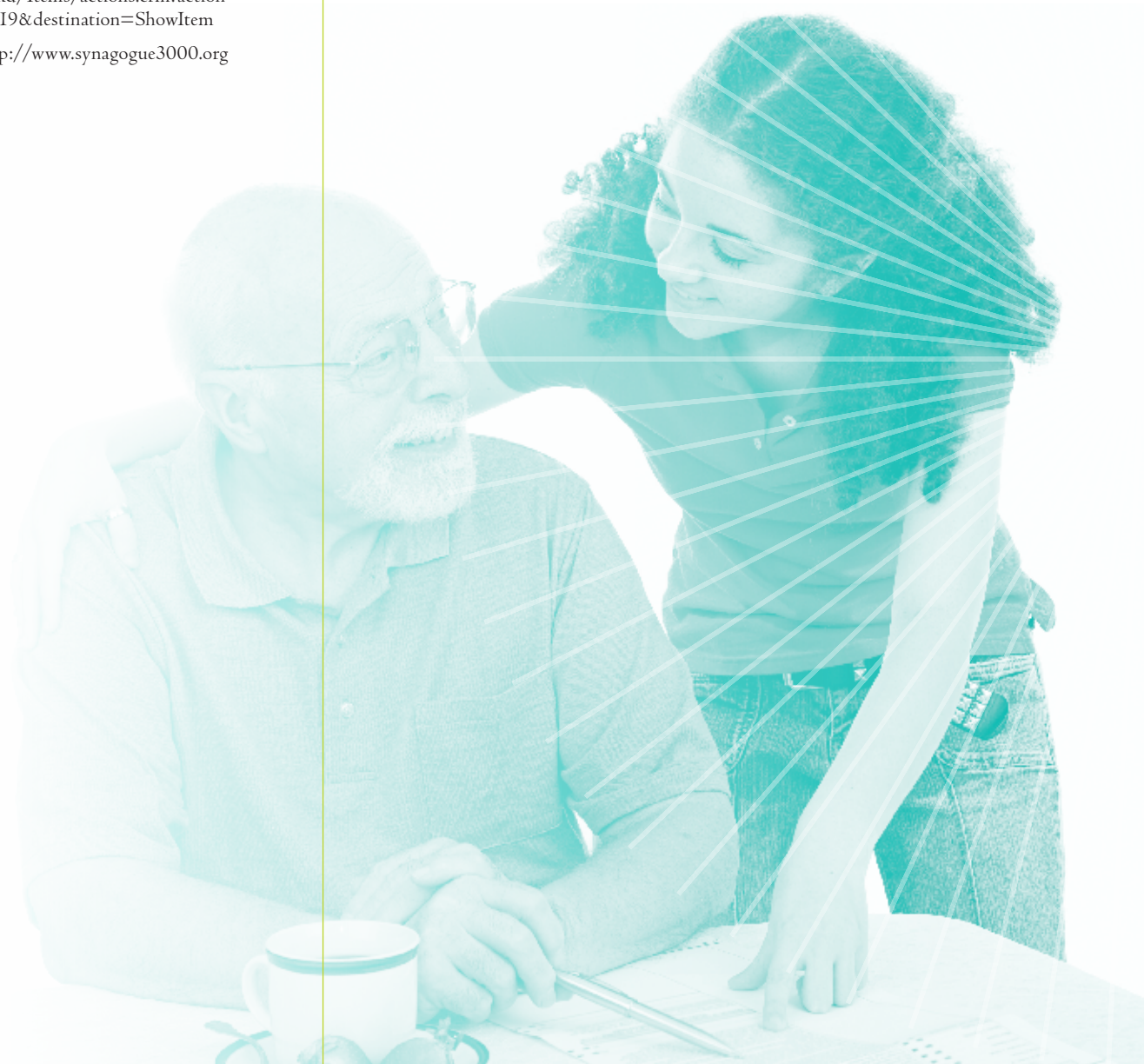
Fox, Seymour, Israel Sheffler, and Daniel Marom, *Visions of Jewish Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Kotter, John P. and Dan S. Cohen, "Step 3: Get the Vision Right" in *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change their Organizations* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

Aron, Isa, Steven M. Cohen, Lawrence Hoffman and Ari Y. Kelman, "The Visionary Congregation: Images of Who We Are and Who We Want to Be" in *Sacred Strategies: Transforming Synagogues from Functional to Visionary* (Herndon: The Alban Institute, 2010).

[http://ccarnet.org/\\_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item\\_id=I9I9&destination=ShowItem](http://ccarnet.org/_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item_id=I9I9&destination=ShowItem)

Synagogue 3000: <http://www.synagogue3000.org>





# Collaborative Leadership

## DEFINITION

Collaborative leadership refers to collaborative working relationships among professionals (education director and clergy) and between professionals and lay leaders. It can help foster an institutional environment that is beneficial to innovation by encouraging cross-fertilization of ideas and by building engagement, buy-in and commitment to change. Decision-makers who lead collaboratively align their goals and direction so that key players unite in working to realize the vision. Both congregants and staff take a more systemic view and eliminate silo thinking which tends to inhibit or limit the scope of innovation to one isolated area. A collaborative culture is not an end in itself, but rather a valuable means that enables innovation.

