



JOURNAL OF
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LEADERSHIP

TECHNOLOGY AND JEWISH EDUCATION: WHAT PRINCIPALS NEED TO KNOW

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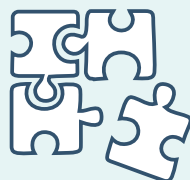
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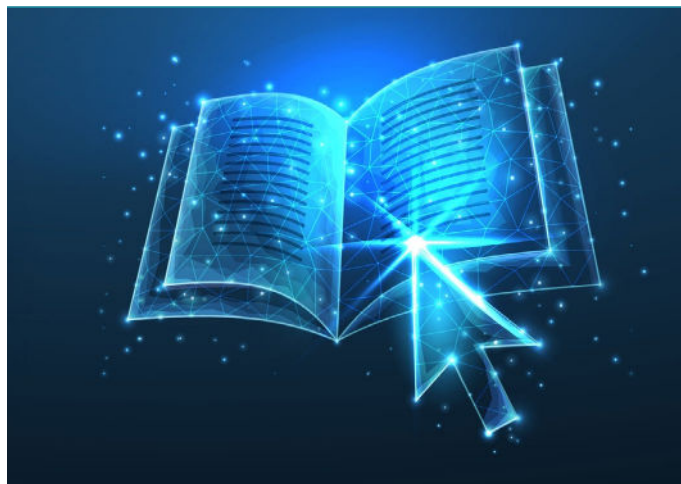


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CoJDS at a glance

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Used in **250**
schools

L'havin U'Lehaskil

L'havin U'Lehaskil is a *Limudei Kodesh* curriculum in which students learn how to translate *chumash* independently. With detailed teacher editions, teacher training and support, and online assessments, the *L'havin* program ensures teacher and student success. In use in approximately **225 schools**, *L'havin U'Lehaskil* is currently reaching over 7,000 students worldwide.

1,000+ classrooms
thousands of students

Small Community Support:

CoJDS increases enrollment in schools by providing low-cost marketing tools and bridge scholarships. The scholarship program has generated over \$1,500,000 in tuition revenue in six years for 24 schools by enrolling and keeping Jewish children in schools who would otherwise be in public schools.

Staffing

- Head of school placement services match talented educators with schools and provide follow-up to ensure smooth transition.
- Periodic email blasts advertising current opportunities are sent to over 5,000 recipients.
- Partnership with Apploi hiring platform, a cutting edge corporation, to provide schools with qualified applicants. Over 70 schools use the CoJDS-Apploi platform.

Our Mission: Empower, Develop and Improve Jewish Day Schools Across North America!

50 graduates

CoJDS created the **Lilmod U'Ililamed** **ללמוד וללמד** program to recruit, train and place teachers in careers in Jewish education. The program includes hands-on mentoring to transition young aspiring *mechanchim* to the *chinuch* field. This program is sponsored by a partnership with Cross River.

"The lack of teachers for the 'out-of-town' Jewish day schools is a real problem [Lilmod U'Ililamed is] ... a golden opportunity to be trained in pedagogy and possibly to consider a career in [chinuch]."

HaRav Shalom Kamenetsky,
Rosh Yeshiva, Talmudical Yeshiva of
Philadelphia

Professional Development

- CoJDS provides PD opportunities to educators across North America via its national and regional conferences.
- CoJDS partners with nationally renowned corporation **Accutrain** to provide Jewish day schools with highly qualified presenters in the field of education.
- CoJDS maintains a **Speakers Bureau** with over 30 presenters to provide high quality speakers for schools' designated professional development.
- Teachers and administrators collaborate via our **Journal of Jewish Day School Leadership** published several times a year.

115 schools

CoJDS administers the **Judaic Studies Achievement Test (JSAT)** to help school leaders improve educational outcomes in their schools by providing objective data about student achievement. Over **11,000 students** have taken a JSAT exam since its inception.

over **16,000**
students
have taken a JSAT exam

CoJDS has partnered with the office of Chief Rabbi of South Africa, Rabbi Warren Goldstein, to implement CoJDS programs in all 11 Jewish day schools of South Africa. All students in the network will administer the JSAT exam to students, and Judaic teachers will be trained in the use of the *L'havin U'Lehaskil* curriculum.

CoJDS launched **JEDIT** to support Jewish day schools by providing consultations, targeted professional development, and recommendations based on each school's unique culture, current infrastructure, and ability and desire to expand their **informational and educational technologies**.

Technology and Jewish Education: What Principals Need to Know

Technology is by its definition disruptive, offering at the same time easier or better ways of doing things as well as new challenges for which there are no easy answers. All schools and school systems grapple with technology's potential and pitfalls as they try to not be left behind while minding their budgets and keeping their students safe. In Jewish day schools these challenges are present to a greater degree, and perhaps the benefits, such as less reliance on hard-to-find specialized faculty or more profound opportunities for students to connect to their learning, are greater as well.

Over the last few years, the Consortium has recognized the broader role technology is playing in our schools and has responded by connecting schools with digital citizenship programs, providing online curricula and assessments, and offering teacher-level and school-level professional development in this area. Recent CoJDS conferences have included technology sessions as part of the JEDIT initiative. This edition of the Journal of Jewish Day School Leadership seeks to continue this work by looking at big-picture issues related to technology in schools, classroom-level technology use, and how technology affects the school leader.

Dr. Eli Shapiro makes the case for schools to develop a comprehensive technology strategy. **Mrs. Miriam Gettinger** addresses the challenge of using technology wisely when decisions and implementation are guided by leaders who are “digital immigrants”. **Rabbi Aaron Kutnowski** and **Dr. Leanne Morris** share a conversation between a school leader and a school parent about limits on technology in school.

Mrs. Lakie Blech describes the challenges and solutions that come with innovation and the adoption of technology.

