

Post-B'nei Mitzvah Engagement Profiles of Innovation November 2018



**UNION for
REFORM
JUDAISM**

**Building Communities.
Reimagining Jewish Life.**

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Special thanks to the many congregational leaders who shared their innovations and continue to do this holy work.

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Introduction

Post-*b'nei mitzvah* is a tricky time. Congregational leaders are eager to maintain a strong connection with emerging teens and families and yet they know that there are numerous factors that could prevent continued engagement. Emerging adolescents and their parents are often open to post-*b'nei mitzvah* Jewish experiences – as long as the opportunities meet their needs. Despite the challenges, many communities are asking good questions, finding compelling answers and offering responsive opportunities for post-*b'nei mitzvah* teens and parents.

A team at the URJ set out to collect examples of what congregations of different sizes, resources and geographic locations are doing to simultaneously address the challenges and embrace the opportunities of connecting post-*b'nei mitzvah* teens and their families to the synagogue and to Jewish life. We found so many bright spots! Approaches are thoughtful and varied. So, varied, in fact, that 15 different names are used to identify programs and opportunities that we profiled:

- Emet Dor Kef
- Etzim
- Havayah
- Hineni
- Noar Night
- OMGJK (Our Meaningful Growth Junior KAFTY)
- OWL (Our Whole Lives)
- Pathways
- Project 4
- Sababa
- Sulam
- Tamid
- Teen Oasis
- The Tent
- Tichon

This document is a collection of these profiles that will introduce readers to models, principles, ideas, and approaches embraced by URJ communities. This is not a comprehensive list of every innovation, model, program or creative idea that exist in our Movement. It does, however, offer a framework for thinking about and planning for this precious population of young Jews. We hope that it is a compelling resource that highlights what is possible and that it will provoke new ways of thinking and spark innovation for your community.

Congregational Post-*B'nei Mitzvah* Engagement:

A Deep Dive into Elements and Models

There are a variety of organizing principles at play in congregational and organizational post-*b'nei mitzvah* engagement approaches. As a way to think about the complex and creative structures and approaches, we have divided the pieces into two buckets:

Models are how a congregation organizes the elements or activities. Sometimes referred to as the “overarching strategy” or “approach,” the model is ideally based on how congregational leaders believe they can most effectively engage teens in Jewish life. A congregation would typically offer one model (though some might have a few), with many elements present within that model.

Elements are the specific activities or programs that are offered to teens in the congregation. Many congregations choose to innovate by adding new elements, or by making developmental changes to the format of their existing elements. Each element has a category listed (underlined) and then many variations within that category. Congregations may choose to innovate within a current model by adding new elements or by adjusting or changing the elements already present.

Models

A La Carte

Teens choose from a wide menu of activities. There is no tracking - they simply choose what they would like to attend. In some cases, this model includes both formal and informal experiences (classes, trips, being on committees) and in other cases, only formal educational experiences. This model may also include activities beyond the synagogue, such as attending camp or NFTY events.

Freestanding

Individual opportunities are presented as separate programs and are often led by different adults. For example, there may be a youth director who oversees the youth group, an educator to create educational classes, the rabbi who oversees Confirmation and the Madrichim program that is managed by a Master teacher. Each activity is seen as free standing and may or may not be marketed together.

One Day-Focused

There is a single designated time that most/all teen programming happens at a synagogue. There may be two sections of classes (perhaps one grade level and one elective) and maybe even a meal in the middle. Youth group may or may not be integrated, but the general idea is that there is one time where teens are in the building.

Points/Credit System

Teens are required to earn a certain amount of credits/points in order to successfully complete the year. Some congregations offer a “carrot” in this strategy– such as if you earn your credits or attend all of the classes, you can go on the grade level trip. Like the A La Carte model, this could include what is traditionally considered formal and informal experiences (classes, trips, being on committees) and in other cases, just formal educational experiences. This model may also include activities beyond the synagogue, such as attending camp or NFTY events.

Teen-Powered, Adult-Supported

There is a select group of teens who are the core leadership of teen programming and oversee all teen engagement efforts. Much like the adult board in the congregation that oversees all program offerings, these teen leaders create and support all offerings for teens in the congregation. This can be combined with other models but is set apart by its deep teen leadership.