In congregations with high capacity for collaborative leadership, the director of education meets with the rabbi and/or lay leaders for purposes such as:

- Thinking together about new directions for education;
- Discussing administrative issues regarding education;
- Reviewing or revising educational policies;
- Preparing or reviewing budgets;
- Addressing individual student issues;
- Using evidence to monitor what students learn;
- Learning together about pedagogy; and
- Studying texts.

## RESULTS

In more than 80% of the participating congregations, the director of education and the clergy meet together to discuss new directions for education, to address administrative and individual student issues, and to review educational policy.

In about half the congregations, they report collaboration on preparing budgets, learning together about pedagogy, studying texts, and using evidence to monitor what students learn. A majority of educators meet with lay leaders to discuss or decide about each of the eight topics listed. Similarly, 80% or more of them meet with groups of members (committees, task forces, boards) to think together about new directions for education, discuss administrative issues, and review or revise educational policy. What's more, educators and lay people are much more likely to collaborate on budget than are educators and clergy.

## SCORES

Within the Collaborative Leadership capability, we report three summary scores that reflect the number of actions and decisions made collaboratively: one for collaboration between educators and rabbis, one for collaboration between educators and lay leaders, and one for collaboration with both rabbis and lay leaders.

On average, congregations scored 2.8 on collaboration with their rabbi and 2.9 with lay leaders.

Congregations average somewhat lower (2.4) for collaboration with both the rabbi and lay leaders.

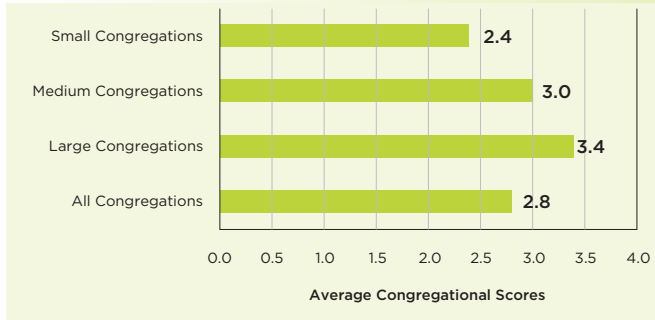
Educators at innovating congregations are more likely to collaborate with their rabbi and lay leaders. The results show a greater pattern of collaboration at innovating congregations on all 8 measures (see below), especially in terms of joint text study with the rabbi and with groups of lay leaders.

## CALCULATING SCORES

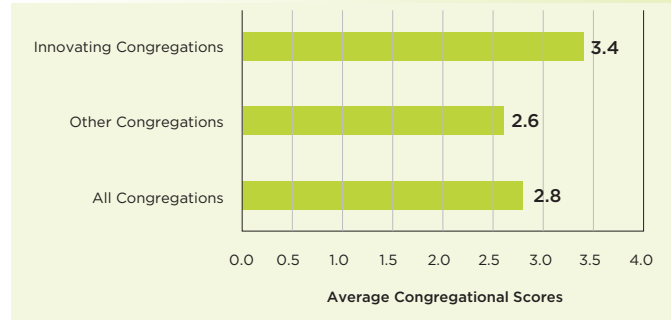
Scores for the three types of Collaborative Leadership (with Rabbi, with Lay Leaders and with BOTH Rabbi and Lay Leaders) (0-4) are each calculated by giving equal weight to the following activities:

1. Think together about new directions for education
2. Address individual student issues
3. Discuss administrative issues regarding education
4. Review or revise educational policies
5. Prepare or review budgets
6. Learn together about pedagogy
7. Study texts
8. Use evidence to monitor what students learn

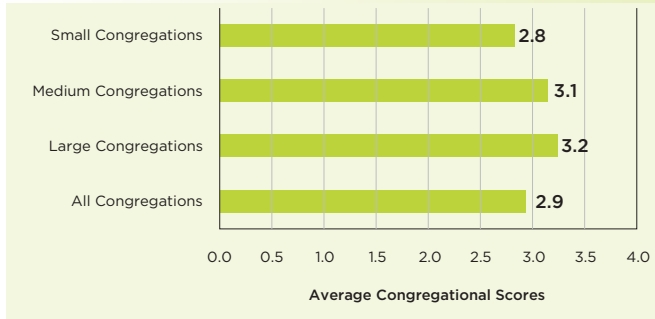
**EDUCATOR WITH RABBI**  
BY CONGREGATIONAL SIZE



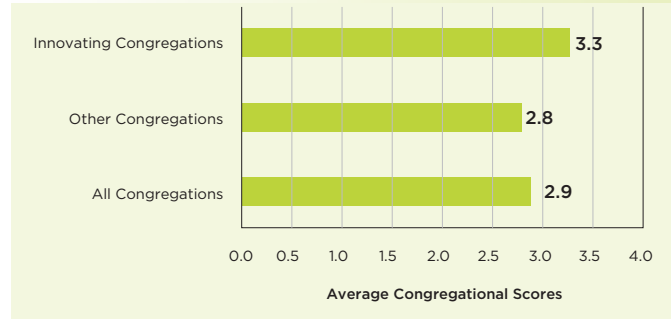
**EDUCATOR WITH RABBI**  
INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



