

Strengthening Congregations

Engaging Families

with Young Children

A Report from 2013–2014 Communities of Practice



UNION *for*
REFORM JUDAISM

האיחוד ליהדות רפורמית

AN INTERACTIVE RESOURCE

Is Your Community looking to...



Photo: Annette Powers



Photo: Ellen Boz, Temple Beth Ami, Rockville, MD



- ☑ Capture the attention of parents and not just their young children?
- ☑ Experiment and take risks to provide quality experiences for families with young children?
- ☑ Use research and data to understand today's parents?
- ☑ Learn from the work of congregations and experts in the field of early childhood engagement?

If you answered **YES!**
to any of these questions—then
***Strengthening Congregations:
Engaging Families with Young
Children*** is the resource for you!



For full access to articles and resources in this guide, please go to urj.org/FwYC.

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**Special thanks go to the congregations that completed
our Communities of Practice in 2014:**

Successfully Engaging Young Families Community of Practice

Congregation Shir Ami, Castro Valley, CA
Temple Beth Torah, Ventura, CA
Temple Beth Am, Framingham, MA
Temple Shalom of Newton, Newton, MA
Temple Beth El, Charlotte, NC
Temple Emanu-El, Utica, NY
Temple B'nai Israel, Oklahoma City, OK
Beth David Reform Congregation, Gladwyne, PA
Temple Shalom, Dallas, TX
Temple Beth El, Tacoma, WA

Pursuing Excellence Through Your Early Childhood Center Community of Practice

Temple Akiba, Culver City, CA
Congregation B'nai B'rith, Santa Barbara CA
Temple Emanu-El, Atlanta, GA
Temple Beth Ami, Rockville, MD
Congregation Shaare Emeth, St. Louis, MO
Temple Emanu-El of West Essex, Livingston, NJ
Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills, NJ
Temple Sinai, Summit, NJ
Temple Shaaray Tefila, Bedford Corners, NY
Temple Sinai Congregation of Toronto, Toronto, ON

While the URJ facilitated the Communities of Practice
and brought them together to learn, network and experiment—
we gained significant knowledge from their efforts in their congregations.
This resource was made possible thanks to their hard work, dedication and
willingness to share their successes, as well as their challenges, with us.

Introduction

We are excited that your congregation is looking for ways to enhance its engagement of Families with Young Children (FwYC) in your community. The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) is deeply committed to expanding and enhancing Jewish engagement for FwYC throughout North America. We have a keen, deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by working with this cohort. The continued vitality and strength of the Jewish community hinges on successful engagement of Families with Young Children.

This guide contains information gleaned from two of the URJ's initiatives implemented in 2013. Over the course of 18 months, 28 congregations participated in two [Communities of Practice](#) (CoPs), a guided transformation process: *Successfully Engaging Young Families* (without preschools) and *Pursuing Excellence Through Your Early Childhood Center*. In addition, more than 60 congregations participated in an [Active Learning Network](#) (ALN), a 16-week online learning project.

It is our experience that *every* synagogue has the capacity to engage parents of very young children, regardless of whether or not there is a preschool/early childhood center (ECC). This guide is not intended to help you open an ECC; in fact some congregations, through their participation in the CoPs, discovered that having an ECC is not the most effective way to engage FwYC in their synagogue.

This guide contains several types of resources, each of which provides effective tools for change. Choose what works best for your congregation.

1. The first section is a listing of nine [Best Principles](#) for engaging FwYC. Best principles are fundamental elements that should be considered when creating a new initiative or adapting one that exists. They are concepts forged from experience, which must be the framework around which any program is designed. This is not to be confused with best *practices*. Too often a program is considered a best practice and it is assumed that if you replicate the program you too will garner success in your congregation/institution. We advise that you view the best *principles* and approach them as the tenets that undergird a program, regardless of what you might want to implement.
 - **If you are looking for a general sense of the best principles in the area of engaging FwYC**—read the [Best Principles](#) section.
 - **If you are looking for tools to take action in your congregation** and get an expanded view on the topic—start with the [Best Principles](#), and then continue by utilizing the [ALN](#) sections described below.

Following the Best Principles section are several resources from our FwYC [Active Learning Network \(ALN\)](#). The [Introduction and Overview](#) explains how the learning was structured.

2. The ALN [Syllabus](#) is broken down into units. Each unit focused on a specific topic and was taught by an expert in that field. Most units of the syllabus include links to webinars, articles and videos the instructors provided for the unit. There are also links to workbook pages for synagogue leadership teams to study the topic together further.



3. The [ALN workbook pages](#) were created for those who had been involved in the Active Learning Network. You can re-create the experience in your congregation by creating a task force or committee to help with the visioning and implementation of FwYC engagement. Your team can use the ALN workbook units that coordinate with each of the weeks of the ALN. Each unit has 2–3 workbook pages, which include:
 - a. An overview of the topic
 - b. Space to write notes
 - c. A text study
 - d. Central (general) questions to ponder
 - e. Reflection on the conversation to determine next steps.
4. The [Current Research Appendix](#) has statistics from some of the most recent FwYC studies.
5. The [Articles and Resources](#) offer a wealth of information for you to explore some of the research, experiments, and conclusions on your own!

Each section of this Guide to Engaging Families with Young Children can certainly stand alone. However, when used together, they will help you develop a deeper understanding of how to apply the best principles of FwYC engagement within the unique culture of your congregation.

We wish you great success in whatever your team decides to try!

Effective Tools for Change:

FwYC Engagement Best Principles

Based on our experience working with and learning from lay and professional leaders in our congregations, as well as experts and practitioners in the field, we have compiled the URJ's Best Principles for Jewish FwYC engagement.

ENGAGEMENT IS A CONGREGATION-WIDE ACTIVITY, NOT AN ISOLATED PROGRAM OR DEPARTMENT

Engagement is the work of the entire congregation. You may have a monthly Tot Shabbat or a weekday Early Childhood Center (ECC), or you may have PJ Library® in your community—but it is the experience of the families that determines whether they feel connected. To sustain any effort to build a community of parents with young children, it is imperative that congregational lay and professional leadership supports the full scope of the work. This practice is especially important as parents of young children often are removed from the congregation—both physically and in terms of leadership. Ninety percent of the congregations we worked with in our Communities of Practice created a lay-professional team that regularly meets to discuss, plan and evaluate efforts to engage FwYC. Two-thirds of their synagogue boards and eighty percent of their senior professionals are very or extremely supportive of their efforts. Among our small congregations, even those without full-time staff worked in teams to effect change.

