LOMED Powerful Learning Study - Memo of Findings

To: **Coalition of Innovative Congregations and CSI Team**

From: **Rosov Consulting Team**

Re: **LOMED Powerful Learning Study – Memo of Findings Revised and Final Version**

Date: **September 9, 2012**

On behalf of the team at Rosov Consulting that worked on this project, I am pleased to present our revised findings memo from the LOMED Powerful Learning Study. As per our agreed upon scope of work, this memo of findings represents the fourth of five deliverables associated with the project. Specifically, this memo synthesizes findings from our site visits, interviews, and conceptual research to date. The memo includes: preliminary observations about the implementation of new educational models in congregational settings, suggestions for assessing measures of success, and our reflections on the key questions and issues that emerged throughout the process. We believe that this memo speaks instructively, albeit in necessarily preliminary and provisional ways, to the relative quality of education in both the "high impact" or "new" (aka "transformational") and "traditional" models and pedagogies observed. It also lays the groundwork for the development of substantive observation protocols that, together with other important data-gathering efforts, will allow the CIC to assess the impact of its work in this arena.

We wish you continued success with this endeavor and thank you for the opportunity to conduct this inquiry.

I. Context

The Coalition of Innovative Congregations (CIC), an initiative of The Jewish Education Project, is working with congregations in the New York metropolitan area to promote holistic Jewish education for children and families that focuses on learners' knowledge, belief, values, actions, and sense of belonging. LOMED (Learner Outcomes and Measurement for Effective Education Design) is one of three programs offered through CIC. LOMED fosters a deep re-thinking of the structure, orientation and nomenclature of learning in congregational contexts. The program provides training, handbooks, funding and coaching to help participating congregations design, measure and assess learner learning in the context of innovative, high quality educational models. The twenty-six congregations that were chosen to participate in LOMED to date are diverse in terms of size, varying from 100 to more than 1500 families, and denominational identification, including: Reform; Conservative; Reconstructionist; Orthodox; and Unaffiliated congregations.

Participating congregations are encouraged to employ models of education that are grounded in Dr. Jonathan Woocher's principles of 21st Century Jewish education.[1] LOMED supports powerful learning based on the following design principles associated with Woocher's framework: 1) Learning will be anchored in caring purposeful relationships; 2) Learning will seek to answer the questions, challenges, and meaning of everyday life; 3) Learning will enable individuals to construct their own meaning through inquiry, problem solving, and discovery; and 4) Learning will be content-rich and accessible.

II. Study Overview

The Jewish Education Project commissioned Rosov Consulting to design and implement an exploratory study of a purposive sample of congregations participating in LOMED in order to more fully understand the nature of the way in which its design principles were being operationalized. By trying to understand the way in which educators use and think about the design principles in action, the Jewish Education Project aims to contribute to the development of rubrics that will aid in assessing powerful learning in congregational settings.

By commissioning an exploratory study of a small sample of congregations participating in LOMED, The Jewish Education Project sought to:

1. More fully understand how the design principles of powerful learning are being enacted in congregational settings;
2. Analyze the opportunities and constraints of implementing some or all of these principles;
3. Begin to develop robust protocols for assessing the quality of the educational experiences that operationalize these principles.

These project goals were pursued through various methods including: interviews, document

[1] Woocher, J., O'Brien, K. & Issacs, L. (2010). Driving Congregational School Change to Enhance 21st Century Jewish Learning. *Journal of Jewish Education*. 76:4, 334-357.

review, and observation of educational experiences during brief site visits(see Appendix C for a list of education experiences observed) to the purposive sample of LOMED congregations, a comprehensive review of the literature on 21st Century learning in general and in cognate fields of religious education, such as Christian education (see selected examples in Appendix A and the bibliography in Appendix B); and conversations with experts in those fields.(See Appendix C for a list of field experts consulted). Interviews with education directors and LOMED consultants were conducted prior to and following the site visits.

On-site observations were conducted at seven (7) congregations, which roughly make up one-quarter of those currently participating in the LOMED initiative. (See Appendix B for a list of congregations included in the study and Appendix E for a list of the learning activities and educational experiences we observed). The primary criterion for inclusion in the sample was the identification of congregations that have most fully implemented one or more of the design principles of powerful learning. Additionally, the sample was constructed to be diverse in terms of congregational size, denominational affiliation, and geographic location so as to provide the broadest context for learnings at this juncture.

This memo is a synthetic analysis and presentation of what we learned through our site-visits, conversations with field experts, teachers and educators doing this work on the ground, and a broad reading of literature on 21st Century learning, Jewish Congregational education and Christian Congregational education. It illuminates some of the ways in which congregations are successfully actualizing the design principles. Challenges that have emerged during congregations' implementation of the program are also identified. In the final section, it surfaces important considerations in developing an approach to the observation and assessment of powerful learning.