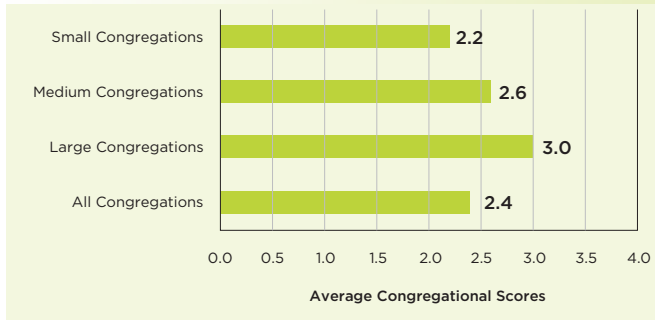
**EDUCATOR WITH LAY LEADERS**  
BY CONGREGATIONAL SIZE



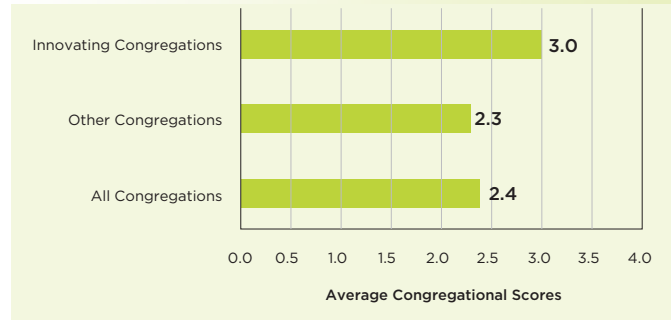
**EDUCATOR WITH LAY LEADERS**  
INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



**EDUCATOR WITH BOTH RABBI AND LAY LEADERS**  
BY CONGREGATIONAL SIZE



**EDUCATOR WITH BOTH RABBI AND LAY LEADERS**  
INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



## VIGNETTE

As a community of learners, Community Synagogue of Rye established the Community Learning Council (CLC), which is made up of the rabbi, the director of education, and representatives from each of the congregation's auxiliary groups (such as sisterhood, early childhood committee, teen engagement committee, and Israel committee). The leadership of the synagogue comes together about five times each year to learn from each other around a particular focus, such as principles for educational design and educational outcomes for learners.

The CLC makes policy decisions to guide the congregation's programs so that they align to their greater goals. While engaging leadership from across the congregation, the council regularly visits the synagogue's vision and makes decisions about how to better achieve that vision. By gathering together during the year to learn from each other and explore the different arms of the synagogue, the CLC acts as a breathing organism in the congregation, inhaling resources and knowledge from across the synagogue and exhaling the learning back into each of the groups. By working collaboratively, Community Synagogue works regularly to set and meet goals for learners and achieve its educational vision.

**Community Synagogue of Rye is a medium-sized Reform congregation in Westchester. Learn more about them at [www.comsynrye.org](http://www.comsynrye.org).**

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways do the educational leaders in your congregation (director of education, clergy, and lay leaders) collaborate in service of education? How often and for what purposes (e.g. budgeting, planning, visioning, learning)? Who else in your congregation collaborates for purposes related to education (e.g. teachers or other staff)?
2. What have been the results of their collaborative efforts? What evidence is there of "silo thinking" in your congregation?
3. In what ways might learners benefit from including other voices in your educational decision-making and planning? What additional educational decisions and conversations would benefit from a more collaborative approach in your congregation?

## RESULTS

Educators at innovating congregations are much more likely to collaborate with their rabbis and lay leaders

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Duck, Jeanie Daniel, "Managing Change: The Art of Balancing" in Harvard Business Review (November 1993).

Gottlieb, Marvin R, Managing Group Process (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2003).

Kotter, John P. and Dan S. Cohen, "Building the Guiding Team" in The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

Lencioni, Patrick, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002).

Facilitative Leadership: The Imperative for Change: <http://www.sedl.org/change/facilitate>



# Culture of Experimentation

## DEFINITION

A culture of experimentation enables congregations to be open to developing new paradigms and ‘transforming’ the system. This kind of change is not simple and doesn’t happen all at once—hence the need for a culture of ongoing experimentation. Such an organizational culture enables congregations to try a series of changes in order to develop and refine new ways to realize their visions for education. Congregations with a culture of experimentation display many of the following characteristics—they:

- Maintain an atmosphere in which innovation is encouraged;
- Believe that there is much to learn from both failure and success;
- Include families who see a need for change in the educational program;
- Have professional staff who see a need for change in the educational program;
- Are willing to make big changes;
- Are open to changes that may not yet be popular with their members;
- Engage lay and/or professional leaders in reflecting on whether current practices are achieving their purpose;
- Formally evaluate how well changes work when they are made.

Innovating congregations report a greater openness to change and are somewhat more likely to evaluate their educational initiatives.

## RESULTS

The majority of respondents report their congregations have an atmosphere where innovation is encouraged, and believe there is much to learn from both failure and success. Some professionals and member families are happy with the status-quo and do not see the need for change.

Over a quarter (26%) say their congregation is ‘reluctant to make big changes’ and nearly a third (31%) let popular opinion guide them in deciding what changes to implement. About three-quarters report that their lay or professional leaders reflect on whether current practices are achieving their purpose, but fewer than 60% formally evaluate how well the changes they make are working. Large congregations and innovating congregations are more open to change and somewhat more likely to evaluate their educational initiatives.

