**Draft Simulation Narrative: Tradition Vs. Innovation**

**NARRATIVE**

**Excerpt from School Mission Statement “*The School will support students in strengthening their Jewish Identity by creating engaging experiences both in and outside of the classroom. Student will benefit from a seamless integration of 21st Century Skills and Technology in General and Judaic Studies”***

**Key players:**

* **Rabbi Pulpit – head of school**
* **Rabbi Dinosaur – Director of Jewish Studies**
* **Mrs. Bylaw – Board President**

**Timeline: over the course of 8 days in early December.**

**Weekly Meeting between Board President and Head of School**

**Board President:** I continue to hear frustration on the part of parents that Jewish studies lessons are boring; that some of the teachers are not using the devices from the one-to-one program; and that there are teachers openly expressing concerns to parents either that they are being pressured to implement new methods to make things work, or that the school is being too, “soft” on those teachers that don’t want to change. As part of your annual review, you have a goal to ensure that the Judaic Studies Department is meeting the expectations of the school about the mission. You are far from meeting that goal and I expect improvement in that area. Additionally, there is a rumor that a new school will be starting in the area that will be based on 21st century education models and will be cheaper. We need to make sure that we are the cutting edge of excellence in education not least Judaic studies, and I need you to prioritize this matter.

**Head of school**: I appreciate the direct feedback. Between us, I am having a lot of problems with the Director of Jewish studies who is not in favor of the changes and is stalling on requiring the department to implement them. I’m also concerned that we have a group of younger teachers who themselves are upset that we have not been making progress and I’m genuinely concerned if a new school does open and that is more in line with their ideology, they may jump ship.

**Board President**: You have the full support of myself and the board in exercising your leadership to accomplish these goals. Please let me know how I can help you.

Decision point I

Meeting with all teachers in the Judaic studies department including the Judaic studies director

**HOS:** I have called this meeting to make clear my expectations going forward. As you know, I am committed to bringing in the latest teaching techniques to all classes including Judaic studies. I believe that it will increase engagement of students and is in line with educational best practice. I want to be clear that those members of this department who are not taking this matter seriously, and improving their practice, are on notice that your positions will not be renewed next year unless you meet the expectations in this area.

**A traditional teacher**: I find your comments very offensive. It is not just a matter of what you like to call best practice. This question goes to the heart and soul of Jewish studies. Jewish studies has been taught the same way for hundreds of years and has been instrumental in the survival of the Jewish people. Our students deserve the opportunity to learn in the same ways that grandparents and great-grandparents did. Furthermore, if you ever took the trouble to come into my classroom you would notice that my students are much more engaged than those students who are supposedly having “best practice.”

**Innovative teacher**: I am finding all of this very demoralizing. The school has set the direction and the students in Judaic studies should be able to benefit from the same teaching methodologies that are having such a positive impact in other subjects. We can’t keep debating whether it is better to do it this way or the old way. We need to be a collaborative department and we need to move forward. I am asking you as Head of School to put an end to the circular discussion and move on.

**Director of Jewish Studies**: I think that everyone is raising some important points, it is not good for the school or the students for us to rush into any decisions on this matter as so much is at stake. I suggest we form a committee of representatives of the different opinions and that we ask this committee to come up with proposals in the next few months that will allow us to move forward while balancing everyone’s legitimate concerns.

Meeting between Head of School and Judaic Studies Director:

**HOS**: I continue to be frustrated that there are members of the Judaic studies department including yourself that are still using repetitive techniques that are uninspiring for the students, and that are out of touch with the direction that the school is going in. I do not buy in to your viewpoint that preserving tradition involves continuing outdated teaching methodologies. Even our celebrations have not changed for years. I understand the strength of opposition however I cannot allow that to stop us moving forward. I want to work with you to bring about this change in a timely fashion. You must decide if you’re willing to be a partner in that endeavor.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: You know my views, however I respect that you are the Head of School. I will try my best but no promises. I do need your help.

**HOS**: Please take the following week to design a plan that you think can be effective and that you can lead. Then let’s discuss it at our next meeting and see how we can work together to make it happen.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: okay.