Mr. Morris Kishk identifies three specific areas for de-

velopment when it comes to technology in schools. **Rabbi Avichai Pepper** makes the case for why we need technology in schools and how it can reinvent education. And **Mrs. Etti Siegel** describes blended learning and offers best practices and examples.

During the time we were preparing this edition, ChatGPT came onto the scene, making accessible to the public, as well as educators, the growing capability of artificial intelligence (AI). **Rabbi Baruch Noy** writes on the challenges this

presents to educators as well as the tools it provides to them. **Mrs. Mushkie Lipsker** helps readers navigate the use of artificial intelligence in a way that enhances meaningful education. And **Rabbi Dov Chastain** shows us how many of us already use AI in everyday tasks to save time and produce work that is high quality.

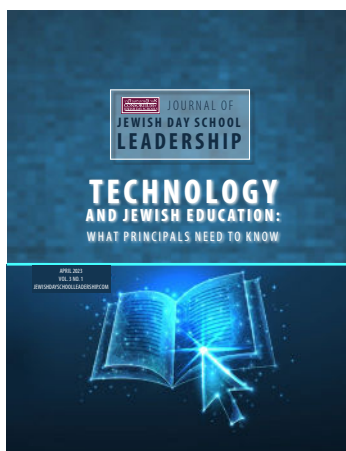
This edition also addresses some applications of technology outside the education department. **Mr. Avrohom Eliezer Friedman** makes a strong case for using automation in school management tasks. **Michelle**

and **Bob Snyder** suggest that schools use podcasting to share their vision and tell their story.

Rav Aharon Lopiansky delivered a message to mechanchim earlier this year as part of the CoJDS *Lilmod U'Lilamed* program, describing a teacher's fundamental role in imparting *Torah* values and in the ongoing development of *Klal Yisrael*. We are pleased to share it in written form with our readers.

As always, we hope you find this edition to be informative, thought-provoking, and enjoyable to read. Feedback is always welcome – email sgewirtz@cojds.org.

Rabbi Shimshon Gewirtz, *Editor-in-Chief*



The Mindset of a Mechanech



Those who have chosen the profession of *chinuch* understand it is important, but it can be challenging in many ways, so it's crucial that they have the correct mindset regarding what they're doing. Without a doubt, *mechanchim* are doing *chesed*. They're teaching *Torah* and helping kids, but if they understand the big picture better, it can afford strength to withstand the taxing situations. Let's explore this big picture by looking at three places teaching *Torah* is mentioned, to understand what *chinuch* really is.

Hashem says about Avraham, "כי ידעתינו לענן אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחרינו ושמרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט לענן הביא ה' על אברהם את אשר דבר עליו" (בראשית י"ח י"ט)

"I have known him (ידעתינו רש"י is an expression of love) that he instructs his children and his household who come after him to keep the way of Hashem... so that Hashem could bring upon Avraham all that he said." רש"י points out that Hashem didn't promise the *bracha* to the *bais Avraham* – his descendants – but to Avraham himself. Based on the *Me-drash Raba*, he says that we see from here that "כל המעמיד בן צדיק כאילו אינו מן". In other words, Hashem is saying that He chose to partner with Avraham because he, Avraham, could get *schar*! And what is the *medrash* that Rashi brings - כל המעמיד בן צדיק -

"כאילו אינו מן?" Was Avraham teaching his descendants for his own good? And it's this merit that the choice of Avraham stands on! This needs further explanation.

If we look at the *mitzvah* of teaching our children *Torah*, the *pasuk* is וישנעם לבניך. The *pasuk* then continues, ודברת בם בשבת בביתך ובלכתך בדרך.... The order of this *pasuk* needs explanation. One would expect the *mitzvah* of וישנעם לבניך to be after the personal obligation of ודברת בם-לימוד וזוהר. First should come the *mitzvos* that relate to an individual's *Torah* study and then the *mitzva* to teach the next generation. Yet we have וישנעם לבניך first and afterward ודברת בם. Why is it this way? Why is teaching our children the first *chiyuv* of *Torah* study?

Regarding the *mitzvah* of *Hakhel*, (as well as at the *כריזות ברית* in the beginning of *Parshas Nitzavim*), Chazal ask: אם אנשים באים ללמד נשים באות לשמע טף למה באין?

The men come to learn, the women to listen, but the children – why do they need to come? The *Gemara* (*chagiga daf gimmel*) answers, כדי לזון שחר, that the children are brought along to earn *schar* for those who bring them. It seems that the children really have no innate reason to be there. How do we understand the *schar* their parents earn for bringing them? If the children had a *mitzva* or a reason to be there then whoever brought them should be rewarded

The two big parts of emunah are the knowledge that Hashem is intimately involved in the world and our lives, and that He cares about each one of us and our growth, our education.

for helping achieve this *mitzva*. But if they have no reason to be there, why would bringing them along generate *schar*?

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF KLAL YISRAEL

To explain this and answer these questions, we need to develop a deeper understanding of the idea of *klal Yisrael* and how *Hashem* relates to this *klal*. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* entered into a *bris* with a *klal*. There is no single person who can fulfill the role *Hashem* had in mind. The *avos* were the *shorashim*, the basis of the accomplishment of the mission, but they were not enough to fulfill the totality of what was intended by the *bris*. This would require all the *shivtei Yisrael*, all of *klal Yisrael*. Each *shevet* and individual within that *shevet* would play a role, and if any individual or segment were missing, the *klal* is incomplete.