## SCORES

The summary score for this capability allots equal weight to each of the bulleted characteristics. On average, congregations scored 2.6. Innovating congregations scored 2.9 vs. 2.6 by other congregations.

## VIGNETTE:

A congregation with a culture of experimentation, Temple Israel Great Neck thoughtfully and purposefully implemented a new model of Jewish learning for its families, which has evolved to come closer to reaching the congregation’s educational vision. In the model, families create their own journeys by selecting from among many worship and family learning opportunities in the Passport to Jewish Family Life brochure. The families enrich their year-long learning by selecting at least 8 worship services and 5 family education programs which they record in their “passports.” Each family’s passport is a unique record of their

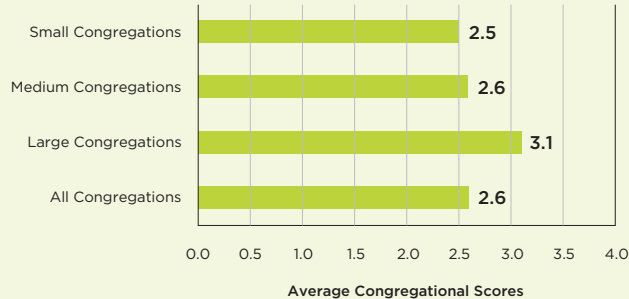
## CALCULATING SCORES

Score for Culture of Experimentation (0-4) is calculated by assigning equal weight to each of the following elements:

1. Lay or professional leaders reflect on whether current practices are achieving their purpose.
2. Negative response to “Families like the education program as is, see no need for change.”
3. Negative response to “Professional staff like the education program as is, see no need for change.”
4. We have an atmosphere in which innovation is encouraged.
5. Negative response to “We are hesitant to make big changes.”
6. We believe there is much to learn from both failure and success.
7. When we make changes, we formally evaluate how well they work.
8. Negative response to “We only make changes that we know our members will support.”

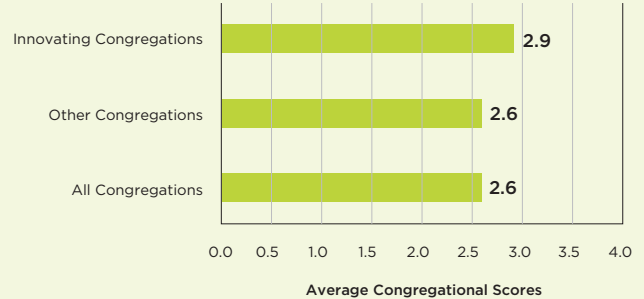
## CULTURE OF EXPERIMENTATION

BY CONGREGATIONAL SIZE



## CULTURE OF EXPERIMENTATION

INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



journey through the year, documenting the opportunities that best meet their particular needs and interests.

### RESULTS

- The majority of respondents report their congregations have an atmosphere where innovation is encouraged, and believe there is much to learn from both failure and success
- Large congregations and innovating congregations are more open to change and somewhat more likely to evaluate their educational initiatives

Understanding that experimentation requires reflection, assessment, and realignment, TIGN formed an assessment committee to design polls and glean feedback after each learning opportunity. The congregation then used data from its learners to mold its program to better meet the needs of its families.

Through experimentation, reflection, and assessment, TIGN has remained committed to designing meaningful, high-impact learning to achieve its vision for education.

**Temple Israel of Great Neck** is a large Conservative congregation on Long Island. [Learn more about them at www.tign.org.](http://www.tign.org)

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The survey upon which this report is based was completed by a single individual, thus reflecting one person's perceptions of the congregation. How do different constituents in your congregation perceive its culture of experimentation?
2. Which of the characteristics listed above are present in your congregation? What evidence do you have of their presence?
3. If your congregation believed that there's much to learn both from failure and from success, how would people in the congregation conduct themselves? How would you respond to success and to failure? What processes would you follow to learn from each other?
4. What was the last thing you tried to change that went well? What was the last thing you tried to change that didn't go well? What did you learn from your success and from your failure?
5. What would it involve for your congregation to formally evaluate change and act on what it learned?



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Aron, Isa, *The Self-Renewing Congregation: Organizational Strategies for Revitalizing Congregational Life*. (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2002).

Bridges, William, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 2nd Edition, (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003).

Campbell, Dennis G., *Congregations as Learning Communities: Tools for Shaping Your Future* (Herndon: The Alban Institute, 2000).

Fullan, Michael, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1994).





# Professional Development & Critical Collegueship

## DEFINITIONS

Professional development and critical collegueship play central roles in helping congregations to adopt new models of education as they strive to realize their visions. Such innovative models require new behaviors from teachers. By participating in ongoing, high quality professional development, directors of education and teachers develop their abilities to adapt to new models and expand their expertise in teaching Jewish content and pedagogy. Congregations that strive to implement excellent educational programs benefit by establishing a culture of critical collegueship where educators learn together with and from others, both within and outside the congregation.

This capability is divided into three parts; each part focuses on a different aspect of professional development. One examines the resources that the congregations devote to professional development activities, another deals with the content of professional development, and the third focuses on the collaboration among teachers and with others outside of the congregations (i.e. in communal networks).