Elements

Classes

- Grade level based
- Mixed grade electives
- Taught by master teachers/congregants/artists/professionals
- Full-year/semester/multiple-week/one-day
- Specialty focused (cooking/art/sports/STEAM, etc.)
- Social justice learning and action
- Project-based learning
- Online/webinar classes (either asynchronous learning or in real time)
- Completely directed by students (they decide what they want to learn, and classes are created for them)
- Multi-generational (adults – not necessarily parents – and teens doing high level learning together)
- Rosh Chodesh/Shevat with Moving Traditions (gender separated learning)
- Teen choir
- Peer teaching (teens are supported by adults to teach other teens (such as 12th graders leading the 10th grade program or teens offering electives on topics they have an expertise in from other settings)
- Integration with a local community program
- Confirmation
- Group celebration in 10th grade
- Group celebration in 12th grade
- No Confirmation

Madrichim/Teaching Assistants

- Paid/unpaid
- Includes social elements (such as lunch or off-site social gatherings)
- Includes educational elements (such as training on how to teach or classroom management)
- Fellowship with focus on résumé building skills
- Individual tutors
- Programmers who create programs for all children/families (i.e. – a group of teens who create the Passover programming)
- Includes regional URJ cohorts and trainings for *madrichim* (available in some regions)

Parent Engagement

- Parallel classes for parents on the same topic their teens are learning about
- Regular or sporadic programming on parenting teens
- Shared classes for parents and teens

Relational Strategies

- Peer-to-peer recruitment
- Congregational leaders (professional or lay) meet with the teen during *b'nei mitzvah* process and identify opportunities for post-*b'nei mitzvah* engagement.
- A program fair that introduces teens to all the different opportunities available to them. There is the opportunity to talk to teens who take part in those activities.
- Meeting with teens during the spring so they can help create the offerings in the fall
- Setting up coffee dates with teens, and encouraging them to make them with each other, to help everyone stay connected (no matter the activities they are doing)
- Non-synagogue-based activities (in homes, in coffee shops, art studios, etc.)

Small Groups

- Teens are taught how to lead small activities and invite their peers to join them
- Teens choose clubs such as cooking, sports, etc. that meet regularly and include related Jewish content
- Opportunities for teens with specific interests to meet one-on-one or in a very small group with professional staff (i.e. 2 teens meeting regularly with the cantor to learn guitar/song-leading)

Synagogue Engagement/Leadership Opportunities

- Participation in synagogue committees and boards as full members
- Participation in synagogue activities previously seen as “adult activities” such as being part of the choir, the baking group, or participating in “adult education” classes
- Worship leading (for teens only, younger children, or for full congregation worship)
- Internships for teens within the congregation (education, marketing, etc.)

Travel/Immersive Experience

- Part of grade level curriculum (i.e. – all 10th graders go on the trip to Europe as part of their Confirmation Class)
- “Carrot” (i.e. – students who earn x amount of credits or who attend x number of classes are eligible for the trip)
- Trips are part of general offerings - anyone can choose to go on any trip
- All teens, or certain grades attend a **Bernard and Audre Rappaport L’Taken Social Justice Seminar (RAC)**
- Integration of summer programming such as **URJ Mitzvah Corps**, Israel Trips, or summer camp (exposing teens to the opportunities and potentially offering “credit” for attending)

Youth Group (teen-led programming)

- Elected or appointed teen board creating and leading activities for teens
- Expanded teen board/committee creating activities for teens
- Fellowship/internships for teen leaders
- No teen board – teens run/take ownership for specific programming, but not overall leadership
- Teen drop-in nights
- Affiliated with NFTY (including attendance at NFTY regional events)
- Non-affiliated – attending events of choice offered in the community

Alternative Choice/Independent Learning

- Mentoring (one-on-one support from adults in the congregation who are experts in a field that interests the student such as law or art)
- A few set elements, with choice of other elements to create their own content-focus and experiences
- May include other elements such as a class or madrichim experience but is unique because of the independent nature, teens create their own experience

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MODELS					CON-GREGATIONS	ELEMENTS								
Points/Credit	Teen Powered, Adult Supported	Free-Standing	One-Day	A La Carte		Classes	Madrichim	Parent Engagement	Relational Strategies	Small Groups	Synagogue Engagement/Leadership Opportunities	Travel	Youth Group	Alternate Choice/Independent Learning
	X				Anshe Chesed Fairmont Temple, Cleveland, OH	X	X							X
				X	Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley, MA	X		X		X		x		
			X		The Community Synagogue, Port Washington, NY	X						X		
				X	Temple Judea, Coral Gables, FL	X								
			X		Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, Reston, VA	X						X		
		X		X	Temple Israel, Boston, MA	X					X			
			X		Temple Sholom, Chicago, IL	X								
				X	Mt. Zion Temple, St. Paul, MN	X	X			X	X	X		
			X		Temple Israel, Stockton, CA	X								
		X		X	Temple Shaaray Tefila, NY, NY	X	X				X	X		
X			X		Temple Isaiah, Lafayette, CA	X	X				X	X		
	X	X		X	Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, TX	X	X		X	X				
				X	Congregation Emeth, Morgan Hill, CA	X	X				X			