We understand today that in addition to the three dimensions of space, there is an additional dimension of time. In a similar way, each generation of *klal Yisrael* is an integral part of the whole of the *klal*. Just like we say that *shevet Zevulun* engaged in trade, *Yisachar* learned, and *Yehuda* led, each contributing to the *klal* in their own critical way, each generation has that same sense of being part of a whole. The *dor hamidbar* had a role, the *dor of kibush ha'aretz* had a role, the *dor of Dovid HaMelech* had a role, and the *dor of churban HaBayis* had a role. Every generation has its challenges, its accomplishments, and whatever character and historical events define it. There's a reason why the *Rishonim* had a certain *cheilek* in *Torah*, while *Acharonim* had another *cheilek*. Each and every *dor* contributes a *cheilek* to *klal Yisrael*, just like each member of *klal Yisrael* at any given time contributes a part of the whole. This can help us understand what is meant by, "פָּתַח בְּדִרְוֹ כְּשֶׁמֶלֶךְ בְּדִרְוֹ". *Shmuel* contributed, and *Yiftach*, though he was no

Shmuel, likewise contributed a crucial part during his generation.

Viewed this way, if there is ever a breakdown of *hemshech* in *klal Yisrael*, if any generation misses an opportunity, that's a piece that is forever missing from the greater *klal*. This changes the way we think about ourselves as individuals. A Jew needs to think about himself in terms of how he is achieving his own *shleimus*, and beyond himself how he affects others, in terms of *בְּלִי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרִיבִים זֶה לָזֶה*, but even beyond that, how he is responsible to see to it that there is a *hemshech*, that there is a legacy that continues from him, to contribute his part to the *shleimus* of *klal Yisrael*.

YIDDISHE NACHAS – JEWISH PARENTHOOD

It's hard to translate the *Yiddish* word *nachas*, which seems to be a uniquely Jewish idea. A non-Jew who has children obviously wishes for his children to be successful, and there is disappointment if they're not, but there is no concept that his children should be continuing a chain. Some people maybe be more opinionated or have a strong identity and really care that their children align with certain beliefs or causes, but the idea that their child is continuing or bringing out a fuller realization of themselves doesn't exist. For Jews, we start with this idea, that our children are our continuity. An individual understands that his *avodah* is to accomplish something personally, and that that accomplishment will also have a *hemshech*, because that is what it's about – that's the understanding of *klal Yisrael*. This is the uniquely Jewish idea of *nachas*.

When *Hashem* was choosing someone to start this nation, the choice obviously needed to be a *tzaddik* and a *shaleim*, and He also needed to be someone who would make sure that his children would do the same, but it's more than that. His choice needed to be someone who would make sure that his children

...he is responsible to see to it that there is a hemshech, that there is a legacy that continues from him, to contribute his part to the shleimus of klal Yisrael.

would be able to continue the process that their father began. *Hashem* said to *Avraham*, יְיָ יִדְעֵנּוּ לָמַעַן, אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו ושמו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט. It was important that *Avraham* teach the next generation, but we know that he taught many people besides for his children, so it's not just about teaching. למען הביא ה' על אברהם את אשר דבר עליו signals that creating a *hemshech* was part of the plan *Hashem* had for *Avraham*. He wanted *Avraham* to bring a certain light into the world, and it couldn't be accomplished just by *Avraham*, but by all the collective generations of his descendants. *Avraham Avinu* threaded a needle with the understanding that the job of the next generation was going to be to pull that thread a bit more, and their children a bit more, for *dorei doros*. למען הביא ה' על אברהם את אשר דבר עליו wasn't just a fulfillment of a promise, but it was itself the plan, that the generations that come out would be the entity that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* had in mind.

Let's go back to the *chazal* by *Hakhel* and *Parshas Nitzavim*. When all of *klal Yisrael* gathered for *Hakhel*, this includes the *taf* and the *mevi'eihem*. Not that the children are *per se* getting anything from the experience, but because it's critical for the parents to bring them, making these parents into ones who are threading the needle and pulling *klal Yisrael* ahead. If one generation sees the next as something ancillary, just something that comes after, that's not a *hemshech*. The next generation has to be there because if their parents don't bring them, they're missing the understanding of *Hakhel*, of gathering all of the *klal*. And when they do bring them, what *schar* they get for doing so!

We find a similar thing by *ma'amad har sinai*, that all the *neshamos* of the future generations had to be present. This is because the *Torah* was given to *klal Yisrael*— *klal Yisrael* was them and all the future generations that would follow. One of the most moving

moments of the year is *kol ha'ne'arim*, when we take a huge *tallis* and bring all the children under it. It's so meaningful because we're making a statement that we are who we are, plus a future that follows.

This idea is born out further if we look more closely at the *Gemara* we've been speaking about (*chagiga dafgimmel*):

זנו רבנן מעשה ברבי יוחנן בן ברוקה ורבי אלעזר (בן) חסמא שהלכו להקביל פני רבי יחושע בפקיעין. אמר להם: מה חידוש היה בבית המדרש היום? אמרו לו: תלמידך את ומימך את שוחן. אמר להם: אף על פי כן, אי אפשר לבית המדרש בלא חידוש.

They went to visit *Rabi Yehoshua*. *Rabi Yehoshua* asked them what new *Torah* idea was said in the *bais medrash* that day. They responded that they were his students and they hoped to hear *divrei Torah* from him and not say *divrei Torah* in front of him (out of respect.) He said, "Still, there must have been a new *Torah* idea in the *bais medrash* today," and asked them to tell him.

שבת של מי הייתה? שבת של רבי אלעזר בן עזריה הייתה. ובמה הייתה הגדה היום? אמרו לו: בפרשת הקהל. ומה דרש בה?

He asked them, "Whose week was it to give the *Torah* presentation?" They told him that it was *Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah's* week. He asked, "What did he speak about?" They responded that the topic was the *mitzvah* of *Hakhel*, and that *Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah* taught the following *drasha*:

"הקהל את העם האנשים הנשים והטף: אם האנשים באים ללמד הנשים באות לשמוע, טף למה באין? כדי לזון שכל למביאיהן"

The *pasuk* says that all the men, women, and children should gather at *Hakhel*. He said, "The men come to learn, and the women come to hear, but why should the children come?" And he answered that the children are brought to give reward to those who brought them.