III. Understanding 21st Century Learning

The literature we reviewed focused on describing and analyzing the characteristics of 21st Century learning and contains very similar core elements to those articulated by Woocher. The epistemological orientation of much of the literature draws on a Deweyan notion of social constructivism. This approach to learning places the learner at the center of inquiry and meaning making, emphasizes relationships, real-world experiences and life-relevant tasks, and creates the groundwork for life-long learning.[2] This is in stark contrast to 'banking' modes of learning that engage atomistic individuals, which understand knowledge as static and unchanging through the learning process, and where the content and process of learning is determined based on what is deemed significant by the educator, rather than the needs, interests, or subjectivity of the learner.[3]

A prevalent theme in the literature is a re-thinking of the cognitive aspects of learning. As

[2] Schoen, L. & Fusarelli, L. (2008). Innovation, NCLB, and the Fear Factor The Challenge of Leading 21st-Century Schools in an Era of Accountability.
Educational Policy. 22:1, 181-203.
[3] Friere, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*. Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland.

such, educational scholars focus on modes of critical thinking, communication and analysis[4]; critical reflection, empirical reasoning, collective intelligence and meta-cognition[5]; and adaptability and creativity.[6]

Another predominant theme focuses on the learner's relationship to the world outside of the classroom. Proponents of 21st Century learning note the import of attending to learners' broader life contexts,[7] and seek to develop the community aspects of learning as a way to model the long-term relationship between learning and life.[8] According to Schoen and Fusarelli, dispelling the false dichotomy between learning and life requires the need to:

> *…fundamentally restructure classroom learning experiences through student exposure to more authentic activities such as collaborative interdisciplinary problem solving and places less emphasis on teaching and testing subject area skills in isolation.*[9]

Research in the field of Christian Congregational Education (CCE) points to the presence of variations in the practical application of the principles of 21st Century learning. In some cases, innovation is employed serially: as a pedagogical technique used to improve a single lesson, unit, or program[10], while in other cases, innovation is utilized as an ideology and conceptual framework with which to advance systemic educational change.[11] The congregations observed in this study employed a combination of these two approaches. Some chose to create a new program or utilize the principles for a particular grade, while others aimed to re-imagine the educational approach entirely.

IV. Design Principles: Study Findings

The study findings are structured according to the four design principles enumerated above, with each section providing a synthesis of best practices and insights gleaned from the literature, expert interviews, and site visits. This structure will help clarify how each design principle might be operationalized toward the overarching goal of developing rubrics for assessing and evaluating the work being done on the ground. At the same time, it must be understood that the design principles do not necessary manifest in discrete moments. As such, the discussion of some principles may find others present as well, even if they are not the central focus. Insights derived from site visits that fell beyond the scope of Woocher's

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[4] Partnership for 21st Century Skills. *P21 Framework Definitions.* Retrieved July 13, 2012 from http://www.p21.org/tools-and-resources/publications/1017-educators#defining

[5] Cookson, P. (2009) What would Socrates say? *Educational Leadership.* 67:1, 8-16.

[6] Shoen and Fuserelli (2008)

[7] Partnership for 21st Century Skills

[8] The 21st Century Learning Initiative. *"Schools" in the Future: What has to change, and why.* Retrieved April 22, 2012 from http://www.21learn.org/site/archive/schools-in-the-future-what-has-to-change-and-why/

[9] Huber & Breen (2007); Newmann & Wehlage (1995) as quoted in Shoen and Fusarelli (2008), 183.

[10] Miller, D. (1999). The Reinvented Church: Styles and strategies. *Christian Century.* 22-29; Buchanan, M. (2005): Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education. *Religious Education.* 100:1, 20-37; Hayn, J., Kaplan, J. & Nolen, A. (2011). Young Adult Literature Research in the 21st Century. *Theory Into Practice.* 50:3, 176-181.

[11] Veverka, F. (1997). Congregational education: Shaping the culture of the local Church. *Religious Education.* 92:1, 77-90; Edie, F. (2005). Considering the *Ordo* as pedagogical context for religious education with Christian high school youth. *Religious Education.* 100:3, 266-281

theoretical structure are also included and should be considered in developing a comprehensive framework for assessment moving forward. Finally, by way of a methodological caution, the limited nature of our initial, exploratory observation has meant that some aspects of the design principles were more vividly evident than others.

Related to our use of the design principles as the guiding structure for sharing our findings, is the fact that they are presented from the learner's points of view, not the educators. How an educator constructs a learning experience is not explicit in the design principles, but is, of course, present in every learning dynamic. It is therefore important to note that the way an educator constructs a lesson or learning experience may be different from the impact that experience has on a learner. For example, an educator may use an inquiry-oriented task to achieve more meaningful learning, even as this approach may be distinct from the design principles. It is thus important to separate the design principles as a method for implementation, from how they are experienced by a learner. This distinction is taken up in the final section of the memo, which focuses on the experience of the educator in a LOMED congregation.

A final introductory note must be made about the language-choice used herein. The language of this memo reflects the values implicit in Woocher's design principles, as adopted by LOMED. The rationale for speaking about 'learners' and not 'students,' 'learning experience' instead of 'lessons,' as well as the lack of reference to "Hebrew/Religious School" is more than semantic. At one level, it is an attempt to move beyond the strictures and expectations of a conventional congregational school experience. But more significantly, it is about beginning to change the culture of learning in congregations by using language that reflects the broader, deeper and more innovative concepts implicit in the design principles. 'Learners', for example, may include families or teachers or even higher level educational leadership, while the use of the term 'students' generally implies a young person in a classroom setting. The hope is that by speaking differently about congregational education participants will come to think differently as well.