MODELS					CON- GREGATIONS	ELEMENTS								
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		X	X		Temple Beth Shalom, Miami Beach, FL	X	X				X	X	X	X
	X			X	Temple Beth Shalom, Needham, MA	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
	X	X		X	Northeast Teen Collective				X	X		X		X
			X		Shir Tikvah, Minneapolis, MN	X		X				X		
	X		X		Woodlands Community Temple, White Plains, NY	X			X			X	X	X
				X	Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El, Plantation, FL	X			X			X	X	
				X	Temple Sinai of Roslyn, Roslyn Heights, NY	X	X			X	X	X	X	
		X			Temple Beth Or, Raleigh, NC			X						
X				X	Chayai Shalom, Easton, MA	X	X				X	X	X	

Temple Isaiah, Lafayette, CA (900 households)

Innovation Highlight: Earned honorarium for future Jewish experiences; attention to cognitive and emotional development of teens. Recognized for providing a space for students to learn content and to just "be."

Models: Points/credit system (*Madrichim/Avodah* TA program), One-day-focused (Noar Night)

Compensation for *Avodah* TA program, 8-11th grades: Sisterhood and JQuest (education program) budgets set aside money for students. Every time a teen participates as a TA they earn a certain amount of money. This is "banked" to use for Jewish programs. Teens have access to the money following one full year of serving as a TA and it is available for up to 4 years post high school graduation. Money can be used for fees at Temple Isaiah, NFTY, Israel programs, Birthright trips, Jewish summer camps, etc. To access the funds, the student must write a letter to the chairperson of the sisterhood. Once they have paid for the program, the student will be reimbursed from their "account." This program has been successful for more than twenty years. It works as incentive to keep teens engaged in Jewish activities.

Noar Night is a Wednesday night teen school (8th -12th grade). It is a place where teens unplug from their cell phones, Instagram and Snapchat, and experience significant face to face interactions. It is a time where homework is temporarily set aside for meaningful conversations, community building, and the opportunity for self-discovery. Through the support of their peers, teachers and clergy, teens feel connected and realize that they are not alone as they encounter a world of challenging questions and elusive answers.

Noar Night begins with some relaxing; they have an informal dinner together in a safe environment, which helps the stress of the day take a back seat to laughter and conversation. As they divide into grade levels, each group participates in what they call a "check-in" - a time to reflect on the week and connect with one another. Each grade has a dynamic curriculum that explores the intersection of Jewish tradition and contemporary issues, which helps teens develop a relevant and

personalized Jewish identity. The evening concludes with *Siyyum*, a time to put their arms around one another as they sing songs and evening prayers. Eighth graders have an opportunity to go on a trip to Los Angeles. Ninth graders have an overnight retreat away from the synagogue. Tenth graders participate in the Confirmation program with the rabbis and attend one of the the RAC's L'Taken Social Justice Seminars. Teen

education culminates with a meaningful graduation ceremony at the end of twelfth grade.

Congregation Emeth, Morgan Hill, CA (90 households)

Innovation Highlight: Small congregation building deep relationships with peers and rabbi through social and content-focused activities.

Model: A La Carte

Emet Dor Kef (Emeth’s Fun Generation) is designed as a club and includes social activities, classes, and travel, all led by the rabbi who considers the different learning and social abilities of the teens. A key component of EDK is learning. At the beginning of each year the students select the topic they want to study. Past series include:

- Interfaith: What are the core beliefs of other faiths
- Modern Jewish History
- Mussar

Emet Dor Kef meets about twice a month, includes trips to Los Angeles and San Francisco as well as a retreat weekend that is considered a Confirmation class. Students serving as *madrichim* must be enrolled in Emet Dor Kef.

Temple Israel, Stockton, CA (229 households)

Innovation Highlight: Educational content comes from students and teachers partnered together.

Model: One-Day Focused

Element: Classes

Responding to the challenge of a geographically disparate and small Jewish community, Sababa brings 9th-12th graders together on Sundays following the morning session for younger students. “Juber” (a play on “Uber”) was established to assist families by arranging carpool opportunities.