Temple Emanu-El in Utica, NY, realized it needed to make a change several years ago when the demographics in their community shifted dramatically. A small congregation that shares a building with a small Conservative congregation, they initiated a number of changes that add up to a large impact for parents of little ones. They installed a changing table in the restroom, created a short, musical family service and dinner once a month before congregational services, family havdalah events, and playgroups. They reconfigured the youth committee to include parents of children 0-18. They're also involved in the community PJ Library® program operated by the local JCC. The rabbi, herself a young mother, has developed relationships with the other parents in the community. Over time, parents have come to share responsibility for the programs. Participation rates have more than doubled in two years. Several families that previously were unaffiliated have decided to join the Temple Emanu-El family.

Congregation Shaare Emeth in St. Louis, MO, also convened a team of diverse stakeholders, representing very different constituents of the community, all of whom shared a passion for engaging FwYC and were dedicated to meeting regularly. "Charged by the Board of Trustees to assist in determining the vision of early engagement and early childhood education at Shaare Emeth," the change team investigated early childhood engagement and ECC trends in their own community and other Jewish communities throughout the country. "Specifically, we wanted to learn about the structure, educational philosophy and curriculum (secular and Judaic) of the various programs, the professional development requirements for teachers, and the modes and relative levels of successful involvement and engagement with the associated congregations."

The change team concluded that the ECC needed to integrate more with the entire synagogue. "... Much of the early childhood education and engagement at Shaare Emeth has been driven solely by [the ECC] and not the Temple itself... It has limited its connection to the Temple and hence distanced Temple families not associated with the ECC. We must do a better job at engaging all of our Temple families with ECC aged children, not just those attending our ECC, to achieve our goal of fostering a strengthened community through early childhood engagement and providing age-appropriate educational opportunities for all of our members."

ENGAGEMENT, NOT ENROLLMENT

Shellie Dickstein and Susan Remick Topek of The Jewish Education Project in New York [call us to action](#). “Let us commit the time and effort to building relationships between and among families as an investment in the future... When serving this population [parents of young Jewish children] at this life stage, perhaps we should instead think about our role as relationship weavers—focusing primarily on building and strengthening Jewish community through relationships rather than content delivery.”

Temple Beth El in Charlotte, NC, has taken engagement to a new level. They have built a community of young adults and parents raising young children called The Porch, symbolizing the front porch hospitality and neighborliness of the South. Through The Porch, a variety of activities are offered on a weekly and monthly basis, including some for adults/parents only, some specifically for parents to enjoy with their children, and some for the whole community together. Parents appreciate the opportunity to engage with a community of peers through the different roles they play in their lives. Regular participants now take responsibility for planning a weekly Torah study group that meets over food and drinks at Whole Foods.

Temple Shalom in Newton, MA, discovered that even with a thriving ECC, they were not engaging large numbers of families that were not enrolled in the ECC. They hired a part-time FwYC engagement professional who partners with the clergy and the ECC director while devoting full attention to Temple Shalom’s welcoming approach. Their [website](#) invites anyone in the area to come by and sample their offerings, members or not. Since the CoP, they have expanded their reach to accommodate new demographics—children under two and families of children with special needs.

USE RESEARCH AND DATA TO UNDERSTAND TODAY’S PARENTS

Our first pedagogical mitzvah, the *sh’mā*, commands us to listen carefully. We are still learning about the enormous social, emotional, and work related pressures that parents of young children experience. New parents—who had been so confident in their careers—find themselves in uncharted waters when they start preparing to welcome their first child. Rather than focusing on what parents and their young children can contribute to the synagogue, synagogues need to see themselves as having something to offer these parents as they start their parenting journey. Synagogues must be intentional in their efforts to meet the needs of today’s parents, beginning with knowing those needs.

The last ten years have yielded a wealth of research into families of young Jewish children, much too lengthy to print in this context. For your convenience, we have placed what we think is most relevant in our [Research Appendix](#). You can find links to even more research in the [Articles and Resources](#) section.

We strongly recommend that you use the data painstakingly gleaned from this research. See what figures resonate with your congregation, whether or not you have an ECC.

CONDUCT YOUR OWN LOCAL RESEARCH

National trends are important. However, to effectively serve FwYC, you must also be knowledgeable about your *local* community. [Community mapping exercises](#) can provide overviews of local demographics, unique community characteristics, and help identify local leadership and organizations. For example, what venues or activities are popular for FwYC in your community? What are dominant modes of transportation and how far are parents willing to travel with their young children? Where do people go for information about local community life? Which organizations currently serve this cohort well? How and why?

For United States congregations, if you have an ECC, one of the questions in the community mapping exercise concerns the availability of Government Funded Universal Pre-K in your state. Given the financial challenges of families today, many are selecting free ECC over Jewish early childhood programs. As has happened in some states,

ECCs are seeking federal money by cutting much of the Jewish curriculum to become “approved” Universal Pre-K sites. The choice comes with a divisive struggle in many communities. The URJ is working in partnership with the RAC to create [guidelines for congregations](#) who face challenges due to Government Funded Universal Pre-K.

Many congregations whose ECCs are experiencing decreasing enrollment are considering augmenting their hours and/or adding full-time infant care to accommodate working parents. These technical solutions can meet the real needs of today’s families if other conditions (location, facility, cost, quality) are met.

According to Lisa Farber Miller, the senior director of the Rose Community Foundation in Denver, “Providing services for parents with young Jewish children presents a rare opportunity for synagogues to be relevant to young families who are looking for places to spend their child-related dollars.”

Synagogues have the potential to provide inspirational Jewish experiences that are engaging entire families in new and meaningful ways from an earlier age—if the synagogue truly sees this as their mission.

INVESTIGATION & DIALOGUE: MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE!

In a DIY era when young adults want to craft their own journeys, congregational leadership must think about the real and perceived barriers to engagement. Mark I. Rosen, Ph.D. used that terminology in [the opening meeting for our communities of practice](#). He advised CoP participants to “Create low-barrier, easy access programming so that everyone feels comfortable regardless of their level of Jewish knowledge. Recognize that some parents are self-conscious about their Jewish knowledge. Uphold their sense of dignity.”

Congregation B’nai B’rith in Santa Barbara, CA, spearheaded a synagogue-wide initiative that was all about investigation and dialogue to find out what they were doing well and to look at how to improve upon and grow their strengths. Taking a different approach, CoP participants at Congregation B’nai Jeshurun in Short Hills, NJ [initiated a series of Coffee Talks](#) designed for listening specifically to their early childhood center parents. You can see the results of both CBB and CBJ’s successful efforts in this brief [powerpoint presentation](#).

[Congregation Shaare Emeth’s complete report](#) is a stellar example of how congregational participants in our CoP followed best principles. CSE studied national trends, did local research, and forged relationships to get real information about what their community wanted. They followed up by creating recommendations for Action Steps based on that information.

STAY CONNECTED: ENHANCE YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

When parents of young children seek information, want to find new activities or ways to get involved in their community, their first stop most always will be online. Recognizing this, congregational communities seeking to reach new parents must consider their web presence on their website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. It is imperative to recognize the value and opportunity that online communities and networking offer for this population.