The *Gemara* continues with the rest of the story and

Avraham Avinu threaded a needle with the understanding that the job of the next generation was going to be to pull that thread a bit more, and their children a bit more, for dorei doros.

at the end it says, *בלישון הזה אמר להם: אין דור יצאנו שרבי*
אלעזר בן עזריה שריו בתוכו.

When they were done telling him what *Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah* had said, *Rabi Yehoshua* declared, “A generation with *Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah* living in it cannot be considered orphaned;” such a generation has a father.

It’s notable that *Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah* was the one who made this *drasha*. When *Raban Gamliel* headed the *yeshiva* they allowed in only the elite, which makes sense because such *talmidim* were cut out to be the future leaders. *Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah* opened the *yeshiva* up to everyone when he took over. Why? What was this policy disagreement with *Raban Gamliel* about? It wasn’t because he thought that the weaker *talmidim* would be able to be leaders and *rabanim*. *Rabi Elazar ben Azaryah*’s insight was this idea of *למביאיהן שרבי ליתן שרבי*. He opened the *yeshiva* even to those who perhaps couldn’t gain from it personally because he was focused on the crucial idea of building all of *klal Yisrael*. *Rabi Yehoshua*, understanding this goal, and having heard his application to the situation of *Hakhel* was moved to declare that a generation whose leader has this attitude, *אין דור יצאנו שרבי אלעזר בן עזריה שריו בתוכו.*

This also explains why *ושענתם לבניך* comes before *ודברת בם*. The most significant obligation a person has regarding his *Torah* is to teach it to his children and to ensure there will be a *hemshech*. *בם* is a broadening of *Torah* – speak about it at all these different times – but continuing the chain to the next generation comes before broadening your own *limud haTorah* because if the *hemshech* is cut in any place, it’s incomplete. Only once the *Torah* is complete, only then can you work on making it wider.

THE MINDSET OF A MECHANECH

This helps clarify for us the mindset of a *mechanech*. As we stated at the beginning, a basic level of

understanding *chinuch* is that when a *rebbe* teaches his students he is helping them, so it’s *chesed*. It’s like whenever someone needs help with something, and you help them. Additionally, *talmud Torah* is more significant than a regular *chesed* because *talmud Torah kneged kulam*, and teaching a student *Torah* is the highest form of *talmud Torah* (like we discussed last time we addressed this topic.) But even this falls short of capturing what a *mechanech* is doing, when viewed through the lens of the building the totality of *klal Yisrael*.

Klal Yisrael is not just the sum total of all of the people in *klal Yisrael*; it’s the sum total of the people and the *hemshech*, layer after layer, and wherever there is something missing, it’s a *chisaron b’etzem*. One of the most profound stories in all of *Tanach* is *pilegish b’giv’a*. During that time, there was a chance that an entire *shevet* would be cut off from *klal Yisrael*. It’s unthinkable! Just like having 11 *shvatim* is not *klal Yisrael*, having 19 out of 20 generations fulfilled but one generation missing something is not *klal Yisrael*. And the fact that a later generation may recover and seem to make up for lost time never makes up for the unique role that that generation needed to play to complete the *klal*.

Regarding a *mechanech*, *chazal* say *בן חבירו* “כל המלמד בן חבירו חזרה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו יולדו” But what does it mean to be a father? The *Gemara* says in *Bava Kama*, “אבות – מכלל דאיכה תולדות.” You can’t have an *av* without the children. For someone who is just mating, and a child comes along, it is just a *mikreh* – something that happened, but it doesn’t define him. *Avraham Avinu* is called a “father” because he had the mentality that he was there to produce children who would continue to build *klal Yisrael*. *Avraham* was an *av* – he recognized that his job was to bring out *Torah* in a way that it will unfold in its totality, *dor after dor*. A *mechanech*, likewise, is creating

And the fact that a later generation may recover and seem to make up for lost time never makes up for the unique role that that generation needed to play to complete the klal.

the opportunity for *Torah* to continue to unfold, *dor* after *dor*.

The idea of having children isn't just that a large population keeps us strong and secure. Having children means that we're bringing out the *shleimus* of *klal Yisrael*. All the *neshamos* that exist are there in us and bringing them into the world is unfolding *klal Yisrael*. But even once they're in the world, they need to

למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו ושפרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט. צדקה. That's why we say that חזירו בן חזירו "כל המלמד בן חזירו" - if you teach someone else's children *Torah* it's like you gave birth to them. You are the one who allows that part of the *klal* to be unfolded. It's the father-ness of *Avraham*.

This is what to think about when you go into *chinuch*. It's extremely challenging in so many ways, and unless we think about it in the right way, it's hard to overcome these challenges. *Chasadim* are nice, but *chesed* has a limitation. *Ad kan*. Teaching *Torah* also has a limit – we would close the *Gemara* to earn a living if we had to. The one thing that has no limit, in a certain sense, is fatherhood. Every time you are מלמד חזירו בן חזירו you are pulling the thread a little farther. You're engaged in the core *avodah* of *klal Yisrael*, the *avodah* of *Avraham Avinu*.

THE MESSAGE OF SCHAR MEVI'EIHEM

This message goes even beyond the *Torah* you actually teach. When you're teaching and the students see that the continuity of *klal Yisrael* is what you stand for and who you are, this is an extraordinary message that they pick up. Sometimes you're not successful at teaching *Torah* in a specific situation – let's say there is a child whose ability to learn is limited – but the

mere fact that the child sees his *rebbe* bringing him into the *klal* plants in his mind that it is his life's mission to be *mamshich* with his own children.