- Includes 9/10th grade core class which incorporates Kabbalat Torah (Confirmation)
- Includes 11th/12th grade core class: ACDC (After Confirmation the Discussion Continues). Each session includes lunch with ample time to socialize. A pantry that is stocked with lunch items for kids to select and prepare their own “all you can eat for \$5” meal.
- Electives for all students are on a weekly rotation, and may include some of the following:

- Student-driven classes. For example, there is a class called “Nothing Sacred” where students may pose any question – nothing is off limits and the learning revolves around the whichever questions the students ask.
- Teacher-driven classes. The most common is “Rabbi’s Restaurant,” featuring current events discussions over lunch
- Collaboration between students and teachers. They call these classes “Wild Card” – they focus on how Judaism is infused in everyday life and are centered around topics such as financial aid for college, how to change a tire, cooking, and film festivals.

Temple Judea, Coral Gables, FL (600 households)

Innovation Highlight: Deep, year-round congregation/URJ camp partnership

Model: A La Carte

Temple Judea works in partnership with URJ Camp Coleman to bridge camp and synagogue community and learning. The program emphasizes camp-style programming all year long. Program elements include:

- Judea High for 8th-12th grade students to gather twice a month for dinner (sometimes with a theme), experiential learning programming and a youth group meeting. There is an annual educational theme that connects the learning. Programming happens in the dedicated youth lounge and throughout the synagogue, not in classrooms.
- Better Together meets once a month as a partnership with a senior living facility and Temple Judea teens. The teens participate in programs with seniors, such as game nights, talent shows, and holding discussions about Israel and politics. It is an opportunity for teens and seniors to learn from one other together.
- Kabbalat Torah: Confirmation program meets second semester of 12th grade with rabbis or educator to discuss enduring dilemmas of Judaism. The program concludes with each the student writing an essay, then participating in a Kabbalat Torah service where they receive a blessing for life after high school.

Temple Beth Shalom, Miami Beach, FL (1,150 households)

Innovation Highlight: Deliberate integration of congregational learning experiences and Reform Movement opportunities

Model: Free-Standing, A La Carte

Elements: Travel/Immersive, *Madrachim*/Teaching Assistants

This merged school and youth program includes the following pieces:

1. jLAB
 - 6th-8th graders meet once a week for grade-level learning, electives, student led *t'filah* (prayer service):
 - Elective tracks align with URJ Specialty Camps: Creative Arts, Sports & SciTech.
 - Ends with dinner that overlaps with the high school program
 - NFTY HaTikvah Kallah serves as the 678 retreat part of the program
2. 9th graders have their own curriculum that integrates Sean Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* with Jewish text. The focus of this curriculum is on helping teens de-stress, especially using Jewish values and practices.
3. 10th grade: Confirmation
4. 11th-12th grade: Teens choose one of the following fellowships, which meet bi-monthly:
 5. Justice League – social justice-focused
 6. Braman Fellowship - Israel advocacy-focused
 7. jTravel: This program expands grade-specific travel options and integrates movement-wide opportunities into teen life. There are grade-specific options (e.g. L'Taken for confirmation), multi-age options (e.g. NFTY convention), and more.
8. *Madrachim*/Leadership Program: Teens support K-5 students with their learning in Shabbat morning jLAB classes. *Madrachim* have a role in planning and implementing programming. There are select internship opportunities for 11th and 12th graders to become "senior *madrachim*" with expanded leadership opportunities.

Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El, Plantation, FL (689 households)

Innovation Highlight: Total integration of religious school and youth group for 7th and 8th grade, with an informal approach to all sessions and one annual registration fee.

Model: A La Carte

OMGJK (Our Meaningful Growth-Junior KAFTY) combines religious school and youth

group experience for 7th and 8th grades. OMGJK meets approximately 16 times a year, typically on Tuesday nights and Sunday afternoons. The primary goal is for teens to engage in fun and educational activities that support progressive Jewish values through innovative, informal and engaging programming.

Judaic content is included in many sessions as a theme or framing for an activity. Sessions include: social action, education, activities, and travel. Session examples include:

- Top Chef: Kosher Edition
- Extreme Couponing: Tzedakah
- Kosher Food Pantry visit
- Laser Tag (with learning about Gun Violence Prevention)
- Holiday observance and cooking
- Weekend trip (additional fee)

Temple Sholom, Chicago IL (1000 households)

Innovation Highlight: Ongoing integration of *t'filah* with strong leadership from clergy

Element: Classes

A weekly evening high school program includes dinner (from a different restaurant each week that is announced in a weekly e-blast), social time, *t'filah*, and a class co-taught by clergy and educational leaders with a different theme each year. The half-hour *t'fillah* is an important piece of each session. It is led in rotation by the educator and clergy. Each leader approaches the experience differently, by design, and themes are often connected to what is happening in the world, lesson topics, and *parashat ha-shavua* (weekly Torah portions). Music and the classroom space set-up are carefully considered.