A. Principle 1: Learning will be anchored in caring purposeful relationships.

This principle refers to the importance of developing relationships both during learning activities and outside of them, through intentional (caring) as well as serendipitous interactions. Purposeful relationships are those where educators and learners share a sense of working together toward a common goal. The caring nature of the relationships is intended to thicken the connection between educator and learner.

The fostering of caring and purposeful relationships was a primary focus in many congregations. This principle was made manifest in a variety of ways in the congregational learning experiences observed. During a number of site visits, learners were observed engaging in group-learning experiences. Through creative processes and facilitated discussions, learners worked together to develop collective understandings of texts, and worked collaboratively to develop group presentations through which they articulated and illustrated their learning. In many cases, communities of learning were created across age groups, with older and younger learners engaging together, rather than being segregated by

age. At one congregation, a group of developmentally disabled teenagers and young adults were invited to eat lunch and play games with a sixth grade class, thus widening the circle of relationships both within and beyond the local learning environment. At another congregation, a learning experience was designed for sixth and first graders: during a "Book-Buddies" program, learners engaged in an inter-age discussion through a pair-and-share based interaction. They also learned an Israeli song and dance together.

Relationship building was not solely focused on individuals. Many of the field experts consulted for this study noted the importance of expanding the educational focus beyond the individual learner, and recommended that families be considered units of learning as well. Participating congregations commonly employed this approach. One congregation facilitated a walking tour of the Lower East Side for third grade learners together with their families as part of their LOMED-inspired programming. Shabbat was widely used by congregations as an opportunity to engage the entire family in learning. By recognizing the family as the unit of learning, congregations implicitly drew upon a relational learning model, and also focused on relevance to the learners' wider life experiences, thereby drawing upon multiple design principles simultaneously.

According to education directors and the educators working on the ground in these congregations, involving parents in the educational experience remains challenging. In some cases, parents seemed reluctant to participate in or contribute to their children's learning. In one case, teachers described expending tremendous effort to create a holiday workbook that was designed to enable parents to complete activities at home with their children. Despite the educators' effort to communicate the importance of these exercises to parents, only two families completed the activity. In an effort to create positive role models for younger learners, another congregation developed a creative strategy to counter parents' lack of participation in congregational programming. Instead, to ensure religious role modeling, joint programming was created to engage teenagers with younger learners.

Another site visit highlighted the importance of the relationship between learner and educator. Once a week a small group of learners meets with a coalition educator in a different family's home to discuss a topic of the learners' choosing. Learners expressed a palpably meaningful relationship with the educator, who had recently had the entire group to her home for Shabbat dinner. This example points to the importance of relationships that connect various parts of a learner's life, enabling educators to take the learning experience beyond the walls of the synagogue.

One of the field experts, Professor Isa Aron, raised an additional challenge inherent in relationship building efforts in the congregational context, namely, the limitations of time. She remarked, "In any given activity there may be relationship building, but how much time do you need for relationships to properly develop?"[12] Since congregational learning experiences often occur during brief and discrete periods of time, Aron's question points to the importance of framing relationship-building in congregational education more holistically, within the broader context of the ongoing process of congregational community building.

[12] Aron, Isa. Personal Interview. April 26, 2012.

B. Principle 2: Learning will seek the answers to the questions, challenges, and meaning of everyday life.

This principle refers to learning that is connected with learners' lived experiences, and stresses the importance of lived Judaism as part of the educational experience. In this sense learning means more than acquiring knowledge of specific bodies of subject matter. In 21st Century education, authentic learning is grounded in issues and topics that are meaningful to the learner. Learning activities are designed to add depth and meaning to questions and challenges that arise from a learner's lived experience. This principle represents an ideological shift from a focus on the authoritative text as the center of learning to the autonomous learner as the focus.[13] Terence Lovat, scholar of religious education, summarizes the shift he witnessed in the field of CCE in these words: "The goal of religious education, then, was not to deliver static 'truths,' nor to determine certain attitudes, but to create critical participants to the ongoing life of the Christian community".[14] In another approach utilized in CCE, the teacher is characterized as guide, rather than a leader.[15]

A dynamic example of this principle occurred during the observation of an educational experience for fifth grade learners that took place in a classroom setting. Learners, who were sitting at desks facing the educator, were taught about mourning as part of a life-cycle curriculum. After presenting the material frontally and then asking questions to ensure the learners' full understanding of the material, the lead educator turned to the learners to make meaning of the relevant rituals and the mourning process. In doing this there was a shift in the educational mode from content and instruction, to an exploration of what the learners themselves found meaningful. The educator asked questions to elicit critical thinking and life-relevant ideas, like: "Why would the *halacha* be the way it is?" and "Why do you think *kriya* (ripping a garment after a loved-one has died) is important?" She also guided the learners to think about their families' motivation to engage in particular mourning practices described by the learners themselves. The learners' answers were personal, thoughtful and revealing of their own experiences of death and mourning. The educator drew upon learners' experiences to discuss informed choice as a value in Reform Judaism and encouraged them to think about choosing to do tradition in a meaningful way. Finally, each learner was asked to journal in response to a prompt given by the educator. The educator ascribed the decision to use this journal as a direct outcome of an interest in applying the LOMED principle that underscores the value of a learner's reflection on his or her learning experiences. By inviting the learners to draw upon their personal experiences of loss and mourning as the lens through which to understand the rituals, the educator grounded the content in learners' own lives. In doing so, she personalized the traditional elements of Judaism, and tied her learners' individual life experiences to communal values and religious traditions.