There was a *ger tzedek* in my community named Dr. Price and when he passed away, his son told a story that was one of the most striking things I ever heard. The son is now a principal of a *yeshiva* in New Jersey but as a young boy he wasn't doing so well in his learning. He did, however, love playing basketball, and he approached his father with a proposal. "Why don't I leave *yeshiva* and go to public school? Then I can play more basketball and you can save all that money you pay for tuition!" His father turned to him and said, "Son – I would work for 24 hours a day so that my children will get a *Yiddishe chinuch*." Perhaps at the time the son didn't find success in learning, but the message made an impact and now he is a wonderful *marbitz Torah* himself. This is the *schar mevi'eihem*, getting passed along.

Those engaged in the *avodas hakodesh* of *chinuch* are the *avos* of the *dor* and of all the *doros*. You are the ones who not only mold the next generation, but who pass along the understanding that this is what *klal Yisrael* is all about. If this is your approach, you're part of the team of יתום אין הדור יתום. Having this attitude means the *dor* has fathers. There is no greater title for a person, no greater crown to wear than to be the *ba'alei bris* of *Avraham Avinu*, one of the fathers continuing the work of *Avraham*. Everyone who is *marbitz Torah* should merit למען הביא ה' על אברהם את אשר דבר עליו because Hashem can declare about you, למען אשר יצוה, את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו ושפרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט.

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky is the Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington. He is the author of numerous scholarly works in Hebrew and English. Rabbi Lopiansky has a unique teaching ability that lures one into the depths of Chazal, pulling out profound messages as well as inspirational and practical lesson for life. His depth of understanding and broad application of the sugyos provides new clarity and insight into the many facets of Torah.

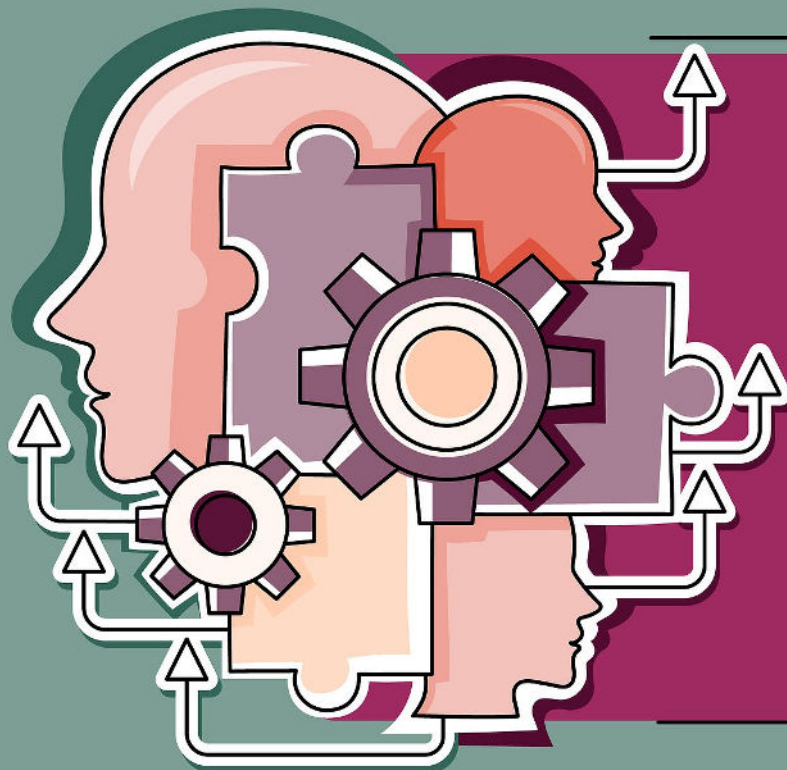


Feedback? Email us at sgewirtz@cojds.org



Comprehensive Technology Strategy

Why Every School Needs One
and How to Develop It



Dr. Eli Shapiro

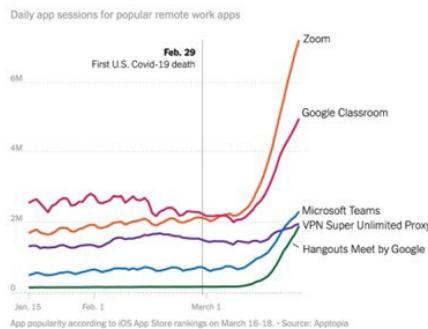
Technology is ubiquitous and inescapable. It presents tremendous educational and existential opportunities as well as formidable challenges in harnessing its maximum benefit and minimizing its inherent negative impact on functioning. Since 2014, I have had the opportunity to create and manage The Digital Citizenship Project, along with Temima Feldman. Over the past nine years we have worked with nearly 300 school communities and organizations to fulfill our mission of teaching digital responsibility in the age of technology through parent programs, faculty professional development, curriculum training and student workshops.

The Digital Citizenship Project approach has always been one that was guided by research. (Some of our early descriptive statistics can be found here: <https://www.thedigitalcitizenship.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Data-Report-DCP.pdf>). In addition to using published data to inform our focus on how technology impacts the social, psychological, and behavioral functioning of individuals and families, we used school specific data to understand which methods of intervention would be most effective. Consistently, an educational strategy served as the strongest contributing factor to healthier technology use, both for parents and students. The key terms that guided this process were “thoughtful”, “deliberative”, “balanced”; and then COVID happened.

I, like many of you, could not find my copy of “The 10 things that effective educators do during a global pandemic that features quarantine, isolation, chaos, political upheaval, and the need to make decisions that no matter what you do is guaranteed to outrage half your parent body, board

of directors, community, and maybe even family.” I think I forgot it on a flight in February of 2020. During this time, we were in crisis mode. As I have said on numerous occasions, COVID-19 was not ideal, and the effectiveness of our response will be studied for decades. But one thing is certain: as a society we went from a semi-measured trickle approach to technology to a tsunami of device ownership, screen engagement, and increased dependence for many of our personal and professional needs. As I said, it was not ideal.