Ellen Dietrick, Director of Early Childhood Learning at Temple Beth Shalom of Needham, MA, and co-creator of Darim Online’s [Social Media Boot Camps](#) shared three keys to social media success in [webinars](#) for the communities of practice:

1. Be Fun: Use photos, share memes, capture interest using a conversational tone. Have a team of people with permissions to post on your organizational feed who are likely to attend different types of events, so that your coverage and style will be broader.

2. Be Social: Be where parents are—for most parents in their late 20's to early 40's, that's Facebook. Listen for online conversations and questions; respond publicly to individuals' public questions so their friends can be exposed to you and your voice; be personal in your responses—even when “speaking” as the voice of the community.
3. Add Value: Content shared should be engaging and newsworthy, have a tight copy and help connect individuals—post ten times more ‘valuable content’ than advertisements of calendar listings.

The director of the [Schiff Preschool of Temple Emanu-El in Atlanta, GA](#), discovered the power of connecting to her families and spreading the word about her outstanding program through Facebook. She shared [some of her ideas with our CoP](#).

Congregation Shir Ami in Castro Valley, CA redesigned their website since joining the CoP, putting content of interest to parents of young children on the landing page. They use Facebook and multiple online community calendars to promote their Tot Talk program series with photos from past events. Designed for children ages 0-5 and their parents/caregivers to learn a little bit about being Jewish while socializing, Tot Talk has attracted many new families with young children. Specifically, they have grown from 49 member units in 2013 to 70 member units in 2015. True to the principles of ‘Be Fun’ and ‘Add Value’, Shir Ami’s Facebook feed celebrates birthdays, anniversaries, and special life events of their community members. These personalized posts are liked and shared, giving the synagogue’s friendly gesture broader exposure among friends of members. In Oklahoma City, Temple B’nai Israel posts photos of recent events and uses them to invite followers to celebrate with the congregation. Parents love to ‘like’ pictures of their kids, sharing their Jewish experience with their friends on Facebook.

REACH BEYOND YOUR EXISTING COMMUNITY: WORK IN PARTNERSHIPS

Though it often feels easier to do it alone, partnerships between your organization and community stakeholders can strengthen your work. As supporters of the [URJ's 2020 Vision](#), we believe that partnerships are mutually beneficial and build upon the strengths of each community involved. They are smart business practices—diversifying nonprofit’s limited human and financial resources and expanding the organization’s reach to a wider audience. Finally, partnerships are the wave of the future—a trend that external funders crave.

[Lisa Farber Miller](#) challenges us to “break down institutional silos. When families enroll in ECE centers, our JCCs and synagogues must embrace those families and show that they are valued members of the broader institution and Jewish community. This means that JCC and synagogues need programs, campaigns, and marketing materials designed to attract the attention of their ECE families, to communicate all that synagogues or JCCs offer, and to build inclusive relationships with these families.”

[Mark I. Rosen, Ph.D.](#) dares to suggest that you “consider joint programming with a local Conservative synagogue or the local JCC. Recognize that the goal is to inspire families to become involved in Jewish life wherever they are most comfortable.” For example, Temple Beth El in Charlotte, NC, helps provide Jewish content for the community’s Jewish ECC, together with the JCC and local Conservative congregation.

In greater Chicago, five Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative synagogues with ECCs have developed and shared action plans focusing on the integration of early childhood into the greater synagogue community. Recognizing the critical role of early childhood as the radiant core of the synagogue, the centers are working together on many strategic initiatives designed to engage families, connect synagogues, and strengthen the greater Chicago Jewish community as a whole.

URJ leads by example, forging partnerships continually. With respect to FwYC, we launched a [national partnership](#) with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and [Women of Reform Judaism](#) to expand efforts to engage FwYC in communities across the country using the well known brand of [PJ Library](#). For the congregations in our partnership, we stress that it’s about engaging with the families and building relationships, not just giving them free books.

EXPERIMENTING AND REFLECTION GO HAND-IN-HAND

Those congregations that have made significant strides are those that create a culture of experimentation and reflection, where risk taking is supported and encouraged.

The ECC director at [Temple Sinai in Summit, NJ](#), wanted to do something brand new to engage their FwYC: a Pajama Tot Shabbat. Through the CoP, they made sure to involve all of their stakeholders, from teachers and EC families to clergy and lay leaders in the decision process. Originally there was a concern that pajamas in the sanctuary would show a lack of proper decorum, but with collaborative preparation, Pajama Tot Shabbat was a great success. During the reflective conversations afterwards, the rabbi offered to wear his pajamas more often and encouraged the director to schedule more! The whole community discovered the importance of staying true to the mission and philosophy of the ECC and synagogue while pursuing excellence as they provide their FwYC with high quality innovative experiences with accessible and relevant Jewish content. An unexpected result is that their Pajama Tot Shabbats attract many families for whom this is their only connection to the synagogue.

STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE

The congregations that are most successful at engaging families with young children and making them feel part of the fabric of the community are those that are continually learning, experimenting, and relationship-building. The pursuit of excellence is a thread woven throughout all of the principles that we have articulated here. It refers to being intentional and reflective about everything you do.

The Board of Directors of Temple Beth Ami in Rockville, MD, realizes that their mission and vision leads them to include FwYC as an integral part of their community. They recognized that the ECC, which has operated for 25 years, has to be treated as an essential part of the synagogue—not separate from it. Due to the requirements of the CoP, they convened a leadership team which consisted of a combination of lay and professional leaders including: an executive board member of the synagogue who was never a parent in the ECC, a board member who was a past parent of the ECC, the ECC Director and the Special Projects Coordinator (who was also a classroom teacher). Each team member brought unique skills and perspectives which helped them address the challenges they were experiencing as they worked to accommodate the very busy and demanding schedules of FwYC. Their CoP experiment culminated in a collaboration with an [outsourced after school care program](#), as well as several other structural and programmatic changes to support families' participation in the school and in the Temple. They are currently working on being more inclusive at their ECC as their next CoP experiment.



INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Engaging Families with Young Children ALN

The **Engaging FwYC Active Learning Network** (ALN) was a 16 week process that the URJ offered to congregations in the spring of 2014. The ALN brought together URJ congregational professional and lay leaders who were interested in building a stronger community in order to engage families with young children. Through the ALN process, congregations had the opportunity to learn together, network with others in the field, obtain great tools and resources, and identify ‘next steps’ to take action at home.

The ALN process operated in a 4-week cycle. In the syllabus below each week is coded by letter and color as the presentation method rotated.

