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**Temple De Hirsch Sinai Chosen for Select Group of North American Congregations
Investing in Full-time Early Education**

[12/12/2016, Seattle, WA] – Temple De Hirsch Sinai is one of 12 Reform congregations in North America selected to participate in the newly formed Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) Community of Practice dedicated to Full-time Early Education. This URJ Community of Practice (CoP) is a congregational networking group for Reform congregations that are seeking to discover new ways to integrate Jewish education and full-time childcare for congregations throughout North America.

By participating in this initiative, Temple De Hirsch Sinai will have the opportunity to meet with leaders from congregations with common interests to share ideas and experiment together with new strategies. Temple De Hirsch Sinai will also have access to the URJ's professional staff and expert consultants, some of the most renowned thought leaders in their fields.

"Early childhood education is more than a critical need for communities looking to foster growing membership," said Daniel Weiner, Senior Rabbi at Temple De Hirsch Sinai. "It is the most basic mandate of our tradition, which commands us to "...teach [these precepts] to our children." By entering into a partnership with other school communities, we benefit from communal wisdom as we plant seeds for Jewish commitment toward insuring our future."

"Across North America, people hunger for real connections. They want – they need – to be part of meaningful communities," said URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs. "The URJ Communities of Practice will give Reform congregations opportunities to work together, take risks, explore new ideas, innovate and have unprecedented access to top experts."

The 12 congregations in the URJ Full-time Early Education Community of Practice will work together formally for 24 months to push the boundaries of existing congregational efforts. Participating congregations will receive guidance from peers and advisors to experiment in their own communities, create congregational innovations, and garner skills that will benefit all areas of congregational life.

This Community of Practice will include an in-person meeting for congregational staff and lay leadership involved in the initiative at the URJ Biennial on December 6-10, 2017 in Boston, MA. There also will be monthly virtual gatherings and e-learning opportunities. Finally, results of these strategic experiments will be shared with congregations outside the Community of Practice and with the Reform Movement at large.

"URJ's Communities of Practice (CoP) inspire congregations to build the skills to experiment and innovate in areas of congregational life that are important to them. We connect congregational leaders to each other as well as to experts, valuable resources, and learning opportunities. The cohort model allows congregations to engage with a group to experiment, lowering the risk and sharing learning," said Amy Asin, URJ Vice President of Strengthening Congregations. "From the work of previous CoP cohorts, we know that the support available in belonging to a committed group focused on areas of interest encourages congregations to delve more deeply into their work and creates a longer term commitment to build the skills for experimentation. The participants engaged in this sacred work will grapple with challenges and celebrate successes across the network. We also look forward to sharing what they learn and do with all URJ congregations."

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