Email from Director of Jewish Studies to Head of School

*Abe,*

*I am extremely frustrated with the fact that you held a meeting with the department without speaking directly with me first. It is nlot fair or professional. I would like to discuss this at our next meeting.*

*David*

**DECISION POINT II**

Follow-up meeting between head of school and Judaic studies director

**HOS:** Thank You for your e-mail – please share with me more details of your concern.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: I have been thinking a lot about what you said at our last meeting. First, I am very upset that you set up that meeting with the department without consulting with me, or at least bringing me in on your thinking, before discussing it with everyone else. Second, before I go ahead and design a plan, I want to be sure that we are on the same page about the need to have a committee representing different factions within the Judaic studies department to review and explore this issue for the next 6 to 8 months

**HOS**: I hear what you say but it appears from your response that you do not understand the depth of my frustration. You and I have spent the last year discussing this issue in the need to bring consistency across the department for the benefit of the students. Yes I did not consult you before the specific meeting however I have consulted you week in and week out for months and nothing has changed. I have decided to take matters into my own hands. Furthermore, the time to form a committee, has come and gone! What I need from you is an implementation plan and a commitment that by the end of 6 months both you and the members of department concerned will be utilizing our one-to-one program and skills-based learning initiative. The philosophical differences have all been aired and I have made a decision on the future direction of the school.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: I will certainly go back to my colleagues and think through what we can do.

**HOS**: I don’t think that you are hearing me – you have one week in which to produce an action plan that will show the expectation and process by which your department will introduce best practice techniques across all classrooms over the next 6 months. This is not a negotiation. If you don’t think that you can, or are not willing to undertake this task then we will revisit your continuing employment by the school beyond next year.

**Decision point III**

Email from six parents to head of school

*Dear Rabbi Pulpit,*

*We are writing on behalf of the many parents in our school whose children are currently or have had the privilege of learning with the Rabbi Dinosaur. It has come to our attention that pressure has been put upon this great Rabbi to change the way in which he teaches as well as to direct other members of the department to change. We want you to know that our students lives have been improved immeasurably by the Rabbi’s teachings and we will be appalled and will not stay silent if the Rabbi feels that he needs to leave because of this issue. While we respect your role as Head Of School,, you are not the sole authority on what makes good teaching. We are impressed and excited about the changes that are taking place in general studies and have seen an improvement in the excitement and engagement of our children. We commend you for that. However, Judaic studies is different. Teachers can and should be permitted to teach in whichever way they choose. Please note that even though There are only 6 signatures, we represent significantly more parents who either too frightened, or for other reasons,* ***declined*** *to sign this letter.*

*Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter and we look forward to hearing from you about this matter being resolved as per the content of our email*.

**Decision point III**

Brief conversation between Head Of School and Direct of Jewish studies in Judaic studies director’s office.

**HOS**: I am somewhat frustrated to have just received an email from a group of parents who seem to be aware of the confidential conversation that you and I had yesterday.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: to start with, you never said it was confidential and furthermore, I hope that you know me better than to have shared these kinds of discussions with parents.

**HOS**: well I certainly didn’t share with anybody so it didn’t come from me.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: I didn’t speak with any parents however I did share the content of our meeting with a few of my colleagues and I cannot be sure about whether or not they did.

**HOS**: how is that plan coming along?

**Direct of Jewish studies**: we will discuss it next week.

**DECISION POINT IV**

Phone call between Head Of School and Board president **(**HOS updates Board President regarding Judaic studies**)**

**HOS**: having updated you on the situation, what do you think is the best way forward?

**Board President**: the real question is what do YOU think is the best way forward?

**HOS**: I think that at this point I need to force the issue one way or another. We can’t afford to have a significant number of students continuing to be disengaged in Jewish life and learning. In my view, that is what is actually happening despite the comments of a small group of parents and our Direct of Jewish studies. Either he has to step up to the plate or leave.

**Board President**: what will be the community push back if he leaves under difficult circumstances?

**HOS**: there will be a small but vocal group that will be very critical of the school and the way it is treating people that have invested many years of their lives with our students, and doubtlessly accomplished some successes. This will be fueled by the Direct of Jewish studies and some of the teachers, and the fact that we won’t be able to comment on the circumstances will obviously play against us. I don’t think there’s an easy or noncontroversial way of accomplishing the outcome however I will work with you and the school lawyer to see if we can come up with a plan to minimize any negativity. There will also be a significant number of faculty, parents and community who feel that this action is long overdue and that the school needs to keep moving forward and continue to prioritize quality innovation in all areas. Based on my prior experience, I imagine that this group will be much less vocal than the others.

**Board President**: as I have said on frequent occasions, the expectation of this board is that the school is using every technique available to maximize quality learning across the board. It is your responsibility to make that happen and if this is the appropriate way to proceed, then you have my full support.

**DECISION POINT V**

Weekly meeting between Head Of School and Direct of Jewish studies

**HOS**: I have not received a copy of the plan that we discussed for the consistent 21st-century curriculum across the department.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: I have decided not to put together a plan as I do not think it is in the best interests of the students for us to force teachers to either change the way they have always taught, or leave. Teaching Judaic studies is about teaching Judaism and cannot be treated in the same way as other subjects.