- **“A” Weeks:** Participants **watched a pre-recorded learning broadcast** (much like a *TED Talk*) **and read supplementary articles** related to a given topic. *Note: Presenters’ titles reflect their positions at the time each presentation was recorded.*
- **“B” Weeks:** Participants watched **live online chat sessions** featuring the presenter from the previous week’s pre-recorded learning broadcast. These experts led a lively conversation around the current topic and answered questions from the participants. These were all recorded so now you can watch them and think through how this topic is relevant to your home community. *Note: The live online chat sessions included participants from all the URJ ALNs running at that time.*
- **“C” Weeks:** Participants **received articles** focused on a specific FwYC engagement topic.
- **“D” Weeks:** Participants watched a **recorded live learning broadcast webinar** related to the previous week’s articles. On this webinar, participants will hear success stories from congregations in the field and learn with a topical expert.

The following section is designed for your congregation to benefit by working through it. All of the webinars, chats, learning broadcasts, and readings are available on Dropbox and YouTube. Links are provided within the [syllabus](#). If you view each webinar, study the recommended readings, and complete the relevant [workbook pages](#), you can learn most of what was offered to our ALN participants.

SYLLABUS

(For full access to articles and resources in this guide, please go to urj.org/FwYC)

- Week 1** **Introduction to FwYC & Active Learning Networks**
Cathy Rolland, URJ Director, Engaging Families with Young Children
Natalie Kianoff, former URJ Coordinator, Early Childhood Engagement Strategies
[Recorded Live Learning Broadcast Webinar \(D\)](#)
[Week 1 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 2** **Building a Base of Congregational Support**
Rabbi Jonah Pesner, URJ Senior Vice President
[Pre-Recorded Learning Broadcast \(A\)](#)
[Slides for Building a Base of Support](#)
[Week 2 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 3** **Building a Base of Congregational Support**
Rabbi Jonah Pesner, URJ Senior Vice President
[Recorded Live Chat \(B\)](#)—Follow up to Week 2 broadcast
[Week 3 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 4** **Barriers & Entry Points**
[Readings \(C\)](#)
[Week 4 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 5** **Barriers & Entry Points**
Stephanie Fink, URJ Associate Early Engagement Director
[Recorded Live Learning Broadcast/Webinar \(D\)](#)
[Week 5 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 6** **Culture & Change with Rabbi Sam Joseph**
Rabbi Sam Joseph, Elanore Sinsheimer Distinguished Service Professor of Jewish Education & Leadership Development, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and URJ Faculty Member
[Pre-Recorded Learning Broadcast \(A\)](#)
[Week 6 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 7** **Culture & Change with Rabbi Sam Joseph**
Rabbi Sam Joseph, Elanore Sinsheimer Distinguished Service Professor of Jewish Education & Leadership Development, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and URJ Faculty Member
[Recorded Live Online Chat \(B\)](#)
[Week 7 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 8** **Leadership**
[Preparatory video: Yitro](#)
[Discussion points for Yitro video \(C\)](#)
(No workbook pages)

- Week 9** **Leadership Rabbi Greg Litcofsky, Temple Emanu-El of West Essex, NJ**
[Recorded Live Learning Broadcast/Webinar \(D\): The Art of Having Coffee](#)
Rabbi Greg Litcofsky, Temple Emanu-El of West Essex, NJ
Natalie Kianoff, former URJ Coordinator of Early Childhood Engagement Strategies
[Mission Handout](#)
[Strategies Handout](#)
[Week 9 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 10** **Experimenting & Measuring: Change the Conversation**
Amy Asin, URJ Vice President/Strengthening Congregations
[Pre-Recorded Learning Broadcast \(A\)](#)
[Read about new ways to measure success](#)
[Powerpoint presentation](#)
[Week 10 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 11** **Experimenting & Measuring: Continuing the Conversation about New Measures**
Amy Asin, URJ Vice President/Strengthening Congregations
[Recorded Live Online Chat \(B\): Continuing the Conversation](#)
[Powerpoint presentation](#)
[Week 11 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 12** **Partnerships & Involving Other Organizations**
Lisa Farber Miller, Senior Program Officer, Rose Community Foundation, Denver
[Readings \(C\)](#)
[1: Colorado Jewish ECE Initiative Progress Report](#)
[2: ECE Summary](#)
[3: Legwork, Framework, Artwork: Engaging the Next Generation of Jews](#)
[4: Mazel Tot Pilot Phase Report Nov 2011 Executive Summary](#)
[Week 12 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 13** **Partnerships & Involving Other Organizations**
Lisa Farber Miller, Senior Program Officer, Rose Community Foundation, Denver
[Recorded Live Learning Broadcast \(D\)](#)
[Partnering for Tomorrow—Slides](#)
[Week 13 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 14** **Being a Networked Congregation—Miriam Brosseau**
Connected Learning in the Digital World
Preparation:
[Reading: The Art of Building Virtual Communities -](#)
[Two minute video: Networks vs. Communities of Practice \(A\)](#)
[Week 14 Workbook Pages](#)
- Week 15** **Being a Networked Congregation—Miriam Brosseau**
[Webinar/Recorded Live Online Chat \(B\) Connected Learning in the Digital World](#)
[Week 15 Workbook Pages](#)

Week 16

Putting it All Together: Concluding FwYC ALN Session

[Recorded Live Learning Broadcast \(D\)](#)

Cathy Rolland, URJ Director, Engaging Families with Young Children

Natalie Kianoff, former URJ Coordinator of Early Childhood Engagement Strategies

Stephanie Fink, URJ Associate Early Engagement Director



ALN WORKBOOK

Engaging Families with Young Children (FwYC)

These workbook pages provide a step-by-step process to learn, discuss, and determine a FwYC action plan for your congregation.

In order to make the best use of these resources, we strongly recommend creating a taskforce that consists of a lay-professional team that is dedicated to working together. Once your team is in place and sets up regular meetings, watch the recorded session in each unit, and study the additional resources in the syllabus which will provide a good opportunity for your team to engage in a discussion based upon the workbook pages for that particular unit.

ALN Participant Notes Page

Week 1—Introduction: Engaging FwYC

Cathy Rolland, URJ Director, Engaging Families with Young Children

Natalie Kianoff: former URJ Coordinator of Early Childhood Engagement Strategies

The **Engaging Families with Young Children (FwYC) Active Learning Network** will explore practical tools, resources, and networking opportunities to help congregations understand, evaluate, and re-imagine pathways to connecting FwYC with Jewish role models and with the Jewish community. Watch the [introductory video](#) and take notes below.

Notes

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Part I: Who we are

An overview of the makeup of the ALN and your diverse backgrounds

Part II: Critical questions around FwYC

- How are you currently responding to varying demographic profiles of families with young children?
- How are you creating opportunities for young families to interact with one another and build connections?
- How are families and children developing long-lasting, positive emotional connections with their Jewish identity?
- How are you paying attention to barriers that are limiting participation in your program? (Cost, travel time, scheduling, etc.)
- How are you being intentional in welcoming interfaith, blended, single-parent, member and non-member families?
- How are you approaching families with children of various ages?
- How do you reach out to parents who are starting a family?
- How do you ensure you have a presence in the larger Jewish community?
- How do you define excellence in your early childhood center?