The above example underlines the complexity inherent in trying to categorize the design principles as they are operationalized (a challenge to which we will return below when discussing future observations). In her lesson on mourning, the educator began with a frontal approach in a typical classroom setting, but employed innovative techniques to

[13] Hayn, Kaplan & Nolan (2011)
[14] Lovat (2002) as quoted in Buchanan (2005), 27.
[15] Miller (1999)

engage the learners and achieve deep and relevant meaning. In doing so, she demonstrated an educational model that simultaneously utilizes both innovative and more traditional approaches, making it difficult to categorize learning experiences as being either traditional or innovative. This example illustrates instead the fluidity of educational approaches employed, and the need for nuance when constructing an observation rubric for congregational learning environments.

During other educational experiences observed, educators created lesson plans that incorporated innovative learning ideas, but their implementation could not be categorized as innovative. In one case, the educator's lesson plan contained interactive elements, accounted for multiple intelligences, and student-centered learning experience; but their implementation fell short of 21st Century learning aspirations. Rather than exemplifying the dynamism of combining multiple educational approaches, this and other examples illustrated the complexity of educational change, and also the challenge for educators to absorb new educational values and not just new techniques. The sentiment of a number of education directors and field experts echoed the words of one respondent who likened the process to "changing the tires of the bus while riding in it."

C. Principle 3: Learning will enable individuals to construct their own meaning through inquiry, problem solving, and discovery.

This principle emphasizes the centrality of the construction of personal meaning, which occurs through the process of self-reflection. Inquiry-oriented educational approaches equip learners with the capacity to explore, discover and analyze educational content, and ultimately make sense of the world for themselves. In this mode, learning is a dialogical and reflexive process without a predetermined end-goal. This kind of deep change demands a degree of epistemological change that represents a radical reorientation to theorizing how people come to know things, and constitutes an adaptive challenge.[16]

An example of this type of learning happened during one congregation's family Shabbat program, which occurs monthly on Friday night. During an educational experience called "Torah Through The Lens Of," learners separated into groups for forty-five minutes to explore the *Parsha* through different modalities: art, photography, technology, nature, *midrash* and theater. The groups were organized by each learner's expressed interest rather than age. In the, "Torah Through The Lens of Drama" group, learners were asked to imagine that they were a person or object that was mentioned in the *Parsha*, and introduce themselves to one another, saying how they feel. In the "Torah Through The Lens of Technology" group, learners used paper and pens to design apps relevant to the *Parsha*. A group of learners designed an online dating app to help Kohanim find their mates, and another learner created a kosher for Passover recipe app.

This educational experience draws upon principles of 21st learning on a number of levels. Learners were gathered in interest-oriented learning groups rather than by age, which aimed to allow learners to make meaning of their religious experiences through life-relevant and inquiry-oriented tasks. As such, learners were encouraged to generate creative ideas through

[16] Haifetz, R. & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*. Harvard Business School Press: Boston, MA.

a discovery process grounded in their expressed interests while utilizing their preferred medium.

Service learning is another way that participating congregations empowered learners through affective activities that incorporate diverse modes of inquiry, problem solving, and discovery. One congregation participated in a community wide Mitzvah-Day social justice program, along with families from neighboring congregations. Congregational learners could choose between participating with their families or with their peers. In choosing the former they could engage in service learning projects inside the synagogue, such as making food for the homeless or planting trees in the memorial garden, or go outside the synagogue to pre-arranged visits to nursing homes and other venues. Yet they could also choose to participate with their peers in such activities as making decorations and blankets for children in hospitals, or meeting with developmentally delayed teenagers from a local Christian organization. According to scholars of CCE, "The benefits of volunteering for young people include congregational attachment, more positive lifestyle choices, increased social and vocational skills, increased self-esteem and self-confidence, and continued volunteering in adulthood".[17] They participated in life-relevant and meaningful activities in the context of an active discovery-oriented learning experience.

D. Principle 4: Learning will be content-rich and accessible.

Content rich and accessible learning is that which connects the liturgical and textual canon to learners' lived experiences. It empowers learners to link their personal Jewish histories to the Jewish master narrative. Site visits revealed that the identification of what constitutes a 'content-rich' learning experience is a challenge many are negotiating. One example presented at the convening[18] based on a site-visit observation was of an educator who taught her colleagues a Chelm story as a way of developing an idea relevant to their collective pedagogical practice. At the convening, participants offered multiple readings of whether this constituted a content-rich lesson, underscoring the subjective nature of this learning principle. One participant felt that the story adequately expressed a substantive lesson, while another found the same story simplistic and not content-rich.