Early COVID data saw a 47% increase in broadband use according to OpenVault’s Broadband insight report of the first quarter of 2020. And while online gaming saw a 75% increase, it was educational app downloads between March 2-16, 2020 that saw a whopping 1,087% increase according to statista.com.



With mandatory school closures and on-again, off-again quarantine guidelines, distance learning became the norm for most Jewish day Schools and *yeshivot*, resulting in similar increases in the use of internet-based technologies for educational purposes. Schools that had invested in devices and educational platforms prior to COVID had an easier time transitioning to a digital platform. Rabbi Eliezer Lehrer, Headmaster at Ora Academy in Rochester, felt uniquely prepared for distance learning, having

When learning is relevant and meaningful, the brain makes connections and constructs knowledge.

already engaged the services of Consortium of Jewish Day Schools and Rabbi Baruch Noy. Rabbi Noy walked the Ora Academy team through a strategic process that included evaluation of the school community needs, assistance in identifying and purchasing the appropriate technology hardware and software, as well as training for the faculty in the use of the technology as a teaching tool. According to Lehrer, “when it was time to shut down during COVID we were able to shift online without any significant challenges”.

However, many schools that may have been apprehensive about the use of Internet-based technology as part of their educational strategy suddenly found themselves in crisis mode and seeking solutions. kPhone, a leader in smart-phone solutions for school communities, shifted their focus from personal devices to educational devices, and between March 2020 and May 2020 provided more than 15,000 Zoom-capable tablets and 5,000 Chromebooks to over 80 schools across North America. While kPhone provided the devices for access to distance learning, within days of the first schools in the Northeast closing, Consortium of Jewish Day Schools hosted a series of webinars focusing on the skills of teaching remotely, as well as how to manage the environment to maximize the learning taking place. These webinars were followed by nearly 30 school-based consultations conducted by Rabbi Noy.

Content was quickly being developed and within days of schools going virtual CoJDS was already engaged in the process of setting up digital access for all the *L'havin U'le-haskil* workbooks, which has resulted in the current *L'havin Connect* platform. Content providers, including *Torah Umesorah's Chinuch.org* platform, saw a massive increase in demand and *morahchaya.com*, a resource for early childhood educational videos, had more than 100,000 video views in only a few months.

Whether COVID opened a Pandora's box of technology dependence or it simply fast tracked the inevitable, federal and state governments are invested in technology as a key component in education and Jewish day schools are benefiting from the availability of those funds. As an example, kPhone has received requests for more than 24,000 devices through the Federal Emergency Connectivity fund (ECF) announced in September 2022, and millions of dollars are being utilized by Jewish day schools for educational technology services through Emergency Assistance for Non-Public School (EANS).

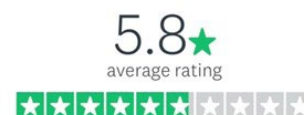
While the marketplace met the demand during those challenging days, and while excessive technology use during COVID was in many ways necessary, for many, technology use and screen engagement was excessive and unregulated. The increased focus on technology use both education-

ally and recreationally has resulted in a renewed interest by school leaders and parents in addressing the question whether we can once again be “thoughtful”, “deliberative” and balanced in a post COVID world.

With the sudden increases in school and home-based technology use and in reflecting how schools could best approach “digital responsibility in the age of technology”, we recognized that a comprehensive technology strategy (CTS) that extended beyond the scope of education would be necessary. Our first step was to survey schools on their overall satisfaction with their technology strategy. In February 2022, 84 Jewish day schools and yeshivot from across North America responded to our online survey and rated, on a scale of 1–10, their level of satisfaction with their technology strategy as a 5.8.

On a scale of 1 - 10, how satisfied are you with the success of your school's current technology strategy?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 3

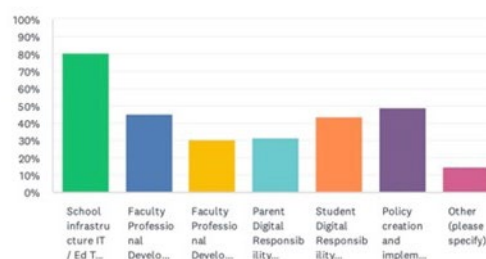


While a comprehensive technology strategy addresses multiple categorical touchpoints, we have found that school communities will often address technology in a piecemeal fashion, usually prioritizing and responding to the most pressing need. The most commonly addressed technology categories include:

1. School infrastructure IT/Ed Tech software/Hardware
2. Faculty Professional Development - IT/Ed Tech Training
3. Faculty Professional Development - Digital Responsibility Training
4. Parent Digital Responsibility Education
5. Student Digital Responsibility Education
6. Policy creation and implementation

Q3 What aspect/s of a technology strategy has your school already addressed?

Answered: 82 Skipped: 5



While the most frequently addressed touchpoint in the technology space was “school infrastructure IT/Ed Tech”, survey responders varied greatly in the number of catego-

ries they addressed as part of their strategy. Respondents also provided comments that included:

“We don’t have anything in place yet.”

“We have done all the training and infrastructure, but that was already a number of years ago. We need to update all the systems and continue training.”

“Some or all of the above.”

Further analysis of the data found that schools that addressed between 1-3 of the categories above had a lower overall satisfaction rating of their technology strategy (3.17) compared to schools that addressed between 4-6 categories (6.63), suggesting that when more aspects of technology get addressed as part of strategic plan, it will yield better outcomes and higher levels of satisfaction. This understanding of the positive impact of addressing and aligning multiple categories in the technology space should inform the overall strategy for schools moving forward. In the age of technology, it is simply not enough to provide school managed Chromebooks and laptops without a well-developed acceptable use policy (AUP), educating the school community on digital responsibility, training faculty in digital pedagogy and creating a culture of expectation and communication.

