



## Sample Professional Development Session Descriptions

*All sessions facilitated by JewishGPS are interactive. They model techniques, teaching methods and technologies that Jewish professionals can utilize in their own work.*

### **You are Cordially Uninvited: The Case for Elimination of Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremonies**

At first consideration, it seems nearly impossible and unimaginable to consider eliminating the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony as a significant milestone event in the Jewish lifecycle. However, with some exploration of the history of the ceremony, an examination of the current crisis in post-B'nei Mitzvah drop-out, and consideration of how Jewish education could be drastically better without it, you too will understand why eliminating or drastically altering this ritual as we know it might be good for the Jewish people.

### **"Get Glue": How Good Experiential Jewish Educators Use Curriculum and Pedagogy to Hold it all Together**

Sometimes experience-based education gets a bum rap for being fluff, education-light and informal. Participants in this session will examine components of traditional formal-setting curriculum and will come to understand how good experience-based education uses these curricular components. We will bust all of the assumptions education leaders have about a lack of quality education that experience-based learning provides. We will have the opportunity to look in-depth at some curriculum components and how they can play out in formal and informal settings embedded in an experience-based methodology.

### **High-Risk, Highly-Inspiring Jewish Education Innovation**

After a brief introduction to the Systematic Inventive Thinking model of "subtraction," we will put the method to the test. You will be challenged to subtract some significant components of our supplemental Jewish education system in order to open our minds to some serious innovation. Come prepared to sacrifice some of the biggest "sacred cows" of supplemental Jewish education.

### **Categories, Schmatteories: What Makes it Experiential Jewish Education?**

Anything that happens at camp is informal education, right? Everything that happens in a classroom is formal education? And any really cool education is experiential! Seems easy, but not so quick. Over the past few years, the buzzwords of informal and experiential education keep popping up, but unfortunately they are often misused. In a session half based in learning theory and half in experiencing the differences, we will come to understand exactly what comprises each education encounter.

### **How Many People Showed Up? Creating New Methods for Measuring Success**

We all do it. A program ends, we see the staff person in the hallway the next day, and we ask them: "How did it go last night? How many people were there?" Many times our boards, our supervisors and our funders determine the entire success of a program based on the numbers that participate and the cost-per-person it took to run the program. In this session, we will explore several new ways to define success and discuss methods for influencing our stakeholders to consider these new models.



### **Down with Dividers: Exploring Pluralism, Post- & Non-Denominationalism**

Recent studies indicate that more and more Jews don't want to be identified with one specific movement and are attracted to programs that cross boundaries. These programs often advertise themselves as "Pluralistic," "Post-Denominational" or "Non-Denominational" which actually aren't the same. Come be a part of the struggle and join a conversation on how you build pluralism in a communal program.

### **Four-Dimensional Text Study: Explore Text Like You Never Have Before**

Text study can be quite the experience ... if you are prepared to leave the desk behind and fully immerse yourself in it. Texts you may (or may not) have encountered before come alive when you experience them in multiple dimensions. Participants in this session should be willing to be adventurous and go beyond typical text-study boundaries. We will take what has traditionally been confined to a formal education method and release the full potential of experiential education methods. Please note: you may get a little dirty but cleaning supplies are included.

### **Wresting with G-d (Jewish Leaders)**

Can you be a Jewish leader and not believe in G-d? What does it mean to participate in t'filah and other blessings if G-d isn't a part of your life? How do you lead programs with Jewish content and still maintain integrity with your own G-d beliefs (or lack thereof)? As Jewish leaders, we struggle to find a place for our own personal relationship with G-d and that which our community may expect us to have. Together, we will tackle the tension that exists when we are Jewish leaders and wrestle with G-d.

### **It's Not Just an Icebreaker: Creating Community in Schools as an Explicit Element**

Have you considered what kinds of relationships exist between the families in your organization/school/program? Do you know how well the learners in your program know each other? Utilizing some powerful quotes from Thomas Sergiovanni's 1994 book *Building Community in Schools*, we will contemplate alternate models for school systems that cultivate community development as well as family and multi-generation engagement. We will also experience some techniques that allow us to create community without compromising the content we need to transmit. Oh, and of course, classic Jewish texts have a thing or two to tell us.

### **Moving the Teen/Parent Relationship from Hassled to Holy**

Navigating the teen/parent relationship can be incredibly challenging: for the teen, the parents, and particularly as a Jewish educator. Parents are still the number one indicator for teen choices on everything from smoking to Jewish identity. Robyn will share proven methodologies that help teens and parents tackle difficult adolescent topics which might include sex ethics, tattoos, body piercing, drugs, alcohol, and body image, modesty in clothing choices. The role of Jewish family education in the lives of teens and their parents can be life altering.

### **Stopping Post-B'nei Mitzvah Drop-Out with Pre-B'nei Mitzvah Families**

Nationally, over 80% of non-Orthodox teens drop out of engaged Jewish life. When leadership teams gather to discuss how to stop this trend, they typically turn towards developing new programming for 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders. In this session, we will explore how engaging the 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade families is really the core antidote for this issue. We will challenge the status quo of current programming for these grade cohorts and will generate different strategies for engaging these families.



### **Engaging Synagogue School Families Year-Round**

When I ask educators about their family education programming, I am often told about “4<sup>th</sup> Grade Family Tu B’Shevat Seders” and “2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Family Havdallah Programs.” While these one-shot programs offer feel-good moments for our families and our schools, they are not actually engaging parents in their child’s Jewish education. In this session, we will learn how to utilize web-based eNews systems to engage and empower parents. We will also talk about strategies for creating community amongst families and will also share programmatic models for family education integration. This session requires computer and internet access.

### **Focus on the Family: Multiple Methods of Educating the Jewish Family**

What exactly is Jewish Family Education? How and why did it emerge as a field and who are today’s leading experts? In this session, we will create a common language to speak about JFE, reflect on the offerings your institution currently offers, and encounter some new emerging JFE models from across the Jewish education landscape.

### **It’s Over My Head: Education Technology Integration**

For many seasoned educators, the apps, tweets, blogs, clouds and web platforms of today are just intimidating. This session is a hands-on workshop to help introduce some great Web 2.0 and 3.0 tools that can be used in classrooms, youth programs, board rooms, staff meetings, schools and more. Bring your laptop, iPhone or iPad – or all three – so you can join in the fun and exploration of these tools.

### **Inspiring Meaningful Jewish Moments**

Jewish educators don’t get into this field for the money. We do it for the goal of setting a strong foundation for meaningful Jewish moments that our learners – adults or children – will have in their lives. How do we recognize when our work has led to these great moments? Are we ever finished planting the seeds for the Jewish futures of our learners? This feel-good session recharges educators and inspires them to think about what they bring to their learners and how the encounters they have now shapes the future of the Jewish people.

### **The “Surprise and Delight” of High-Impact Learning Methods**

What are the moments our learners remember 5 years from now? How about 25 years from now? There are certain methods educators can embrace which will create memorable and high-energy learning in any environment. Summer camps are experts at creating those moments, but can they be replicated in classrooms? Together we will learn a few techniques for integrating new methods into our religious school classrooms so we can offer some “Surprise and Delight” through the year!

### **Building Partnership & Team in Community**

Many congregations offer madrichim programs as way of involving their teens and keeping them engaged. Often, however, madrichim are not utilized to their full capacity. What can a congregational education team of teachers and madrichim accomplish when working in partnership? We will spend time building a community atmosphere and developing team strategies in order to strengthen the education experience the learners in your setting encounter.

NOTE: This session is done in cooperation with a Madrichim Coordinator and the madrichim themselves.