The issue of accessibility is also contested. For some, accessibility is perceived as a lowering of standards; a simplification that can detract from educational experience. For example, at one congregation visited, prayer books (which were compiled by the educators), included transliterations in response to the awareness that many parents do not read Hebrew. At least one teacher commented that providing transliterations to make the service more accessible gives parents the mistaken impression that learning Hebrew is not essential.

Before suggesting one way to think about this dilemma, it is useful to reference the learning experience on mourning discussed above in design principle number two. If the educator in this instance was simply to give over the content about mourning, one might call it content-full, but hardly rich. Its richness came about because of the ways in which the educator

[17] Benson & Roehlkepartain (1993), as quoted on page 372 in Myers, D., Wolfer, T. & Garland, D. (2008). Congregational service-learning characteristics and volunteer faith development. *Religious Education.* 103:3, 369-388.
[18] On June 13, 2012 in New York City, CIC organized a convening of the education directors, consultants, and coalition educators, from the LOMED congregations that participated in this study, in order to discuss and reflect upon the insights of this study to that point.

helped the learners experience the content as relevant to their lives through a connection to the learners' experience. The same would be true about the Chelm story mentioned at the beginning of this section, where its usefulness to the learner, or personal relevance, puts it into a category one could call content-rich.

What made this learning content-rich, and can help distinguish thin from rich content, was the way in which the material provided was deepened through a learning experience in which the learners were engaged and to which they were committed. Finding that bridge is thus a way to think about the relative content-richness of what an educator is sharing. Thus, Woocher's fourth learning principle may not really stand on its own (even as most of them often do not in practice anyway), but can be demonstrated only by the degree to which it also connects to other learning principles.

V. Cross-cutting Issues

Observing the emergent operationalization of the design principles has highlighted two broad foci for attention that are essential to the successful implementation of educational change: educators, on the hand, and congregational dynamics and institutional cultures, on the other. These same foci were corroborated in an interview with Dr. Jon Woocher in which he was asked what would be needed to implement the principles on which LOMED is based.

(i) Educators

Educators ultimately act as translators between concepts and actions during the operationalization of the design principles. Translating the principles into actionable techniques has proven challenging. This necessitated one group of educators to re-frame the design principles into concepts they could more easily understand and impart. They characterized the principles as: "Jewish values," "personal understanding," and "relationships," which they found to be much more user-friendly in the design and implementation of learning experiences.

For educators, who must concern themselves with the practicalities of designing and facilitating learning experiences, the larger conceptual framework guiding LOMED seemed to be less at the forefront of their thinking. In contrast, consultants, coalition educators and education directors expressed a much more comprehensive grasp of the program than the educators who were tasked with its implementation. As a result, some educators seemed to translate the design principles into criteria for lesson design, rather than seeing them as constituting an approach to rethinking the educational process more broadly.

For some, participation in LOMED improved their experience as congregational educators by empowering them to utilize their creativity. In several congregations, the frequency of professional development was increased and the content of the learning was enhanced as a result of LOMED. As a result, LOMED appears to contribute to an increased feeling of competency and professionalization amongst educators; a healthy byproduct of this activity

(ii) Congregational culture and structure

Change initiatives commonly confront entrenched organizational cultures. According to the field experts interviewed, challenges to educational change include:

1. Limited time and resources, which impede opportunities for educators to learn from one another
2. Specific requirements related to bnai-mitzvah preparation, which leave little room for curricular variation
3. Lack of ownership of space, since congregational education typically utilizes rooms that are otherwise occupied by lengthier educational programs.

A scholar of Jewish education in congregational settings, Dr. Michelle Lynn-Sachs, contends that changes to how people think about the nature of learning cannot be divorced from the organizational environment in which they take place.[19] She notes that organizations supporting congregational education frequently shift between emphasizing the reform of educational capacities and structures to emphasizing the transformation of educational experiences and pedagogies, rather than attempting both types of reform simultaneously.

Congregations' Shabbat programming provides an example of how many are attempting to deconstruct the divisions between content and context. By providing educational opportunities for families during Shabbat, a number of congregations are working to enhance learners' experiences by bridging congregational participation (combining "school" and "shul"). In doing so, they are breaking down the institutional and organizational boundaries that Professor Jeffrey Kress noted often separate learning from lived experience.[20]

VI. Assessing Powerful Learning - Moving Forward

Through analysis of site-visits that were informed by the literature of CCE, Jewish Congregational Education and 21st Century Learning, along with the insight of experts in these fields, this memo offers a first glimpse of how LOMED's design principles are beginning to be operationalized in congregational contexts. This memo reflects a moment-in-time in a process of educational change and of congregational learning. We have provided a snapshot that, inevitably, cannot capture all four of LOMED's design principles especially when these principles may not yet all been ready to view. A fuller assessment of the operationalization of the design principles ought to be undertaken at this time. We offer below some suggestions of what such an assessment ought to consider.

(i) A continuum from the traditional to the transformed
As this memo illustrates, congregations are in the midst of a transformative process. Their activities are best described as occurring along a continuum of innovation, rather than as either traditional or transformed. In some of the instances observed the pedagogical context was more traditional while the pedagogical approach was clearly informed by the innovative

[19] Lynn-Sachs, Michelle. Personal Interview. April 25, 2012.
[20] Kress, Jeffrey. Personal Interview. April 24, 2012.

model. In other cases, the educational context was innovative, but the new pedagogical approach was not fully integrated.