In a recent JEDIT workshop on acceptable use policies for school devices, Avi Bloom, Director of Technology at SAR High School in Riverdale, NY, identified the importance of a well-developed AUP and the mistake that many schools make by starting with an AUP. “An AUP is a critical step in a process that has to draw on the values and philosophy of the school,” but before policy, there needs to be clearly articulated values to guide the creation of that policy.

While the work of The Digital Citizenship Project has been and continues to be educational in nature and addresses two of the six categories mentioned above, the realities of what school communities need to address technology effectively and efficiently in a comprehensive and strategic manner require a wider range of knowledge and expertise.

Fortunately, there are individuals and organizations who have had demonstrable success in addressing these categories and are currently collaborating to streamline the process for schools under the banner of KETER (Kehila Technology Education and Resources). KETER continues to explore emerging resources that benefit school communities and to work with leading organizations like TAG

(Technology Awareness Group) for filtering, Project Trust for individual guidance and support, and Safe Telecom, a kPhone alternative for android users. But most importantly, KETER serves a single point of contact to help school communities identify and espouse their values around technology, assess their needs and develop a comprehensive strategy to meet them.

kPhone serves as the leader in the personal device technology space, helping school communities manage devices consistent with their standards, values and overall health and well-being. kPhone works with school leadership to provide premium filtering, support, and a user experience to maximize the satisfaction of all school community stakeholders.

Through a host of customized services, JEDIT (Jewish Ed Tech and IT), a division of the Consortium of Jewish Day Schools, supports Jewish day schools by providing consulting, targeted professional development, and recommendations based on each school’s unique culture, current infrastructure and ability and desire to expand their informational and educational technologies. Under the leadership of Rabbi Baruch Noy, JEDIT is elevating the conversation around the hardware and software that help a school operate and maximize the opportunities for successful outcomes in the educational technology realm.

M.U.S.T. (Mothers Unite to Stall Technology) is dedicated to helping parents build consensus on delaying personal device ownership and social media engagement. Research suggests that it is the communal norms and peer pressure that drive the onset of personal device ownership and social media membership. M.U.S.T. is a must for elementary age school communities that are seeking to influence the social norms to where personal technology is not a driving factor in community culture.

Project Focus is a Chicago based movement dedicated to creating community-wide awareness of the many ways technology impacts our lives and relationships. Having successfully organized gatherings in Chicago, Cleveland, and Los Angeles, Project Focus continues to develop valuable educational resources that help motivate communities to promote healthy technology use and effect a culture of change in our relationship with technology.

What is clear is that the opportunities and challenges of technology, both at home and at school, are continuously evolving and school communities must continue to adapt

CTS should be capable of evolving as a school community’s needs evolve, and it should always be reflective of core values.

and adjust. While school leaders are accustomed to identifying and addressing educational priorities, unlike core subjects, curricular matters, pedagogy, and leadership, many find themselves in the unique position of establishing norms, policy, and educational strategies in an area where they have far less expertise and confidence. However, the key is developing and implementing an effective technology strategy and building a support team within your school community. Mrs. Ahuvah Heyman, Director of Bnos Yisroel in Baltimore, was not a technology expert when the need to develop a comprehensive technology strategy emerged in her school community, but she knew where to turn within her faculty and created a technology team that meets on a weekly basis to discuss ongoing and emerging technology challenges. According to Heyman, “the weekly meeting puts us all on the same page and as the school director it keeps me informed of everything I need to know about technology in our school and allows me to prioritize and guide a process that ultimately improves student education.”

Effective education is not a pursuit by an individual, but rather a collective effort by all within the school community. To harness the collective wisdom for better student outcomes, school leaders are increasingly turning to a process called a Professional Learning Community (PLC). A PLC is defined as “an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (*DuFour, DuFour & Eaker, 2002*). Many school leaders may be familiar with a Child Study Team. This is usually an internal team of educators consisting of school administrators, student support staff, and classroom teachers providing an interdisciplinary approach to discussing the needs of individual students. A PLC differs as it expands beyond the internal educators to include other members of the school community. A technology PLC may include parents, board members, representation of the *Vaad Hachinuch*, an outside IT support representative, and even students. At a recent Technology PLC that I participated in where the school did not have a dedicated IT person, a high school student who was a member of the PLC pointed out that it would not be ideal to purchase google Chromebooks when the school’s primary software was Microsoft based.

A PLC is the ideal mechanism for schools to develop and maintain a comprehensive technology strategy by using a process called ADEPT.

Assess
Design
Educate
Process
Tweak

Assess: During this process the PLC will first explore and articulate its values around technology. It may include statements like, “We believe that technology plays a fundamental role in educating students today and we are committed to providing faculty, students and parents the necessary resources to maximize what technology has to offer.” The PLC would then assess whether there is in fact consistency between the espoused and enacted values. Is the school providing the appropriate devices and software to meet their goals? Does the infrastructure support effective and efficient use of technology in the classroom? Has there been education to support responsible use of technology for both students and parents? Has the faculty been trained in the use of technology for their respective subject areas?

A different school’s value statement may look something like this: “While there are some efficiency benefits to technology, the consequences of its utilization for educational purposes far outweigh its benefits and in our school community we will avoid the use of educational technology.” In their assessment the PLC would ask questions such as, what is our policy regarding homework that promotes internet use? How do we address student use of technology for recreation purposes? Is there a role for PowerPoints and videos in the classroom and what, if any, is the process for approval? Are technology restrictions to be limited to just pedagogy or other areas including communication, assessment, and finances?