Part III: Putting it all together

- Summarize the Discussion.
- What are your next steps?

Part IV: Resources

- [Critical Questions For Your ALN Team](#)
- [Looking for Connections: A Study of Jewish Families With Young Children in Chicago](#)
- [PJ Library's 2013 Impact Study](#)
- [JECA December 2011 Journal on Early Engagement](#)

PART V: HOMEWORK—Meme Assignment

- [What are our goals for Families with Young Children at our congregation?](#)

ALN Participant Notes Page

Weeks 2 and 3—Building a Base of Support

Rabbi Jonah Pesner, URJ Senior Vice President

- **Understanding the role of the leader** in moving a community
- **Creating a “power analysis”**—better understanding who can influence change in an institution
- **Understanding the interests of those with power** & finding ways to expand and deepen relationships with them

Notes

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Building a Base of Support

Rabbi Jonah Pesner, URJ Senior Vice President

- **Understanding the role of the leader** in moving a community
- **Creating a “power analysis”**—better understanding who can influence change in an institution
- **Understanding the interests of those with power** & finding ways to expand and deepen relationships with them

Part I: Topic Overview

To begin the taskforce meeting, the ALN Participants will share an overview of their learning on this topic as part of the ALN process.

Part II: Text Study

Exodus Chapter 18:1-27 Yitro 1 Jethro priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the Lord had brought Israel out from Egypt. 2 So Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after she had been sent home, 3 and her two sons—of whom one was named Gershom, that is to say, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land”; 4 and the other was named Eliezer, meaning, “The God of my father was my help, and He delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” 5 Jethro, Moses father-in-law, brought Moses' sons and wife to him in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. 6 He sent word to Moses, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, with your wife and her two sons.” 7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed low and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent.

8 Moses then recounted to his father-in-law everything that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had befallen them on the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. 9 And Jethro rejoiced over all the kindness that the Lord had shown Israel when He delivered them from the

Egyptians. 10 “Blessed be the Lord,” Jethro said, “who delivered you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, yes, by the result of their very schemes against [the people].” 12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to partake of the meal before God with Moses' father-in-law.

13 Next day, Moses sat as magistrate among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. 14 But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, “What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?” 15 Moses replied to his father-in-law, “It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of God.”

17 But Moses' father-in-law said to him, “The thing you are doing is not right; 18 you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19 Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You represent the people before

God: you bring the disputes before God, 20 and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. 21 You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and 22 let them judge the people at all times. Have them bring every major dispute to you, but let them decide every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the burden with you. 23 If you do this—and God so commands you—you will be able to bear up; and all these people too will go home unwearied.”

24 Moses heeded his father-in-law and did just as he had said. 25 Moses chose capable men out of all Israel, and appointed them heads over the people—chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens; 26 and they judged the people at all times: the difficult matters they would bring to Moses, and all the minor matters they would decide themselves. 27 Then Moses bade his father-in-law farewell, and he went his way to his own land.

Discussion Questions

- What does Jethro teach Moses?
- Why is Jethro’s insight critical to move the community forward?
- Why is Jethro successful in helping Moses grow and become a more effective leader?
- How can we apply these insights for our own congregational leadership?

Part III: Central Discussion—Questions to Ponder

- How would you rate your base of support for your initiative?
- To what extent does your base of support extend beyond the usual suspects and those within your target audience that are already involved?
- How would you rate your congregation’s awareness about your initiative?
- How would you rate the buy-in of your senior rabbi & temple president?
- How would you rate the buy-in of other critical players?
 - Board Members
 - Donors & Potential Donors
 - Other Key Stakeholders
- In your congregation, how strong is your understanding of where power to make change lies?

Part IV: Next Steps

- Summarize the Discussion.
- What are your next steps?

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Week 4: Barriers and Entry Points

Part I: Your team has completed the [meme assignment](#) reflecting what you consider important around Engaging Families with Young Children. In addition, you have reviewed the following questions from last week's virtual convening and live chat with Rabbi Jonah Pesner:

Part II: Putting it all together


Summarize your team's conversation around the power analysis.

The slide is titled "POWER ANALYSIS" in large, bold, black letters. Below the title is a subtitle in smaller, bold, black letters: "HOW DO WE IMPROVE OUR AWARENESS OF WHERE POWER LIES IN OUR CONGREGATIONS?". Underneath the subtitle is a bulleted list of seven questions. At the bottom right of the slide is the logo for the "Active Learning Network" (ALN), which includes a blue square icon with a white stylized 'U' and 'R' and the text "Active Learning Network" in blue.

POWER ANALYSIS

HOW DO WE IMPROVE OUR AWARENESS OF WHERE POWER LIES IN OUR CONGREGATIONS?

- Who makes decisions?
- Who influences how decisions are made?
- Who has a stake in the initiative & its vision?
- Who are potential allies?
- Who are potential obstacles?
- How much power do they have?
- Who influences them?

 **Active Learning Network**

Part III: Resources

- [Let's Get Serious About Relationship Weaving and Increase the Potential for Communal Change in Family Engagement](#) by Shellie Dickstein, eJewishPhilanthropy.com 1/28/2013
- [The Network Secrets of Great Change Agents](#) by Julie Battilana and Tiziana Casciaro, Harvard Business Review, 7/2013

PART IV: What is Your Vision For Engaging FwYC?

- Who Are We 3-5 years from now?
- Consider the following scenario with your team:

You're standing in line at Starbucks, when you overhear two parents with young children discussing their experience at your congregation.

What do you hope they are saying?

Notes

ALN Participant Notes Page

Week 5: Barriers and Entry Points

Stephanie Fink, Associate Director, Engaging Families with Young Children

How do you take what you know about your community and your population and look for opportunities to make changes? We will look at multiple examples of congregations that have taken strategic steps to address a wide variety of challenges—with noteworthy results. Use the notes section below to comment on how each community identified potential entry points and worked through existing barriers to engage FwYC—and to imagine how your own community can do the same.

Notes

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Week 5: Barriers and Entry Points

Stephanie Fink, Associate Director, Engaging Families with Young Children

Part I: Topic Overview

A growing body of research helps us understand the barriers that keep FwYC away from synagogues and synagogue programs. The same research helps us identify potential entry points for them, if we can be effective in removing the barriers and in reaching FwYC where they are.

Part II: Text Study

Leviticus 12:1-6 Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a woman at childbirth bears a male, she shall be impure seven days; she shall be impure as at the time of her condition of menstrual separation.—On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.—She shall remain in a state of blood purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until her period of purification is completed. If she bears a female, she shall be impure two weeks as during her menstruation, and she shall remain in a state of blood purification for sixty-six days. On the completion of her period of purification, for either son or daughter, she shall bring to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a purgation offering.