The lack of clear differentiation between new and traditional approaches exemplifies the process of educational change. New methods have been incorporated to varying extents; different institutions have reached different phases in the process of transition. A fuller study, conducted over a longer period of time, has potential to yield more definitive information about the transformation of congregations' education culture. Focused on a greater variety of sites, it will reveal more fully the extent to which all four design principles have been implemented.

(ii) It's all about the learners
The design principles of LOMED are oriented to the experience of the learner, not the educator or educational context. Ultimately, the learner's experience is the programmatic output that matters most, even while the quality of inputs (educational practice and context) continues to be important to determine. Learning activities may contain formal elements of the design principles, and can be evaluated as such, but ultimately they must be examined in terms of how far they advance learning.

Further assessment of the design principles' implementation calls for devising an observation rubric for assessing the quality of learning - the learning experiences being engaged by the learner. It will be important, for example, to distinguish between seeing a design principle 'in action' and determining its effectiveness as an educational approach. (All of this, of course, will depend on applying LOMED-appropriate language within which to identify and observe all program elements, inputs as well as outputs.)

(iii) Context
The current iteration of the memo is formed around the design principles at the center of the implementation of LOMED. Our focus has been on capturing aspects of the pedagogy, not on the structures and cultures of the context.

Our informant interviews highlight the importance of context in determining where practices are located on a continuum from traditional to "transformed." Future assessment must take fuller account of the wider educational environment, such as cultures of teacher development and professionalization, and administrative advancement. A further iteration of the observation protocol should account for these elements.

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Appendix A: Examples of Powerful Learning

Examples of 21st Century Learning (21CL)

1. A school district created an after-school program focused on 21CL in which both students and teachers participated in voluntarily. Students created an electronic portfolio of activities in which they participated, drawn from a (long) list of options created by teachers. The teachers created rubrics to determine if the product was acceptable. Students were also involved in the planning, pointing to the value of collaboration generally found in 21CL. Students received points for completing tasks, and if they passed a threshold, they received a diploma and became eligible for scholarship money that the district raised. There were seven 21CL categories, and students had to complete a certain number of activities in each category (the number depended on the category). The district was able to get corporations to provide internships and shadowing and to endorse the diploma.

   Comment: This kind of authentic learning, collaborative and inquiry-based in nature, and directly connected with the entirety of a learner's life experience, is a powerful model for the enactment of 21CL in a congregational setting because of its non-classroom orientation, and willingness to work outside the 'grammar of schools', the term that Michelle Lynn Sacks applies to refer to conventional classroom learning and its correlate structures (2011).

   Citation: Clark, T. (2009). 21st Century Scholars. *Educational Leadership*. 67:1, 66-72.

2. In the last ten years, Singapore has implemented a program called "Social Practice of Learning (SPL) [which] refers to life-long learning, deep reflection, and dialogue in a community" (Hung, Ng & Hoh, 2009, 205), elements which have much in common with Woocher's (2008) notion of 21CL. The motivation for these changes arose out of the recognition that in a knowledge-based economy, one has to move beyond curriculum and discipline-based learning to a meta- or cross-perspectival mode of learning. This move was a burden the Singapore system placed firmly on the teacher, whose role was to help students understand the epistemological underpinnings of their own thought, and engage them in alternate or multiple perspectives. At the root of this project, and perhaps its most important conclusion, is the realization that "…the real issue is to go beyond the system's provision of supportive structural changes to the substance of the epistemological reform" (Hung, Ng & Hoh, 2009, 212). But it is also notable that this was not seen as an individual project, rather as one that involved the creation of community, or a community of practice in a classroom setting.

   It is instructive that when the Singapore education system began this process,

they assumed a feature common in 21CL projects: a focus on Information Technology. However, after seven years they realized that this focus was misplaced, and that the goal instead should be to "develop intellectual curiosity among the students and the spirit of collective initiative" (ibid., 211), and improve the quality of interactions between teachers and students. There was a shift from teacher-centered to group-centered learning that focused on discussion, research and problem solving. This was supported by PD for teachers by creating teacher-networks, collaboration and sharing. This is a way of having teachers be the kind of reflective learners that they want their students to be.

Comment: The Singapore case is instructive at two levels. First, its success is not about specific, innovative programming, but about creating a new culture based on a set of innovative epistemological foundations. This allowed for a significant degree of adaptability that a focus on technology would not allow. Second, their focus on community and collaboration were central to making successful change, which is the first of the LOMED design principles.

Citation: Hung, D., Ng P., & Hoh T. (2009). The social practice of learning: A craft for the 21st century. *Asia Pacific Education Review*. 10: 205-214.

Christian Church Education (CCE)

1. Michael Buchanan speaks about a pedagogical approach that is particularly relevant to the intersection of 21CL and CCE which he calls 'Shared Christian Praxis': "The goal of religious education… was not to deliver static 'truths,' nor to determine certain attitudes, but to create critical participants to the ongoing life of the Christian community (Lovat 2002, 24–25)" (Buchanan, 2005). The goal of CCE is to think in terms of praxis, or a focus on action and a reflection upon that behavior, and not in terms of theories or theology, which, like 21CL, implies a focus on a person's lived religious experience in contrast to the religious knowledge they are supposed to have learned.

