

## Sample Script for a Connecting Conversation

### Set-up

- Wherever you are gathering, be sure seating is comfortable and everyone can see everyone else.
- Provide refreshments
- Have text handouts readily available
- Provide name tags for everyone

### Part I: Welcome and Introductions (20-25 minutes)

Welcome and thank you for joining us. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm part of the team working to create new kinds of Jewish learning experiences for children and families in our congregation. Joining me is another member of our team, \_\_\_\_\_, who is going to do his/her best to keep a running record of our discussion.

This summer our team came together to begin what we feel is really exciting and important work for our synagogue under the auspices of a project called I\*Express. We are working with a consultant and made some preliminary decisions about the direction we want to go in (more about that later) but don't want to proceed much further in our thinking and planning until we learn some more about you and your families. Your children's grade/subject/stage in life is the target audience for the "taste" of this new model of learning that will be introduced this winter/spring. In order to create something that is truly engaging and meaningful we'd like to learn more about your family— what's important to you and what kind of Jewish life you want to live. We're going to follow together a structured conversation that will bring these thoughts to the surface.

Perhaps you're wondering why we have turned to you for this conversation. Two main reasons: one, we know that you're invested in your children's and family's education and Jewish future, and two, we know that you have your finger on the pulse of other families in the congregation and are a connector.

*Let's go around and please introduce yourself by name,  
the names and ages of your children and your answer to this question:  
Share one activity that your family enjoys doing together.  
Please limit your sharing to one minute.*

Suggestion for facilitator: Identify and name a common thread that connects the activities the participants, i.e. family together time around celebrations and holidays.

Thank you for sharing. It's great to get to know you a little better. We're trying to create a model that fosters meaningful experiences for you and your children. Your stories give us insight into the direction we will take.

## **Part II: A Little Bit of Torah (25 minutes)**

Part of the model is to help you achieve your hopes and dreams for your children. We know that it's not always easy to articulate your hopes and dreams – both general and Jewish –so we're sharing some pieces that others have written to get us started. On a separate sheet are five short texts and you'll be reading them together in pairs (*Facilitator: assign each pair a different text or two*). As you read, underline the items that relate to your hopes and dreams. When we come back together, each person will share some of their partner's thoughts. (*Facilitator: make sure participants are aware that they will be listening to their partner's thoughts for sharing. When you bring group back together, start the round of sharing to model for others*)

**Timing: 10 minutes.**

(*Facilitator – bring everyone back together*). Let's go around, and each person share something your partner identified with in the text(s).

**Timing: two minutes per pair, 10 minutes total.**

Please return to your pairs and share a hope and dream for your children that was not expressed in these texts. *After pairs have shared among themselves, ask if there is a volunteer or two who would like to share. If nothing was related to a Jewish life, you can say; I noticed that we haven't heard anything about living a Jewish life, which could be anything from community, Israel, study, social justice, ritual, etc. Where does this fit into your hopes and dreams?*

**Timing: 5 minutes total.**

## **Part III: Living a Jewish life (15-20 minutes)**

As you think about your hopes and dreams for your children in our lives today,

***What are some things that are helping you reach those hopes and dreams?***

Please take two minutes to consider this question. You may want to jot down your thoughts. Turn to the same partner from the earlier round and share. (*Tip for facilitator: direct the sharing from the circle in the opposite direction from sharing in part I*). Thank you. The next question to consider is:

***What are some things in this changing world that are getting in the way?***

*[On the last page of this section is a tool for the facilitator and note taker to help capture characteristics of meaningful experiences.]*

#### **Part IV: Facilitator reflection and building your new model (15 minutes)**

What we've captured today will help inform the direction of our new learning model. Our consultant will be working with us to analyze the data.

Describe the *broad* outlines of your model emphasizing:

- The category (e.g. Shabbat centered, Service Learning, etc.)
- The design is far from complete.
- It may require some schedule changes but that the team is being very thoughtful about providing plenty of communication and notice about what's ahead.
- Much of what was shared during this Conversation will be critical as the team shapes the model and plans for its implementation.

#### **Part V: Group reflection and Wrap-up (10-15 minutes)**

Go around and ask everyone to respond to this reflection question:

*How was this conversation different from other meetings or discussions you've had at the synagogue about a new initiative or upcoming program?*

**Thank** everyone for being so forthcoming and sharing their personal stories.

**Ask** the participants to help make your innovations successful by talking to others about this Conversation and continuing to share their ideas as your plans progress.

**Promise** participants that you will follow-up with them soon.

**LISTENING TO STORIES – tool to capture characteristics.**

As experiences are being shared in **Part I**, the note taker should jot down the experiences shared by parents.

<b>Activities Shared By Parents</b>

As hopes and dreams related to the texts are shared, in **Part II**, the note taker should jot down the thoughts shared by parents

<b>Sections of Text</b>	<b>Personal Connection to Hope and Dreams</b>

As stories are being shared in **Part III**, the note taker should jot down these items that were shared and expressed.

<b>Hopes and Dreams Expressed</b>	<b>What <u>Helps</u> Reach Hopes and Dreams</b>	<b>What are <u>Barriers</u> to Reaching Hopes and Dreams</b>