Kabbalat Torah is for second semester 12th graders who study with the rabbi with a curriculum based on questions from the teens. During the Kabbalat Torah service, which coincides with high school graduation, the seniors pass the Torah to the 8th graders.

Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley, MA (1300 households)

Innovation Highlight: Full integration of multiple elements and encouraging teens to “choose their pathway” through diverse teen created experiences.

Models: A La Carte & Teen Powered/Adult Supported

Elements: Small Groups

Havayah is the teen community of Temple Beth Elohim. Havayah combines classroom-based, experiential and family education in a program that fosters Jewish identity development and community-building. There are multiple ways for teens to participate.

- Chavurot are interest-based learning groups
- Shabbatonim are a series of informal learning experiences with pieces led by teens
- *Tikkun olam* (social justice) activities
- Community activities, which are offered monthly for Shabbat, holidays, travel, or social action
- Social Networks: BELY the senior youth group, NFTY, local Jewish teen events

All events are planned by the teens with support from the Havayah Director. The teen leadership includes the Havayah Council, which acts as a board, and leaders that oversee each activity. Chavurot groups are led by an adult and may meet 1 or 2 times a month at different times and days so teens are able to participate in more than one.

Temple Beth Shalom, Needham, MA (940 households)

Innovation Highlight: Teen leadership, mentorship between educators and teen leaders, flexible participation

Model: A La Carte & Teen-Powered, Adult-Supported

Element: Relational Strategies

Etzim is Temple Beth Shalom's learning program for children in grades 6-12. Teens participate in active, meaningful Jewish learning experiences in a welcoming and nurturing environment that reflects the character of the entire community.

- Etzim has a creative youth leadership structure. The leadership structure includes the Etzim Board of 9 teens who oversee all programming, including youth group, with adult leaders. The Rosh Team complements the Etzim Board by serving as committee heads of the individual programs, including events and travel. Anyone who would like a leadership position is offered a role.
- Etzim's staffing model includes the Assistant Director of Etzim, overseeing 6th-12th grades, three full time educators for 6th -12th grades and two part time educators. Each educator mentors the teen leaders so they have a one-on-one connection. The educators spend about half their time teaching and the other half acting as a mentor.

- Etzim uses a flexible choice model: They use a trimester schedule, and classes are held on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Students can enroll for a full year or just one trimester, depending on their other commitments. Tuition for the whole year can be paid all at once, or families can pay for each event a la carte. Most students participate in more than one program. Grade level trips and Shabbatonim are also offered.

Temple Israel of Boston, Boston, MA (1400 households)

Innovation Highlight: A pluralistic, communal education program that is made up of elective-only experiences so that teens drive their own learning.

Element: Classes

All 8th graders participate in Our Whole Lives (OWL), a weekly program focusing on Jewish social/emotional values-based learning. OWL includes a cohort weekend in New York City to bond and learn. The Tent, a program of Temple Israel of Boston, is a Jewish learning community for greater Boston teens. It is a pluralistic communal educational program in partnership with Jewish neighbors. The program connects teens with diverse of voices from 8 local synagogues, as well as unaffiliated families,

to strengthen them as learners, as thinkers, and as young American Jews. The Tent is an electives-based program with 24 distinct electives offered every year. Students learn to advocate for themselves and their needs and develop as leaders who have ownership and agency over their education and what their Judaism means to them.

Chayai Shalom, Easton, MA (197 households)

Innovation Highlight: A wide variety of opportunities for teens are captured in Teen Oasis, each worth a different amount of points that add up towards different levels of recognition and achievement.

Models: Points/Credit & A La Carte

Teen Oasis allows each participant to create a personalized journey with a variety of opportunities to engage, learn, and try new things in order to experience and explore Jewish life with friends and with the larger community. Each experience has a *n'kudot* (points) value, and recognition is offered at various levels of *n'kudot* accumulation. A minimum number of *n'kudot* is required for achieving confirmation. There is a lot of

variety in the type and frequency of offerings. Participation costs vary based on the activity and whether or not you are a member of the congregation.

The Northeast Teen Collective **(part of the URJ family of camps and youth programs)**

Innovation Highlight: Intense learning with a core group of highly engaged teens who lead pop-up programs for their (mostly unengaged) peers. Teens receive mentoring in group cohorts and one-on-one. The Northeast Teen Collective (NETC) also partners with local and national organizations.