   Comment: Buchanan is advocating a move from 'learning about' religion, to 'learning through' religious experiences. This connects closely with the second design principle that "learning will seek the answers to the questions, challenges, and meaning of everyday life". By focusing on the 'doing' of Jewish life, as Buchanan advocated, students will find their learning more authentic and relevant.

   Citation: Buchanan, M. (2005): Pedagogical drift: The evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education. *Religious Education*. 100:1, 20-37.

2. A new curriculum created by Lutheran Education Australia called *Equip* is particularly interesting for the similarities it has to 21CL. It describes learning as: holistic, and not just cognitive; as inquiry based and leading therefore to multiple journeys of discovery; and as collaborative, both amongst students themselves and between students and teachers (Jacqueline, 2011). The feedback from this program has been positive, although no study of impact was provided.

   Comment: There were few details about the project itself, but because of the parallels, it seemed worth noting that similarly motivated projects are happening in other religious education environments, and have been well received.

   Citation: Jacqueline, D. (2011). Equipping for now and the future: a window into Lutheran Education Australia's training program for teachers of Christian Studies. *Lutheran Theological Journal.* 45:2, 114-124

3. A study by Cook and Simonds (2011), entitled "The Charism of 21st-Century Catholic Schools: Building a Culture of Relationships," looks to an aspect of 21CL for its educational vision, but only one that fits within a conventional religious discourse. The authors want to advocate for *relationships* as the central focus of 21st century Catholic education.

   Comment: While the move to relationships as a key element of religious or general education is not new, what is noteworthy is the way they take a pervasive element of popular contemporary educational philosophy (21CL), community and collaboration (Myers, Wolfer & Garland, 2008; Buchanan 2005; Edie, 2005; Mercer, 2005; Rossiter, 2010; Veverka, 1997 and more), and focus on the aspect that can best connect with a normative religious message. Finding these places of overlap may be useful in substantiating an educational approach or message within a congregational environment.

   Citation: Cook, T. & Simonds, T. (2011). The Charism of 21st-Century Catholic Schools: Building a Culture of Relationships. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice.* 14:3, 319-333.

4. Much like Jewish education, Christian Church education utilizes service-learning as a method for engagement. One of the interesting findings of this approach was found in a study that linked service-learning to "mature faith and other faith practices" of volunteers, as well as increased linkages with the community (Myers, Wolfer & Garland, 2008, 370). They even found that,

   > …it appears to be more powerful than Sunday school, Bible study, or participation in worship. The benefits of volunteering for young people

include congregational attachment, more positive lifestyle choices, increased social and vocational skills, increased self-esteem and self-confidence, and continued volunteering in adulthood. The seeds planted in teenagers' lives through service bear fruit for a lifetime (Benson and Roehlkepartain 1993) (ibid., 372).

Comment: Service-learning projects are often supported in liberal religious congregations because of the way they fit into the social justice value of *tikun olam*. This study goes in a different direction and substantiates the relationship between these projects and faith development. Knowing about this connection may open up new ways in which service learning projects can be designed and oriented for learner participation.

Citation: Myers, D., Wolfer, T. & Garland, D. (2008). Congregational service-learning characteristics and volunteer faith development. *Religious Education*. 103:3, 369-388.

5. One innovative model in CCE is called 'Congregational studies', which is a method wherein the students become researchers of their own congregation as part of constructing the content of the course (Mercer, 2005). It is an interdisciplinary approach whereby students engage in a horizontal form of investigation of their own religious community and local theologies in an attempt to understand their form, structure, history and culture, while at the same time burrowing down into a vertical form of study that looks at how local practices evolved from earlier variations. This can apply not only to religious thought and ritual, but architecture, budget, mission and governance.

   As learners in the course construct knowledge about the particular congregation they are studying, the seminary classroom becomes a space for integrative reflection upon the subject matter of the course and a specific congregational context. That is, the particular subject matter of the course—Bible, Church History, Christian Education, Pastoral Care, Missions—takes focus in relation to the study of a specific congregation. Thus, as students learn about the history and theology of missions, for example, they research the ways a specific congregation understands and practices mission, how its organizational structures relate to (or impair) its particular theology of mission, how its neighborhood context and world events shape changes over time in its mission, and how formal and informal processes of leadership in this community of faith deal with conflicting views about mission. Acting as researchers in the congregation, course participants may interview church members and leaders, observe children's activities and church governance meetings, survey the surrounding neighborhood business owners for their perspectives on the congregation's mission, and engage in participant observation in worship toward discerning the theologies of mission expressed in liturgy and hymnody. In contrast to field education methods in which students occupy the role of

"student minister" or church-leader-in-training in relation to a congregation, in a congregational studies-based pedagogy students take on roles as practitioner-researchers who seek to gain insight and under- standing into a particular religious community and its dynamics across the whole of its life." (ibid., 283)

Comment: This kind of project allows learning to become a holistic activity, preventing the various forms of religious life from becoming isolated and fractured, and forcing students to think outside the boundary of traditional disciplines. In a similar vein, it focuses on the particular reality which the learner is familiar with, even as it places that particular within a wider framework of religious life that they can now learn about. Finally, this is a collaborative project, accepting the deep conviction that religion, and good education, is a communal enterprise.