## RESULTS

### Resources for Professional Development

Approximately three-quarters of congregations hold professional development (PD) sessions for groups of teachers at their own sites, conducted by their staff. Almost three-quarters of the congregations have time for PD built into the teachers' contracts; virtually all (90%) of the innovating congregations do so. A higher percentage of innovating synagogues require PD (80% vs. 62% of other congregations) for some or all of their teachers. Thirty-nine (39) percent of the congregations pay their staff extra to at

tend professional development outside of regular program hours. Few congregations formally evaluate the outcome of their PD (26%) or tie it to learner outcomes (39%).

### Content of Professional Development

Congregations devote PD time to both teaching content and pedagogy. The list below indicates the most popular areas of focus for professional development and the percentage of congregations devoting PD time to these areas.

- How to teach a particular content area (e.g. Israel or T'filah) (67%)
- Exemplary teaching strategies/pedagogy (63%)
- Sharing educational resources (51%)
- How to adapt or implement new curricula (41%)
- How to identify and measure learning outcomes (35%)
- How to involve parents in support of their children's education (34%)

Innovating congregations focus to a much greater extent on "how to identify and measure learning outcomes" than other congregations (70% vs. 26%). While almost half (45%) of the innovating congregations report spending PD time on "How to involve parents in support of their children's education," only 31% of others reported doing so.

### Critical Collegueship

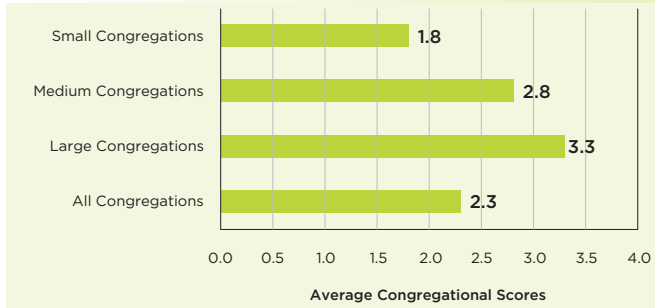
Teachers at innovating congregations work more collaboratively. They are more likely to have jointly developed a lesson plan (85% vs. 73% for others), jointly developed a whole unit (60% vs. 28%), taught classes together (85% vs. 77%), jointly developed learner

## RESULTS

- Almost three-quarters of the congregations have time for professional development built into the teachers' contracts
- A higher percentage of innovating congregations require professional development
- Teachers at innovating congregations work more collaboratively
- Large congregations and innovating congregations collaborate to a greater extent with other Jewish organizations

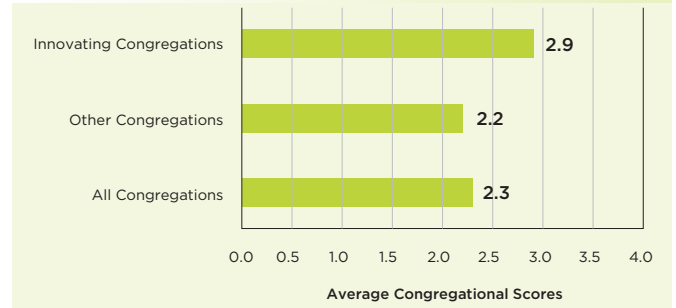
### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: RESOURCES

BY CONGREGATIONAL SIZE



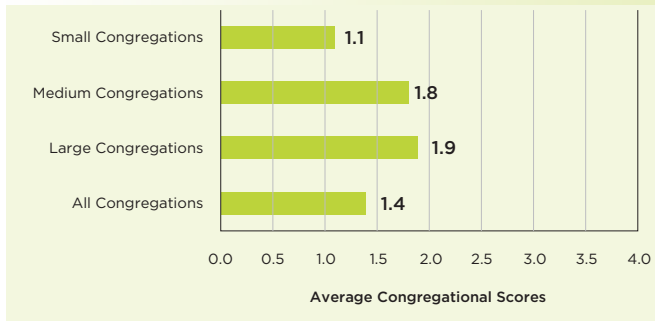
### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: RESOURCES

INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



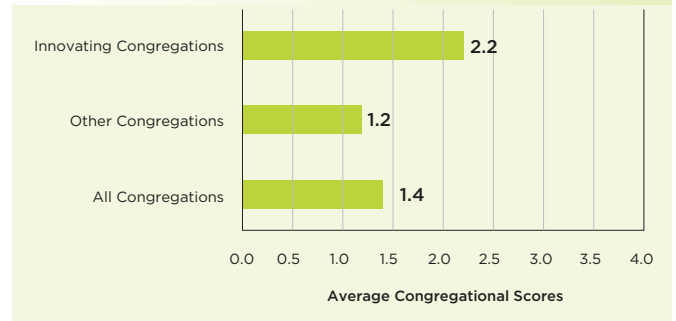
### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONTENT

BY CONGREGATIONAL SIZE



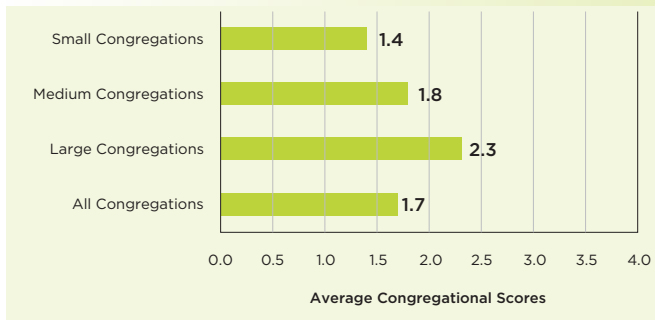
### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CONTENT

INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



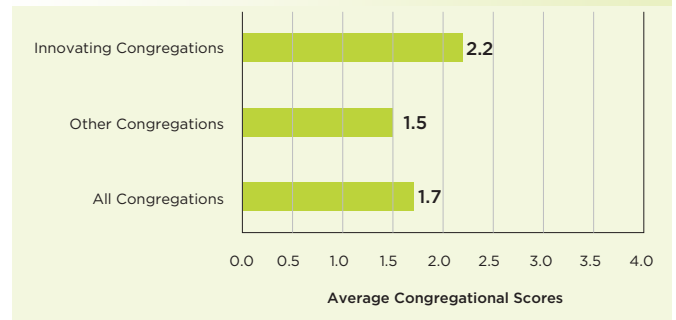
### CRITICAL COLLEAGUESHIP

BY CONGREGATIONAL SIZE



### CRITICAL COLLEAGUESHIP

INNOVATING CONGREGATIONS VS OTHER CONGREGATIONS



outcomes (65% vs. 20%), and observed another teacher (45% vs. 32%).

Overall, just 29% of the respondents say that their synagogue collaborates extensively or very extensively with other Jewish organizations or institutions for the benefit of education at their congregation. Sixty-five (65) percent of participants in innovating congregations report extensive collaboration vs. 19% of other congregations.

### SCORES

Three separate scores were calculated for this capability—Resources for Professional Development, Content of Professional Development and Critical Collegueship. You may notice that the scores in this section seem low relative to the scores for other capabilities. The low scores suggest that most congregations have room for improvement in the capability of Professional Development, especially the sub-category of Critical Collegueship.

#### Resources for Professional Development

The overall average score for congregations was 2.3. Innovating congregations scored 2.9 on average and other congregations scored 2.2.

#### Content of Professional Development

Overall, the congregations scored just 1.4 out of a possible 4 points. The elements included in the score were not generally the focus of PD. Innovating congregations scored higher (2.2) compared to others (1.2).

#### Critical Collegueship

This score summarizes the extent of collaboration among teachers. Overall, the congregations scored 1.7 out of a possible 4 points on critical collegueship. Innovating congregations scored 2.2 on average and other congregations scored 1.5.

### CALCULATING SCORES

#### RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (0-4)

is calculated by giving equal weight to each of the following elements:

- Built professional development time into their teachers' contracts
- Required professional development for at least some teachers
- Either held professional development during regular hours or paid teachers for PD outside of regular program hours

#### CONTENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (0-4)

is calculated by giving equal weight to each of the following elements:

- Aligned to specific student outcomes
- Focused on identifying and measuring learning outcomes
- Addressed how to involve parents in support of their children's education

#### CRITICAL COLLEAGUESHIP (0-4)

is calculated by giving equal weight if teachers, in the past 12 months, have:

- Jointly developed a lesson plan
- Jointly developed a whole unit
- Planned their own professional development
- Taught classes together
- Jointly developed learner outcome indicators
- Observed another teacher
- Engaged in peer coaching

## VIGNETTE

While participating in LOMED, Mara Braunfeld, Director of Education at Temple Shaaray Tefila in Bedford Corners, saw the need for better collaboration and professional development for her staff. The synagogue has a large staff with several teachers at each grade level who work on different days of the week. In the past, Shaaray Tefila faculty gathered only a few times during the year. Understanding that professional learning and critical collegiality can lead to achieving learner outcomes, Mara sought to change how professional development was done at Shaaray Tefila.

First, Mara selected teacher leaders from several of the grade levels to make up a Professional Learning Team (PLT). The PLT worked to support teachers in each of the grade levels to begin coordinating with each other to better meet their goals for learners. Having experienced the benefit of collaboration toward better achieving goals, the teacher leaders wanted to model collaboration for the rest of the faculty. By working together, the teachers designed learning that focused more clearly on the congregation's priority goal for learners: "Learners will be on a spiritual journey rooted in Jewish tradition." After teaching their lessons, the teachers gathered again to reflect on how things went and to plan collaboratively again. Teachers are beginning to see their colleagues as resources and sources of support for designing learning. They have begun to reach out to each other for other collaborative opportunities. And the teacher leaders now work to align the grade levels' professional development and collaboratively-designed lesson plans to achieve the congregation's priority goal.

**Temple Shaaray Tefila of Bedford Corners** is a large Reform congregation in Westchester. Learn more about them at [www.shaaraytefila.org](http://www.shaaraytefila.org).