Models: Teen Powered-Adult Supported, Free-Standing & A La Carte

Elements: Small Groups, Relational Strategies

The NETC works with highly engaged Jewish teens to mentor them in developing their leadership and programming skills. Highly engaged teens are defined as those who are involved in youth groups, Jewish day schools, etc. This is a strength-based model, led by teens, to teach peer leadership skills as well as skills based on Jewish values that are needed in the secular world. There are three ways teens become involved:

1. The Machon Summer Leadership Institute is a leadership development and skill-building internship experience at URJ Eisner and Crane Lake Camps that invites rising high school seniors to explore what it means to be productive and successful staff members of the camp community, discover their Jewish identity, and gain valuable skills as Jewish leaders.
2. The Dana Gershon and Rabbi Jonah Pesner Northeast Leadership Summit is where Jewish teens come together for a collaborative leadership experience with a unique focus on Jewish Justice and Social Advocacy. Teens define and share their personal mission statement, translate their passions into new ideas and real experiences, and develop a plan to bring their ideas to life.
3. Pop-up events are planned and led by teen leaders from the Machon program and Leadership Summit. Pop-up events are low-commitment standalone or ongoing events with a specific focus on community and relationship building. All pop-up events have an underlying Jewish theme and focus on engaging the unengaged. Some examples of pop-up events are: discourse on the presidential debates, Israel advocacy sessions, Shabbat dinners, Hanukkah parties, and cleaning up a local park.

Mt. Zion Temple, St. Paul, MN (645 households)

Innovation Highlight: Expansive approach to teen engagement throughout congregation

Model: A La Carte

Elements: Synagogue Engagement/Leadership & Classes

In addition to Chai School (religious school classes and programs), Mount Zion offers a variety of engagement opportunities for teens to be involved in synagogue and Jewish life. The programs strive to foster a safe, inclusive space for youth to connect, learn, lead and have fun. Opportunities include:

- Youth Groups
- Retreats and Shabbatonim
- Choirs
- Summer Camp
- Israel Experiences
- Teen Leadership: Teens work as Gesher Mentors for 11th& 12th graders to mentor and teach 7th graders

Shir Tikvah, Minneapolis, MN (600 households)

Innovation Highlight: A congregational culture that emphasizes the value of being involved, nurturing relationships among youth, teachers and staff, as well as making a difference in the world.

Model: One-Day

Elements: Relational Strategies, Parent Involvement, Travel/Immersive Experiences

This youth educational community focuses on building relationships among youth, teachers and staff which contributes to students remaining involved and connected to the congregation.

People are seen and heard as individuals and the emphasis throughout *b'nei mitzvah* process focuses on the value of being involved. Grade-based classes meet weekly with each year focusing on empowering and inspiring personal Jewish journeys of relationship, meaning and impact:

- 8th Grade: Modern American Jewish life – What does it mean to be a Jew? This class includes a capstone trip to NY to look at turn-of-the-century Jewish spaces in NY and how they have shaped Jewish identity. Parents are also included in the trip, emphasizing that the whole family is engaged in the journey.

- 9th Grade: Ethics – Who are you? What do you want to be? How do we want to continue Jewish life? Every week there is a hot-topic discussion, sometimes driven by news, where teens discuss how they look at these things from a Jewish perspective. There is also a sexuality education program that has been designed by congregants, driven by up to date sexuality information/data connected with underlying Jewish values.
- 10th Grade: Confirmation – Co-taught by Senior Rabbi and Executive Director of Jewish Community Action, this class explores what it means to have moral courage. This class is justice-oriented with a robust Israel curriculum

From the Hartman Institute, which focuses on the topics of Israel and Palestine. At the end of the year, students plan a service to culminate their religious school life.

The Community Synagogue, Port Washington, NY (770 households)

Innovation Highlight: All the teens are in the building on the same day doing a variety of elements. Confirmation is in 12th grade.

Model: One-Day Focused

Element: Youth Group

Teen Tuesday is the youth education program for 7-12th grade students that meets every Tuesday evening for a hybrid model of content learning delivered in an informal youth program style. The evenings include:

- Youth Group for 7th and 8th grade students, called MPOW, with programs that are grounded in Jewish values, study, lively discussions with special guest speakers, and hands-on community service projects.
- POWTY Foundation, a Jewish teen philanthropy program for 9th-10th graders to engage with Judaism through study, discussion, decision making, fundraising and philanthropy.
- Kabbalat Torah for 11th- 12th graders, which consists of a two-year course of learning, as well as debate and growth with the clergy. The program culminates for 12th grade graduates in a special confirmation ceremony.
- A calendar of youth engagement events supplements these programs and meets at various times throughout the month outside of Teen Tuesday programs.

Temple Shaaray Tefila, New York, NY (1100 households)

Innovation Highlight: Deep commitment to meeting teens where they are at – paying special attention to their schedules, interests, and friend groups.