Citation: Mercer, J. (2005). Teaching the Bible in Congregations: congregational studies pedagogy for contextual education. *Religious Education.* 100:3, 280-297.

6. Veverka (1997) suggests an approach very much akin to 21CL, and one in which she utilizes, rather than bemoans, the location of a congregational school within the church. She would like to see the goal of congregational school education as being a catalyst in changing the culture of the church, as well as the very nature of congregational life. Congregation education, because of its situation within a specific community, resists the separation between individual and community, or vision and practice, which is a feature of modern education. The goal is not to deepen the existent religious practice, but to transform it through collective work, by translating the theological into practice, or what she calls 'practical thinking'.

   Comment: While Verveka does not propose a specific instructional program, she does raise intriguing possibilities for how a congregational learning program can be re-thought as a powerful element toward changing synagogue life and culture, because at the root they are both embedded in a single community.

   Citation: Veverka, F. (1997). Congregational education: Shaping the culture of the local Church. *Religious Education.* 92:1, 77-90.

7. In thinking about more systemic change, as well as a holistic model, there is an interesting immersive model of education, which while it does not have a direct correlate to congregation education, may yet provide a useful model for how to think about the relationship between practice and learning. The *ordo* is a liturgical calendar of the Church, with each day assigned a different form of prayer, celebration, reflection, and the like. Fred Edie (2004) studied a two-week, immersive *ordo* experience in which teenagers with a poor religious background participated. He draws out the powerful impact on cognitive learning that happens when that learning emanates from, or occurs parallel to, religious

experience. This is the case, he says, "because lives do not get lived in general, but in particular times, places and in and through specific social locations, pedagogies that seek to shape lives must, out of necessity, attend to such contextual realities" (ibid., 267). This was particularly effective in his case because, for the students he studied, this was their first immersive religious experience, which gave the learning a meaningful context and vibrancy. What they try to do, by using *ordo* and critical reflection, is to base that reflection within an authentic practice, recognizing that these teenagers' poor religious experiential background demanded something that was both abstract and concrete. The result was more than just being able to do what was learned, but allowed for a very personal challenge to that learning because it was embedded within a life-practice, and therefore was a critique from within the system. This approach has led not only to increased involvement in worship at home, but also to an increased involvement in social services like HIV/AIDS assistance, and Christian peace movements, hospitality and food distribution, the last two they relate specifically to aspects of their learning experience.

Comment: A similar program to this may be particularly useful with students in the Jewish congregational school context who do not have a regular or normative experience of an immersive life of religious practice. It makes clear that 'learning about' something is much more relevant when one is also involved in doing that thing, which is the direction the LOMED design principles are oriented toward.

Citation: Edie, F. (2005). Considering the *Ordo* as pedagogical context for religious education with Christian high school youth. *Religious Education.* 100:3, 266-281

Appendix B: Bibliography

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Appendix C: Field Experts Consulted

1. Dr. Jonathan Woocher, Chief Ideas Officer, JESNA
2. Dr. Bonnie Botel-Sheppard, Executive Director, Penn Literacy Network
3. Dr. Isa Aron, Professor of Jewish Education, Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion
4. Dr. Michelle Lynn Sachs, Visiting Professor of Jewish Education, Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion
5. Dr. Jeff Kress, Assistant Professor and Chair of the Department of Jewish Education, Jewish Theological Seminary
6. Dr. Gail Dorph, Director, Mandel Teacher Educator Institute, Mandel Foundation

Appendix D: Congregations included in the Study

Congregation	Size	Affiliation	Location
Community Synagogue of Rye	500	Reform	Westchester County
North Shore Jewish Center	440	Conservative	Long Island
Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore	350	Reconstructionist	Long Island
Temple Beth Sholom	800	Conservative	Long Island
Temple Emanu-El of NYC	2400	Reform	New York City
Temple Israel Center	850	Conservative	Westchester County
Temple Shaaray Tefila of NYC	1525	Reform	New York City

Appendix E: Overview of Site Observations

Site Visits included:

- A one-hour briefing conducted via telephone with the educational director and consultant prior to the on-site observations
- Collection and review of relevant documents
- On-site observation of educational experiences
- A debrief meeting with the education director, consultants and teachers

The following educational experiences were observed:

Congregation	Educational Experiences
Community Synagogue of Rye	• Chavurah • Kesher Kef
North Shore Jewish Center	• Family Kehillah
Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore	• Family Shabbat School
Temple Israel Center	• Hebrew school parsha class • Havurat Torah high school program
Temple Emanu-El	• Tefilah • 4th grade class • 3rd and 4th grade staff meeting • Mitzvah Corps
Temple Beth Shalom	• Book buddies • Mitzvah Day • 4th grade class • Staff Learning
Temple Sharaay Tefila	• 5th Grade Religious School • 2nd Grade Hebrew class • Grade-level staff meeting • Masa