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What professional development opportunities does your congregation offer to its faculty? How many teachers take advantage of these opportunities? What might you do as a congregation to make more time available for teachers to participate in professional development?
2. In what ways do the teachers in your congregation collaborate to design and deliver learning? What other opportunities for collaboration could your faculty take advantage of? In what ways can you imagine collaboration improving learning opportunities in your congregation?
3. When participating in professional development, what do your teachers study and how do they learn? What are the critical areas for education in your congregation? In what ways might the professional development for your faculty better align to the educational vision of the congregation?
4. How do you know whether professional development for teachers results in better outcomes for your congregation's learners? If you do not currently evaluate professional development in your congregation, how might you begin to find out the ways in which and extent to which it impacts your learners? If your congregation currently evaluates professional development, how well is it meeting the goals of the congregation? How might it be improved?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DuFour, Richard et al, *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* (Bloomington: Solution Tree, 2006).

Kiser, A. Glenn, *Masterful Facilitation: Becoming a Catalyst for Meaningful Change* (New York: AMACOM, 1998).

Stoldolsky, Susan S., Gail Zaiman Dorph, and Sharon Feiman Nemser, "Professional Culture and Professional Development in Jewish Schools: Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences," in *Journal of Jewish Education* (August 2006): pp 91-108.

Learning Forward: <http://www.learningforward.org> (formerly called the National Staff Development Council.)



A decorative graphic consisting of numerous thin, light green lines radiating from a central point on the left side of the page, creating a sunburst or fan-like effect that extends towards the right.

# Resources Committed to Education



## DEFINITIONS

Delivering a program of high quality education usually requires the commitment of resources—human (staff), physical (space), and financial. For the capability called “Resources,” this study looked specifically at educational leadership, teaching staff, space for education, and budget.

Reporting summaries in this broad area is challenging because resources are not necessarily tracked and reportable in comparable ways across congregations. Therefore, it is difficult to make valid statements and comparisons are not easy to interpret. We hope to continue developing methods for tracking and reporting results in a standardized way that will allow for valid comparisons. Rather than reporting scores in this category, we present findings we believe can generate serious conversation and be useful for learning in congregations.

## RESULTS

### Educational Leadership

The title most commonly accorded the senior educator is “Director of Education.” In most cases, this person holds the title of “Director of Education” (61%) or Principal/Religious School Director (23%). A few congregations (5%) refer to the role as “Director of Lifelong Learning.” In some congregations, a congregational rabbi (4%) or cantor (2%) holds additional responsibility for overseeing and running the education program.

Educational leaders hold degrees in Jewish education, Jewish studies, and general education. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the respondents hold a degree in Jewish education; 30% in Jewish studies; 42% in general education; and 36% hold a degree in some other field. These categories are not mutually exclusive; some educators hold multiple degrees. Seventeen percent (17%) are ordained rabbis and two percent are cantors.

Nineteen percent (19%) of the respondents report no advanced degree (beyond a bachelors’ degree).

Staffing models for educational programs in the congregations differ. The administrative team is broader at innovating and larger congregations. Family Educators are most common at innovating congregations (full or part-time—45%); only 16% of all congregations in the sample have Family Educators. Teacher Leaders are most common at innovating congregations (30% vs. 11% overall).

### Teaching Staff

About a third of the congregations employ teachers who are currently enrolled in Jewish education or clergy education programs. Most are found in Westchester congregations. Congregants work as teachers in a little over half of the synagogues. More than half of the congregations have teachers with credentials in Jewish education, Jewish studies, or Hebrew. Over 80% of innovating congregations have at least some teachers with such degrees.

### Space for Education

The survey asked whether New York area congregations are constrained in their ability to offer educational programs by the type or amount of space available. We would expect that whether the type of space is appropriate will depend upon the type of educational programs that the congregations are trying to offer. Since most congregations’ educational facilities consist of a school building, congregations seeking to use innovative (non-school) models of Jewish learning are more likely to feel constrained by the nature of their current space.

## RESULTS

- More than half the congregations report space constraints on their ability to offer educational programs. Innovating congregations are more likely to find space to be a constraint.
- Congregations appear to have similar per-student expenditures at all sizes and levels of engagement with innovation.

More than half the congregations report space constraints on their ability to offer educational programs. Overall 16% percent feel somewhat limited and 35% say that their programs are limited to a great extent by the type or amount of space. Innovating congregations more often report space limitations. This may reflect the fact that they have different expectations in terms of the type of space that would be conducive to create the learning experiences that they envision. Surprisingly, despite current economic conditions, approximately one-fourth of responding congregations are considering or planning the addition of space in the next five years.

### **Budget for Education**

The amount of money that congregations commit to education is a tangible measure of the priority that they assign to this aspect of congregational life. This information should be informative about the current financial status of educational budgets in the congregations, as well as an important baseline for assessing future developments.

People who responded to the survey calculated their budgets in different ways, making comparisons difficult. We appreciate the considerable effort that respondents made to report budget figures within the framework of questions we provided. Despite our best efforts to frame the budget questions in a way that would yield comparable data, tracking and reporting methods vary sufficiently to make valid comparisons difficult to achieve. It appears from the survey that the median expenditure on education on a per student basis is quite similar for all sizes of congregations and for innovating congregations and others.

