



The Four Change Boosters of Innovation: Social Connectors

Connecting Conversation A: Talking About Our Hope and Dreams

*Adapted from our I*Express Innovation Initiative*

The value of a social connector conversation cannot be overstated. It builds community and fosters relationships which are core design principles in our learning models and it gives us insight into what our congregants are valuing/thinking about. Here you will find a “how-to” lead a connecting conversation along with the texts on which the conversation is based.

Set-up

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

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

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

In order to create educational experiences that are truly engaging and meaningful we need to learn more about each other and our families – what’s important to each of us and what kind of Jewish life we want to live. Together, we’re going to follow a structured conversation that will help bring these thoughts to the surface.

Before we begin, there are two important sets of insights that each of us brings to the table and which we hope you will share. One, we know that you’re invested in your children’s and family’s education and Jewish future, and two, we believe that you may have your finger on the pulse of other families in the congregation and can be a connector.



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

Suggestion for facilitator: *After everyone has shared, if you can, identify and name a common thread that connects the activities of the participants, i.e. family together time around celebrations and holidays.*

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

How do we achieve our hopes and dreams for our children? We know that it's not always easy to articulate our hopes and dreams – both in general and Jewishly – so we're sharing some pieces that others have written to get us started. On a separate sheet are five short texts that you'll be reading together in pairs.

Facilitator: *Assign each pair a different text or two from the Hopes and Dreams Readings Handout.*

As you read, underline the items that relate to your hopes and dreams. When we come back together, each person will share some of their partner's thoughts.

Facilitator: *Make sure participants are aware that they will be listening to their partner's thoughts for sharing. When you bring group back together, start the round of sharing to model for others.*

Timing: 10 minutes

Facilitator: *Bring everyone back together.*

Let's go around, we're going to ask each person to share something your partner identified within the text(s).

Timing: two minutes per pair, 10 minutes all together.

Please return to your pairs and share one hope or dream for your children that was not expressed in the text you read or from what was shared.

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

Timing: 5 minutes



Part III: Living a Jewish Life (15-20 minutes)

As you think about your hopes and dreams for your children in our lives today, **What are some things that are helping you reach those hopes and dreams?** Please take two minutes to consider this question. You may want to jot down your thoughts. Turn to the same partner from the earlier round and share.

Tip for facilitator: Direct the sharing in the opposite direction of the circle from sharing in Part I.

Thank you. The next question to consider is: **What are some things in this changing world that are getting in the way?**

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

Part IV: Facilitator Reflection and Building Your New Model (15 minutes)

Thank you. What we've discussed today will help inform the direction of our new learning model.

Note to Facilitator: *If you have already have some information regarding your model to share, describe the broad outlines of your model emphasizing:*

- *The category (e.g. Shabbat centered, Service Learning, etc.)*
- *The design is far from complete and will be shaped through further work and sessions like this.*
- *It may require some changes but that the team is being very thoughtful about providing plenty of communication and notice about what's ahead.*

Part V: Group Reflection and Wrap-up (10-15 minutes)

Go around and ask everyone to respond to this reflection question: **How was this conversation different from other meetings or discussions you've had at the synagogue about a new initiative or upcoming program?**

- **Thank** everyone for being so forthcoming and sharing their personal stories.
- **Ask** the participants to help make your innovations successful by talking to others about this conversation and continuing to share their ideas as your plans progress.
- **Promise** participants that you will follow-up with them soon.



LISTENING TO STORIES (a tool to capture characteristics)

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

Activities Shared By Parents

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

Sections of Text	Personal Connection to Hope and Dreams

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

Hopes and Dreams (if specifically noted)	What Helps to Reach Hopes and Dreams?	<u>Barriers</u> to Reaching Hopes and Dreams?