Model: A La Carte

Elements: Travel/Immersive Experiences & Alternative Choice/Independent Learning

The teen engagement program at Shaaray Tefilah is called Pathways, and consists of:

- 18 programmatic options with over 200 events/registrations throughout the year for 8th-12th graders. The message to teens is "working with your schedule, not against it." They offer weekly, bi-weekly, monthly and single event programming for maximum flexibility.
- The Pathways umbrella includes a teen-led youth group, a *madrichim* program, learning electives, travel experiences, and internships.
- Most grades have a dedicated travel experience rooted in Social Action. For example. There is an 8th grade trip to New Orleans, a 9th grade trip to the American South to learn about Civil Rights, and a 10th grade trip to one of the RAC's L'Taken Social Justice Seminars. The trips are open to any Pathways-enrolled teen in the congregation, regardless of participation in other events or programs.
- Examples of programs and electives within Pathways include a social justice elective, a senior seminar with the Senior Rabbi, congregational internships, a cooking class, and a *madrichim*/teacher assistant training program.

Woodlands Community Temple, White Plains, NY (400 Households)

Innovation Highlight: Social fabric is woven in earlier years and involves the active presence of clergy. Confirmation takes place in 10th grade, and there is a highly anticipated graduation ceremony in 12th grade. There is flexibility in all programming in acknowledgement of the demands on teens.

Model: One-Day

Elements: Relational Strategies & Youth Group

Woodlands Community Temple builds a culture of engagement and relationship. They focus on building cohorts in the early grades. The social fabric that they create is the reason teens continue to be involved. For example, there is a school community celebration for each *b'nei mitzvah*, including a small party with cupcakes the Monday after their *simcha*. 7th grade retention is high due to strong communal format and that 7th grade *b'nei mitzvah* don't begin until January. Additionally, the rabbis and cantor are active and present in the lives of kids from kindergarten on, they make it a priority to know the kids and build relationships. If they do not see a teen continuing involvement,

they reach out personally to check in and invite them to participate.

Programmatic elements include:

- 12th grade graduation expectation articulated in temple membership materials and in all programming
- Youth Group (WoodSY – NFTY-affiliated) is a leadership track for teens who want to lead teen programming. They lead with the help of a full-time youth director. With the belief that youth group should not add to the demands of teens' lives, there is staff available to make things happen and add flexibility in every way. The goal is to have one program a month, ranging from big or small, intense to relaxed. Everything is focused around accommodating the kids.
- Monday Night Academy is a program that behaves like a sanctuary and is modeled after Shabbat in terms of consistency. Teens know it is always there on Monday nights, regardless of how often they participate. Regular or drop-in attendance is welcomed. This approach acknowledges the other commitments in the lives of teens. Weekly topics of study are publicized, helping some to make attendance decisions based on that. It includes Moving Traditions groups, holiday programming and family learning.
- Staff maintains a spreadsheet to account how each teen is engaged. Individual plans for those wanting to be involved in alternative ways are created with teen and staff.

Temple Sinai of Rosalyn, Rosalyn Heights, NY (900 Households)

Innovation Highlight: Diverse options for teen learning and engagement, taking place at the congregation 4 days a week – there's something for everyone.

Model: A La Carte

Elements: Small Groups & Youth Group

Sulam is a high school model designed to be accessible to as many kids as possible, knowing how demanding their schedules can be. Programming takes place on different days of the week, with similar programs on the same night, such as electives, confirmation classes, social action, etc. Programming is intentionally planned to align with teen interests, needs, and passions so teens feel valued in the community. Some teens participate in more than one program and so they are in the congregation multiple times a week. The congregation believes that the more they offer, the more teens will participate, and that the community builds upon itself. Programs are weekly,

bi-monthly, and monthly – offering many on-ramps and pathways towards involvement. Congregational leaders also use social media in a deliberate effort to engage teens online.

Some examples of the programming on different days of the week are:

- Sunday: TSPN (Temple Sinai’s Philanthropy Network) Conducted online in a Facebook group. Teens learn about Jewish values and how they connect to sports and competition. They create fantasy football teams and then decide where *tzedakah* (charity) will be donated. Each teen is recognized for their donation. The group meets once a month for conversations, lunch, and to watch or play sports.
- Tuesday: “Think Tank” nights which includes Meeting of the Minds, Advocacy in Action, and Confirmation classes.
- Wednesday:
 - Leadership Academy: youth group board, *madrachim*, Teen Chazak (typically developing partners with teens who have special needs as buddies)
 - Boutique Classes: Music, Cooking, Movies, Israel
- Saturday: Action Institute - Havdalah for Hunger: Immerses teens in learning about and taking action on food insecurity.
- Additional opportunities for teens to engage with the community include travel opportunities, annual special programs, and one-off “add-on” programs.