**HOS**: we can’t keep having the same conversation. As I have told you on numerous occasions, it is my view that this has nothing to do with other subjects. It has to do with engaging our students in their Judaism and recognizing that the use of innovative, student-centered techniques is going to dramatically improve learning and it can’t be optional as to whether or not a teacher buys in and delivers that type of education.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: it looks like we will have to agree to disagree.

**Head Of School**: this is not optional. I was very clear that a failure to produce a plan, would affect your future employment. I am a passionate believer in tradition and maintaining the learning, performance of mitzvot, and other core aspects of Jewish practice. However, the school that I lead will accomplish that best by using the most up-to-date techniques and technology. Based on your unwillingness to participate in this progress, it is not realistic for you to continue as Direct of Jewish studies. Therefore, we will not be offering your contract for next year. It would be better for all parties for you to resign and we can then celebrate your many years of commitment to the school and its students. I have instructed our attorneys to work with you or your attorney to draw up a mutually beneficial agreement.

**Direct of Jewish studies**: this is not how I expect to be treated after all of my years of service, I am not going to leave quietly. I believe that the direction in which you are taking the school is wrong. I understand that you have the right to not issue a new contract for next year. However, I will fight you in the private and public domain to give voice to the viewpoint that you are breaking with years of tradition in Judaism to the detriment of the students, and I believe that I will prevail.

*Direct of Jewish studies storms out of the room*

**DECISION POINT VI**

Meeting with the executive board at the home of the Board President – Head Of School fills everyone in on the day’s events.

**Board President**: we need to proceed as if the Direct of Jewish studies is going to make as public a storm as possible. Rabbi Pulpit – please prepare some talking points with particular emphasis on why it is so necessary to be using best practice 21st-century skills in the Jewish studies classroom. Mr. Lawyer – please be in touch with the Direct of Jewish studies to see if you can work with him towards the more mutually beneficial outcome and report back.

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Decision point 1:

1. HOS has more immediate priorities and responds to the Board President that he will postpone this process for a year.
2. HOS is so fed up with the intransigence of the department and particularly Rabbi Pulpit, that he calls a meeting with all of them in order to push this issue.
3. HOS has a meeting with the Director of Jewish Studies and tells him that it needs to be sorted out.
4. HOS tells the Director of Jewish Studies that his contract is not going to be renewed and starts a search for a new one.

Decision point II:

1. HOS responds to e-mail, “*David, I am the one that should be frustrated. I’ve been trying to get you to change for the last two years with no success. Now it has reached a point where my Board President is demanding action. I don’t have time to take your feelings into account anymore*.”
2. HOS responds to e-mail, “*David, I hear your point – maybe I should’ve spoken with you first however frustrated I was – let’s set up a time to meet as soon as possible*.”
3. HOS ignores e-mail and decides to deal with it in a few days time at the next meeting.
4. HOS responds to e-mail, “*my apologies – it won’t happen again. Let’s take this change process more slowly and we can think it through at our meeting next week*.”

Decision point III

1. write an e-mail to the parents thanking them for their input, and assuring them that there are no immediate plans for the Rabbi to leave.
2. Write an e-mail to the parents thanking them for their input, asking them how they found out about confidential information, and explaining that the decision regarding employees is confidential and at the sole discretion of the Head of School.
3. Write a short e-mail to the parents acknowledging receipt with no further details, to allow for some internal follow-up.
4. Ignore the e-mail.

Decision point IV

1. make a phone call to the Board President regarding the situation and discuss the way forward.
2. Write a formal letter to the Director of Jewish Studies reminding him about the importance of confidentiality and warning him that any further violations of confidentiality will result in his termination.
3. Call a meeting with the department to stress the importance of not talking with any parents about school related matters.
4. Let it go as it is just one more issue to have to deal with.

Decision point V

1. Set up a meeting with the Director of Jewish Studies to give him an ultimatum regarding the situation. Either he has to follow these directions about bringing the department on board with new technology, or resign, or be terminated.
2. Set up a meeting with the Director of Jewish Studies to tell them that even though you agree with is concerns, the president of the board is pressurizing you to fire him. Tell the Director of Jewish Studies that for his own sake, he needs to be more proactive in making this happen.
3. Write an e-mail to the Director of Jewish Studies informing him that he will not be offered a contract for next year and making it clear that this information cannot be shared with parents or colleagues. If he does share it, then he will be terminated immediately.

Decision point VI

1. Arrange a follow-up meeting with the Director of Jewish Studies to explain that the meeting got a little bit out of control. Obviously, you have no intention of ending his employment after all these years, and you are open to working together to resolve your differences of opinion.
2. Call an emergency meeting of the executive committee of the board to discuss these events and determine a plan of action.
3. Don’t do anything immediately, and hope that the situation will calm down.