Questions:

1. What does the text say about the relationship between a new mother and her religious community?
2. Generalizing the text, in what ways are new parents separated from their typical lives and community activities when a new child arrives? How does their reality change as children age into preschool and later into elementary school?
3. In this text, the circumcision of a male baby is mentioned almost as an aside. Is a *brit milah* to be viewed as an entry point? Might it also be a barrier?
4. How are the community's expectations of new parents different from its expectations of other adult members of the community? How might the parents' expectations of the community be different?

Part III: Central Discussion—Questions to Ponder

1. Understanding how parents' lives are turned upside down when a new child arrives, what are the barriers that can keep FwYC from connecting to a synagogue?
2. What do new parents need? How can you turn those needs into entry points?
3. How can our synagogue provide FwYC with something they need—both the families that are already in our orbit, as well as those that are not yet?

Part IV: Next Steps

- Summarize the discussion.
- What are your next steps?

ALN Participant Notes Page

Week 6: Culture and Change

Rabbi Sam Joseph, Elanore Sinsheimer Distinguished Service Professor of Jewish Education & Leadership Development, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and URJ Faculty Member

Our congregation's culture is the "way we do things around here." Real change happens when those cultural ways are examined and judged as ways for now, ways that need to be changed, or ways that should be eliminated. A great challenge is that most of the time the elements of that culture are part of the unconscious behaviors of the members. New people only learn them when they inadvertently violate them. Change requires intentional reflection and evaluation of the unconscious cultural behavioral assumptions by which congregations maintain their culture.

Notes

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Week 7: Culture and Change

Rabbi Sam Joseph, Elanore Sinsheimer Distinguished Service Professor of Jewish Education & Leadership Development, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and URJ Faculty Member

Part I: Topic Overview

Our congregation's culture is the "way we do things around here." Real change happens when those cultural ways are examined and judged as ways for now, ways that need to be changed or ways that should be eliminated. A great challenge is that most of the time the elements of that culture are part of the unconscious behaviors of the members. New people only learn them when they inadvertently violate them. "That's not how we do it around here." Change requires intentional reflection and evaluation of the unconscious cultural behavioral assumptions by which congregations maintain their culture.

Part II: Text Study

*What we want to change we curse and then pick up a tool.
Bless whatever you can with eyes and hands and tongue.
If you can't bless it, get ready to make it new.*

by Marge Piercy, Poet

- What does Piercy mean in her first line?
- Her second line? Third line?
- How may this apply to what we can do in our congregation?

Part III: Central Discussion—Questions to Ponder

- If a "person from Mars" landed in our congregation, what are examples of important artifacts that this person would see? What do they mean and why are they important?
- What are our congregation's espoused values?
- Do the artifacts and the espoused values align?
- Looking at one small facet of the congregation, what do we think people assume about that facet? Examples to look at are: religious school, ECC, Friday night or Saturday morning services, the Oneg Shabbat, dues and congregational financial obligations, mail and communications from the congregation, the youth group, Women of Reform Judaism/Sisterhood, Brotherhood.

Part IV: Next Steps

- Summarize the discussion.
- What are your next steps?

(There are no workbook pages for Week 8)

ALN Participant Notes Page

Week 9: The Art of Having Coffee

Rabbi Greg Litcofsky

Rabbi Litcofsky is a prime example of a congregational leader who has had great success in building relationships. In his first year at Temple Emanu-El of West Essex, he met with over 150 of his congregants. These conversations serve to invest people in a shared vision of engagement, raising up a new generation of young leadership to help do the sacred work of engaging FwYC. How do you plan for those conversations, and what do they actually sound like?

Notes

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Part I: Think about what engagement look like for the following groups

- Family
- Children
- Parent-Child
- Parent (Mom, Dad)

Part II: WHY?

Please view the accompanying [Ted Talk by Simon Sinek on *How Great Leaders Inspire Action*](#). Please consider:

- Who is on your current team?
- Are they the right people?
- Who are the people in power who can move your initiative forward or stop it?
- Who else needs to be on your team and why?

Part III: Additional Materials

- [Rabbi Litcofsky's Mission Handout](#)
- [Rabbi Litcofsky's Strategies Handout](#)

ALN Participant Notes Page

Weeks 10 and 11: Changing the Conversation about Evaluation

Amy Asin, URJ Vice President/Strengthening Congregations

Making change happen in our congregation not only requires learning new ways to engage congregants or run programs or raise funds, it also requires learning new ways to measure what we do. Old measures like attendance and complaints won't go away and shouldn't. But if we are really trying something new, shouldn't we also be looking for new ways to define success?

Notes

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Changing the Conversation about Evaluation

Amy Asin, URJ Vice President/Strengthening Congregations

Making change happen in our congregation not only requires learning new ways to engage congregants or run programs or raise funds, it also requires learning new ways to measure what we do. Old measures like attendance and complaints won't go away and shouldn't. But if we are really trying something new, shouldn't we also be looking for new ways to define success?

Part I: Topic Overview

To begin the taskforce meeting, the ALN Participants will share an overview of their learning on this topic as part of the ALN process.

Part II: Text Study

EILU d'varim she-ein lahem shiur,
she-adam ocheil peiroteihem
baolam hazeh
v'hakeren kayemet lo laolam haba.
V'eilu hein:
kibud av va-eim,
ug'milut chasadim,
v'hashkamat beit hamidrash
shacharit v'ar'vit,
v'hachnasat orchim,
uvikur cholim,
v'hachnasat kalah, ul'vayat hameit,
v'iyun t'filah,
vahavaat shalom
bein adam lachaveiro,
v'talmud Torah k'neged kulam.

אֵילּוּ דְּבָרִים שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם שְׁעוּר,
שֶׁאָדָם אוֹכֵל פְּרוֹתֵיהֶם
בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה
וְהֶקְרָן קַיִמַת לוֹ לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.
וְאֵלּוּ הֵן:
כְּבוֹד אָב וָאִם,
וּגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים,
וְהַשְׁכָּמַת בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ
שַׁחֲרִית וְעֶרְבִית,
וְהַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים,
וּבִקּוּר חוֹלִים,
וְהַכְנָסַת כֶּלֶה, וּלְוִיַת הַמֵּת,
וְעִיּוֹן תְּפִלָּה,
וְהַבָּאָה שְׁלוֹם
בֵּין אָדָם לַחֲבֵירוֹ,
וְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כָּלֶם.

These are things that are limitless of which a person enjoys the fruit of this world, while the principle remains in the world to come. They are: honoring one's father and mother, engaging in deeds of compassion, arriving early for study, morning and evening, dealing graciously with guests, visiting the sick, providing for the wedding couple, accompanying the dead for burial, being devoted in prayer, and making peace among people. But the study of Torah encompasses them all.