Temple Beth Or, Raleigh, NC (479 households)

Innovation Highlight: Congregation responded to local need to provide safe space for students to explore a sensitive and important subject. Everyone (parents, staff, clergy) in the community is involved, which normalizes the material and encourages teens understand that they have allies to share and consult.

Model: Free-Standing

Element: Parent Involvement

The Teen Sex Ed Retreat is a well-known, trusted program, with a history of 20 years in the community. The retreat occurs every other year, combining two grades together, 8th and 9th. During the off year, when the retreat doesn't take place, there's a healthy relationships workshop. The retreat takes place at the synagogue, with teens sleeping

over, staffed by the rabbis, youth director, and a series of guest speakers (experts in the community). The program includes team building, Shabbat meals and services, interactive workshops on anatomy/physiology, loving relationships and sexuality. All programming includes Jewish perspective – with texts, stories, and values shared with an understanding that Judaism can help guide decisions they make about their bodies and relationships. The retreat culminates with participants developing a personal code of sexual ethics. Parents have a separate, concurrent event (immediately following the retreat) where they check in with weekend staff for an overview and Q&A on the program.

Anshe Chesed Fairmont Temple, Cleveland, OH (1300 households)

Innovation Highlight: Engaging teens who need flexible scheduling

Element: Alternative Choice/Independent Learning & *Madrichim*/Teaching Assistants

Hineni, "Here I am", is an alternative program for students looking for flexible scheduling. Participating students are unable to make the commitment to the weekly evening program, so they opt into Hineni and the following pieces:

- Monthly Hineni sessions for all participants to learn together with a rotating member of the clergy and to build relationships with each other
- Independent study project developed and guided by clergy
- *Madrichim* teaching in Sunday morning classes for younger students
- Volunteering at a community kitchen, delivering meals and cooking

Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, TX (2600 households)

Innovation Highlight: Teens engage peers and lead planning, appreciation for all levels of engagement, multiple on-ramps, respectful of teens' time/availability/interests.

Models: Teen-Powered, Adult-Supported, Free Standing, and A La Carte

Elements: Classes, Travel/Immersive Experiences

Project 4 is a way for Temple Emanu-El's 9th-12th graders to experience Judaism on their own terms. Involvement is tailored to busy schedules and varied interests. A teen Leadership Council creates all programs that generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Learning (including stand-alone workshops and weekly 9-10th grade classes)
- Social Justice and Advocacy
- Jewish Community

- Travel

Project 4's Guiding Principles:

1. Jewish ethical teachings and values can inform our thinking, decisions and actions.
2. Judaism is relevant to all that we do in our everyday lives and adds value to secular studies and eventual careers.
3. Jewish teens can be involved in youth engagement opportunities throughout the Jewish community, not Temple youth group alone.
4. A deep sense of relationship and community, reinforced in a teens-led space, connects our teens to Judaism and the Jewish community.
5. Project 4 seeks to reinforce teens' connection to clergy, carrying those relationships forward from *b'nei mitzvah*.

Project 4 hosts multiple events throughout the year. Sunday morning is the weekly time for specific learning and the *madrichim* program. Every teen is considered a part of Project 4 if their family are synagogue members; an engaged teen is one who has come to at least one event each year.

Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, Reston, VA (500 households)

Innovation Highlight: Only one day a month is required/prioritized, other times during the month are optional/drop-in days.

Model: One-Day Focused

Element: Classes

The 8th-12th grade Tamid program, which takes place on Tuesday nights, is preceded by an optional dinner. All the grades meet together, excluding Confirmation. Each week of the month has a different focus with the first Tuesday of the month, Talmud Torah Tuesday (3T), being required and all other weeks being elective. The required week allows the teen community to have critical mass at least once each month, which contributes to the creation of a *kehillah kedosha* (holy community) filled with *ruach* (spirit), cohesion and relationships, as well as a regular venue for communicating upcoming opportunities. This approach recognizes the other obligations competing for time in a teen's schedule by prioritizing 3T while also welcoming and encouraging participation on the other weeks.

- The Weekly Rotation:
 - 1st Tuesday- Talmud Torah (Judaic program)
 - 2nd Tuesday- Current Events Tuesday (*Tikkun Olam*)
 - 3rd Tuesday- *Chevrat*i (social program)
 - 4th Tuesday- *Meyuchedet* (special/flexible program)