### **VIGNETTE**

Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore (RSNS) was facing the same challenge as every other synagogue: limited resources. What is unique about RSNS is that they found a way to redistribute time and money to meet their needs. The faculty was trying to find time for professional development, but the synagogue did not have additional money to pay teachers for extra hours of work. At the same time, RSNS was looking for opportunities for families to gain authentic Jewish experiences outside of the classroom. To meet both challenges, RSNS launched a pilot where 3 times during the year families attended congregational celebrations (e.g. Purim) instead of attending the regularly-scheduled learning sessions. In addition to giving families authentic Jewish experiences, the synagogue was able to free up 3 afternoons for teachers to engage in professional development.

At the end of the year, RSNS learned through a survey that families were excited to celebrate holidays with the congregation. Because of the pilot's success, the following year the congregation included 6 days of congregational celebrations in its calendar for families. The director, Rabbi Jodie Siff, explained that the congregation, like others, had limited resources. She said, "You have to figure out what is essential." As a small congregation, RSNS turns to its vision and values when determining how to use its limited resources.

**Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore** is a small congregation on Long Island. Learn more about them at [www.rsns.org](http://www.rsns.org).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Make a list of the educational professionals in your congregation and their areas of responsibility. Where does the bulk of the responsibility lie? In what ways does the current staff structure support your congregation's vision for education? What other supports could your congregation employ or access to support education? (Some ideas include empowering teachers to take leadership roles, bringing skills and talents from congregants into the staff, hiring additional administrative staff, or leveraging outside resources from a local agency.)
2. What human resources (with what skills, education, and experience) currently support your congregation's vision for education? What other resources have not yet been aligned to support your congregation's vision for education? What other human

resources would better support education in your congregation (e.g. providing professional development, recruiting staff with particular qualifications)?

3. In what locations does learning take place in your congregation? How do these spaces support education in line with your vision? In what ways does the space limit the quality or nature of the educational experience? Where else might learning take place within or outside the walls of your congregation?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Aron, Isa, "Realism as the Key to Excellence in Congregational Education" in *Agenda: Jewish Education* 17 (Jewish Education Service of North America, Spring 2004).

Ulrich, Dave and Dale Lake, *Organizational Capability* (New York: Perseus Books, 1997).

Wertheimer, Jack, *Learning and Community: Jewish Supplementary Schools in the Twenty-first Century* (Lebanon: Brandeis University Press, 2009).

The Alban Institute: <http://www.alban.org>

## Some Final Words of Thanks

The Jewish Education Project (formerly BJENY-SAJES), the Experiment in Congregational Education, and the Leadership Institute of Hebrew Union College & The Jewish Theological Seminary (The Collaboration to Sustain Innovation) gratefully acknowledge a grant from UJA-Federation of New York that made this study possible. Our thanks go to Susan Bloom of Bloom Associates and Jim Meier of Arete Corporation for designing, implementing and analyzing the survey of New York congregational educational leaders. The data they gathered, their analysis, and their subsequent report created the foundation for this report. We appreciate their patience, persistence and keen insights. Members of the

Collaboration to Sustain Innovation also extend thanks to Cindy Reich of the Experiment in Congregational Education and Anna Marx of The Jewish Education Project for their contributions to the entire process from research design through report production.

The survey upon which this report is based grew out of a desire to learn about and to improve congregational education in the New York area. We, the Collaboration to Sustain Innovation, extend our thanks to all the directors of education who took time to complete the survey; all of us have benefited from your efforts. We expect to repeat the survey to learn about change over time, and to discover how our Jewish educational initiatives and yours make a difference.

We encourage you to use the report to understand the congregational capabilities that contribute to innovation, to learn about your own congregation and those in the New York area, to identify areas of strength and growth in your congregation, and to plan for the future. Ultimately we hope this report provides information you will find useful in your endeavors to provide Jewish education that makes a positive impact on the lives of Jews in the 21st century.

Please let us know how you use the report, what kind of conversations it stimulates, and what action it inspires.

### **The Jewish Education Project (formerly BJENY-SAJES)**

Cyd B. Weissman, Director of Innovation in Congregational Learning • [www.TheJewishEducationProject.org](http://www.TheJewishEducationProject.org)

The Jewish Education Project connects forward-thinking educators to powerful ideas and resources so we can create new models of how, what, and where people learn. We pioneer new approaches in Jewish education and impact more than 200,000 Jewish children in 800 institutions including Congregational Schools, Day Schools and Yeshivot, Early Childhood Centers and Teen Programs. Together with our partners, we're transforming Jewish education for today's ever-changing world and helping to shape the future of the Jewish people.

### **The Experiment in Congregational Education**

Dr. Robert M. Weinberg, Director • [www.ECEOnline.org](http://www.ECEOnline.org)

The Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE) is an innovative initiative with over 18 years of pioneering experience in synagogue transformation through Jewish learning. The ECE works through regional partnerships and national advocacy, guiding congregations and communities to revitalize themselves by re-imagining Jewish learning, bringing it into every aspect of congregational life.

### **The Leadership Institute**

Dr. Evie Levy Rotstein, Director • [www.Leader-Institute.org](http://www.Leader-Institute.org)

The Leadership Institute is guided by the vision of the New York School of Education at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) and the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). This opportunity enables HUC-JIR and JTS to join together to further the leadership capacity, pedagogic skills and Judaic knowledge of congregational school educators. This program is open to candidates from all denominations in the New York, Long Island, Westchester and the greater metropolitan area.

#### **For more information please contact:**

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