Text Study Questions

- The text tells us that certain things are limitless and immeasurable. We are told that this means that we cannot ever have done enough of them. There is no point at which we can say, we have made enough peace. Do you agree with this precept—that there is no limit to what we can do in these areas?
- Pick one of the areas that relates to something that you do at your congregation. Even if the amount you do should be limitless, how can you tell if you are doing it well? What measures would you use?

Part III: Central Discussion—Questions to Ponder

- Do a “conversation audit.” When you talk about what is going well or not going well in your ALN topic area, what are the measures that you are using to define success? Are they old measures or new measures?
- What is one new measure that you can start to use in your ALN area? How can you collect data?
- What are two or three success stories based on new measures that you want to start sharing? How can you use these stories to start changing the conversation about success in your congregation?

Part IV: Next Steps

- Summarize the Discussion.
- What are your next steps?

ALN Participant Notes Page

Weeks 12 and 13: Partnering For Tomorrow: Meeting Today's Parents of Young Children Where They Are

Lisa Farber Miller, Senior Program Officer, Rose Community Foundation, Denver, CO

Jewish tradition teaches us that “with each child the world begins anew” (*Midrash*). Our sages understood the transformative power of early childhood. They knew it is a window of opportunity when parents are seeking community. Research shows that ECE centers impact the entire family, not just the child, and serve as a primary gateway into the Jewish community. This session will help you understand the needs of Generation X and Millennials—today’s parents of young children—so that you can use this knowledge to inform your family engagement work. You will also learn strategies to engage young families authentically as partners.

Notes

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Part I: What is the significance of the title?

As you begin to reflect with your ALN team on Lisa's presentation, we invite you to consider the title of the webinar: **Partnering for Tomorrow: Meeting Today's Parents with Young Children Where They Are**. What is significant to your team about this title?

Part II: Critical Questions to Consider

- What are some of the differences between Generation X and Millennials? Did you learn anything that challenges your assumptions about parents of young children?
- How and in what ways are you currently building relationships with FwYC?
- Are you paying attention to those families who are NOT members of your ECC and/or your congregation?

Part III: Next Steps—Creating a Strategy

- Given the characteristics of these two cohorts of parents, how might you consider making adjustments to your current approaches for engagement with these families?
- What steps can you take in creating a strategy to meet Gen X and Millennial parents where they are?
- If your congregation has an ECC, what are you doing to meet the needs of parents—both those whose children are enrolled in your ECC as well as those who are not?

ALN Participant Notes Page

Week 14: Connected Learning in the Digital World

Miriam Brosseau, Engagement & Program Director—ELI Talks, See3 Communications

Building any learning network takes work, and it can seem particularly challenging online. But “connected learning” in the digital world also offers unique opportunities for growth. In this session, we’ll take a look at what makes a healthy community of practice, explore how those elements look and feel different online, and uncover how to make the most of our online learning.

Notes

Taskforce Discussion Guide

Week 15: Connected Learning in the Digital World

Miriam Brosseau, Engagement & Program Director –ELI Talks, See3 Communications

Part I: Topic Overview

Building any learning network takes work, and it can seem particularly challenging online. But “connected learning” in the digital world also offers unique opportunities for growth. In this session, we’ll take a look at what makes a healthy community of practice, explore how those elements look and feel different online, and uncover how to make the most of our online learning.

Part II: Central Discussion—Questions to Ponder

- What are our goals for our learning?
- If we are wildly successful, how will our work/congregation be different?
- What will it take to make our learning a regular practice? How can we build it into the existing system, and where will we have to develop new behaviors?
- How transparent will we be? What are the boundaries? How can we embrace vulnerability to help deepen the connections in our community while maintaining a sense of safety or privacy?

Part III: Next Steps

- Summarize the Discussion.
- What are your next steps?

CURRENT RESEARCH APPENDIX

How Jews Choose: A Study of Early Childhood Decisions Among Jewish Parents in Greater Boston,

Combined Jewish Philanthropies, prepared by Mark I. Rosen, Ph. D. and Heidi Schwartz, Ph. D., January 2015

- 5% of families raising young Jewish children are headed by single parents.
- Among two-parent households, 79% have two working parents; nearly half (45%) have two parents working full-time.
- The overwhelming majority of parents (91%) are interested in developing new friendships.
- Among those who have already chosen an ECC, 74% considered a Jewish ECC and 48% chose one. Among those that did not choose a Jewish ECC (52% of parents), “convenient drop-off and pick-up times” were an essential decision factor for half of them. Parents who did not choose Jewish ECCs want later pick up times; nearly 25% of parents need care past 5:00 p.m.
- 76% of parents indicate that friends are a major source of recommendation about prospective ECCs. Parents with Jewish friends are more likely to choose Jewish ECCs. Parents trust the recommendation of a friend more than they trust websites, flyers, or advertisements, and the power of these relationships to influence choices and behavior cannot be underestimated.

Looking for Connections: A Study of Jewish Families with Young Children in Chicago, The Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, prepared by Mark I. Rosen, Ph.D., March 2013

- Parents’ demographic profiles, degree of Jewish involvement, and program interests varied considerably across neighborhoods and communities. You must know your local community.
- Parents are seeking new friendships and connections to the Jewish community... they expressed a desire for: social events to make friends, local parent groups, events closer to home, programs on weekends for dual-income families, and more affordable synagogue dues.
- Parents are interested in attending Jewish programs, but cost, travel time, and lack of information are barriers to participation.
- Each neighborhood and community has its own unique ways of informing parents about local offerings. It is necessary to learn how [parents] find out about local secular offerings and to publicize events using these same information sources.
- Parents who considered a Jewish preschool but did not choose one indicated that cost, location, school/child fit and scheduling were the reasons that they chose a non-Jewish preschool.
- New parents, whose oldest child is younger than 24 months, have a different profile and are especially receptive. New parents...
 - ... would like to be more connected to the Jewish community (71% versus 51% of all parents)
 - ... are more likely to want playgroups (74% versus 38% of all parents)
 - ... want to meet new people when they attend programs (42% versus 27% of all parents)
 - ... want information about Jewish preschools (60% versus 25% of all parents)
 - ... are less likely to be synagogue members (32% versus 52% of all parents)

- Interfaith families have a different profile than in-married families... Interfaith families were less interested in Jewish program content... less likely to attend Jewish programs... [and] have fewer Jewish friends... 37% preferred programs that were specifically for interfaith families and 63% either preferred programs publicized as being for all families, and 37% had no preference.

Engaging Today's Families: Parent Research Findings, Jewish Education Project, prepared by Shellie Dickstein and Susan Remick Topek, 2013

This sample focused on Jewish moms in Manhattan and Brooklyn whose oldest child is under the age of 2.

- Newer moms are craving connections at this life stage because they feel vulnerable in this new role. They seek help and support as they navigate new terrain where they can no longer identify as 'an expert'... Moms are looking for other moms with logistical similarities (kids the same age, geographic proximity). However, chemistry remains at the core of what moms hope to discover in new friendships.
- If moms didn't create a group of new 'mom' friends at the early stages (during pregnancy, infancy, etc.) they felt more isolated and disconnected later on when they tried to make connections or join already existing groups of friends.
- For the majority of moms, their main [Jewish] engagement revolved around holidays, food and family.
- Classes that moms like best meet the following criteria: make their children happy, are within a 10 block radius of their home, are affordable, and have an engaging instructor who provides outside knowledge that the parents do not have.

A Portrait of Jewish Americans, Pew Research Center, 2013.

- In total, the study estimates that 1.8 million children reside in households with at least one Jewish adult. This includes approximately 900,000 children who are being raised exclusively Jewish by religion; about 100,000 children who are being raised as Jews of no religion; and 300,000 children who are being raised partly Jewish and partly in another religion. In addition, survey respondents report that about 400,000 children are not being raised Jewish at all, despite residing in a household with at least one Jewish adult.
- Among Jews who are currently parents or guardians of at least one child residing in their household, about 80% say they are raising their children as Jewish. This includes 59% who say they are raising their children Jewish by religion, 14% who say they are raising their children partly Jewish by religion and partly something else, and 8% who are raising their children Jewish but not by religion or who have multiple children with some being raised Jewish by religion and others being raised partially Jewish.

"Nones" on the Rise, Pew Research Center, October 2012.

- One fifth of the U.S. Public—and a third of adults under 30—are religiously unaffiliated, however, many are religious or spiritual in some way. One third of the unaffiliated say religion is at least somewhat important in their lives. Two-thirds believe in God.

Articles and Resources for the URJ's Communities of Practice: Successfully Engaging Young Families and Pursuing Excellence Through Your Early Childhood Center

[Changing Diapers and Changing Parents: Lessons Learned Regarding Early Engagement](#), by Mark I. Rosen, Ph.D., JECA Journal, 12/2011

[Untapped potential: The status of Jewish early childhood education in America](#), Baltimore: Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership, prepared by Ilene Vogelstein and David Kaplan, 2002

[Early Family Engagement Measuring Growth in Jewish Identity](#), by Perri Klein and Michael Ben-Avie, Ph.D., eJewishPhilanthropy.com, 7/24/2013

[Engaging Today's Families: Parent Research Findings](#), Jewish Education Project, prepared by Shellie Dickstein and Susan Remick Topek, 2013

[Getting to Know You... The Key to Building Community is Social Interaction, Not Social Networks](#), by Susan Freudenheim, JewishJournal.com, 2/27/2013

[Getting to Nordstrom's](#), by Dr. Erica Brown, The Jewish Week, 1/2/2013, www.thejewishweek.com/features/jew-voice/getting-nordstroms

[Growing Families and Advancing Jewish Early Childhood Education in Greater Boston](#), Combined Jewish Philanthropies, prepared by Anna Hartman

[How to Bounce Back Stronger After You Blow It at Work](#), by Deborah Greyson Riegel, Fast Company, 3/2013

[How Jews Choose: A Study of Early Childhood Decisions Among Jewish Parents in Greater Boston](#), Combined Jewish Philanthropies, prepared by Mark I. Rosen, Ph.D. and Heidi Schwartz, Ph.D.

[Jewish Preschools as Gateways to Jewish Life: A Survey of Jewish Preschool Parents in Three Cities](#), Pearl Beck, Ph.D., November 2002

[Let's Get Serious About Relationship Weaving and Increase the Potential for Communal Change in Family Engagement](#), by Shellie Dickstein, eJewishPhilanthropy.com, 1/28/2013

[The Network Secrets of Great Change Agents](#), by Julie Battilana and Tiziana Casciaro, Harvard Business Review, 7/2013

["Nones" on the Rise](#), Pew Research Center, 10/09/2012

[On the Brink: Many Working Moms Falling Apart, Author Says](#), by A. Palowski, TODAY.com/moms, 9/18/2013

[Our Challenge: The Under-Demand for Jewish Life](#), by Marc N. Blattner, eJewishPhilanthropy.com, 1/22/2013

[The Parents Next Dor: Strategies for Bringing a New Generation of Families into Reform Synagogues](#), by Mark I. Rosen, Ph.D., 1/26/13

[A Portrait of Jewish Americans](#), Pew Research Center, 10/01/2013

[Prioritizing Jewish Early Childhood Education](#), by Lisa Farber Miller, Cathy Rolland and Mark Horowitz, eJewishPhilanthropy.com, 1/21/2015

[Recommendations for URJ Congregations Regarding Government Funding for Pre-K Programs](#), Religious Action Center, Union for Reform Judaism, 3/5/2015

Relational Judaism: Using the Power of Relationships to Transform the Jewish Community, by Ron Wolfson, Jewish Lights, 2013

[Response to Pew: Acceptance of Intermarried May Be Key](#), by Zohar Rotem, eJewishPhilanthropy.com, 11/26/2013

Sacred Strategies: Transforming Synagogues from Functional to Visionary, by Isa Aron, Steven M. Cohen, Lawrence A. Hoffman, and Ari Y. Kelman, The Alban Institute, 2010, chapters 1 and 2

[Should Young Families Have to Pay to Pray?](#) by Adina Kaye-Gross, eJewishPhilanthropy.com 9/9/2013
[Response: Dues Are Not the Sole Stumbling Block for Young Families](#), by Mitchell Shames, eJewishPhilanthropy.com, 9/11/2013

[Steve Jobs and the 7 Rules of Success](#), by Carmine Gallo, Small Business, 10/14/2011

[Surprisingly Easy to Quit My Synagogue](#), by Rabbi Cyd Weissman, LivingLOMED.blogspot.com, 3/3/2013
[Response: Incomprehensible: My Reaction to Cyd Weissman's Blog Post](#), by Rabbi Hayim Herring, HayimHerring.com, 3/2013

[Synagogue-Hopping With Generation Y](#), by Naomi Schaefer Riley, The Wall Street Journal, 4/4/2013

[When Churches Want a Pastor Who Can "Bring in Young Families](#), Jan Edmiston, achurchforstarvingartists blog post, 2/19/2015

[Why I Am a Jewish None \(or a None-ish Jew\) and Why You Should Care](#), by Rabbi Wendi Geffen, Pri HaGeffen—Rabbi Geffen's Blog, 12/2012

[What if Starbucks Marketed Like a Church? A Parable](#), Richard Reising, October 30, 2008
www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7_dZTrjw9I

*We look forward to hearing from you and your congregation's task force team
as you embark on this journey to better engage these fabulous families.
Please keep in mind that the examples we gave for some of our Best Principles
are not Best Practices. You are not to copy them and expect instant success.
Do the research in your community, listen to your people and
have fun experimenting with what will work for YOU!*

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