At this point the goal of the PLC is to identify what they want or don’t want out of technology and to assess whether they are addressing it properly in the above-mentioned categories of:

1. School infrastructure IT / Ed Tech software / Hardware
2. Faculty Professional Development - IT / Ed Tech Training
3. Faculty Professional Development - Digital Responsibility Training
4. Parent Digital Responsibility Education
5. Student Digital Responsibility Education
6. Policy creation and implementation

Design: In most cases the PLC will be able to identify many areas that need to be addressed in the assessment. During the design phase the PLC will further articulate its comprehensive technology plan but will now prioritize, calendar, and assign task responsibilities. For example, if a school has determined to use Chromebooks in the classroom, the device distribution would have to take place after ensuring that the Wi-Fi can handle the increased load and that the teachers have been sufficiently trained in using the devices. Failure to follow that order will result in sub-par lessons that never get past the introduction as devices fail to connect and pages load slower than a 56k modem from the 1990s.

Other aspects of the design phase include clarifying acceptable use policies, plans for parent education, digital citi-

zenship curriculum, personal device policies, and more. For example, if the policy for a high school is that only a personal phone filtered by kPhone is allowed to be brought into school, what is the process for verification? Who on the PLC is coordinating the setup and who is approving app requests and adjustments? All of this must be clarified before moving on to the next phase.

It is a good idea to send out surveys (digital or paper, depending on your resources and values) to collect data and take the pulse of the parent body. This will help ensure that the PLC is generally aligned with the school community and will help mitigate the vocal minority of the inevitable outliers that disagree with the strategy the PLC.

Educate: While a PLC represents the values and interests of a school, it is in this phase where the comprehensive technology strategy is brought to the rest of the school community.

During the education phase you are outlining the designed plan. Ideally the CTS will be shared with faculty, followed by the parent body and can be done in writing, video messages, Zoom or in person meetings. If there will be an in person or interactive Zoom, a written version of the CTS should be distributed in advance and any questions or concerns should be communicated prior to the public event. If the phases of assessment and design were conducted in a thoughtful and deliberate fashion, articulation of your goals and educating the school community should have only the expected bumps in the road.

There will, of course, be the outliers that feel that the comprehensive technology strategy is either too liberal or too draconian, or both. Keeping those usual suspects in the loop and validating their concerns will go a long way in mitigating the potential chaos they can cause. Additionally, survey data that supports your strategy will provide resources to ensure that the interests of the silent majority are being represented.

Process (implementation): After educating the community comes the process of implementation. It is here that the work of the PLC is actually being put into practice. In most cases there will be segments of your CTS that is already in place and may require no adjustment or only small adjustments. In

some cases, aspects of your CTS will be brand new or require a significant overhaul. Implementation requires PLC members to have tasks that they are accountable for and an expectation of reporting back to the PLC on a weekly basis. Many aspects of the CTS are dependent on one another, and collaboration, communication, and systems are essential for success. When Mrs. Heyman and the Technology Team at Bnos Yisroel determined that all reimbursement requests needed to be filed digitally with a picture of the receipt, they were aware that not all of their teachers had smartphones. To address this, a tablet with a camera and instructions for reimbursement submissions was installed in the office so all teachers could be in compliance. Heyman shared that “those are the kind of things that come as part of being part of a cohesive team and having a weekly opportunity to bounce ideas off of each other.”

Tweak: No strategy is perfect, and technology is always advancing and developing. Who would have ever thought that portable storage would require more than a 1MB compact floppy disk? Nonetheless, a CTS should be capable of evolving as a school community’s needs evolve, and it should always be reflective of core values. Tweaking is not indicative of failure; it is a natural part of the ongoing process and brings us back to assessment.

In closing, technology is ubiquitous and inescapable and whether embracing or pushing back on it, today’s educational landscape requires a comprehensive strategy to address it. Increasingly school leaders are called upon to guide their school communities through a new era of educational needs and Professional Learning Communities can serve as system to drive the student educational experience and its outcomes. When it comes to technology, a PLC can be an effective approach to developing a sound Comprehensive Technology Strategy and a vehicle to become ADEPT.

Becoming ADEPT is not a simple process, but fortunately schools and their PLC’s have resources to lean on. Organizations like KETER and their affiliates, JEDIT/CoJDS, The Digital Citizenship Project, kPhone, Project Focus, M.U.S.T. and more are available to guide and support school communities in all aspects of their technology journey. ■

Tweaking is not indicative of failure; it is a natural part of the ongoing process and brings us back to assessment.

Dr. Eli Shapiro is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a Doctorate in Education. He is the Creator and Director of the Digital Citizenship Project and KETER and serves as the Director of Educational Initiatives for Consortium of Jewish Day Schools.

Reflections of a Digital Immigrant



Miriam Gettinger

As a digital immigrant who did not even know how to turn on a computer prior to becoming principal in a cutting-edge technological school environment, I have learned much over the past 15 years. In reflection, it is important to focus upon the medium of technology in Jewish education independently of its messaging. Technology after all is a tool, an educational implement which can be used to enhance Judaic studies instruction, increase motivation and student engagement, and provide a platform for student voice and choice in presentation or consolidation of their extended thinking and learning. It is not, however, a panacea nor is it designed to babysit restless students. Technology can be misused or abused, addictive and even dangerous. Just as we would never put a power drill or circular saw in the hands of a child without proper safety goggles and adult supervision and guidance nor give a young teenager the keys to a car with a carte blanche 'license' to go wherever and whenever they wanted, we ought not grant unsupervised technology exposure to our children without controls and trainings.

And yet we all face the ubiquitous reality of doing just that! Importantly, though, we must not blame nor eschew technology, for it is just the tool. We must be wary of setting up a 'forbidden fruit' scenario, and instead mine and direct its usage to our advantage in reaching 21st century students growing up in this very digital environment.

School Leaders as Digital Immigrants

Principals must be vulnerable, truly and transparently reflective in analysis of the medium of technology with themselves, teachers, parents, lay leaders, and students. In particular, we must acknowledge the generation gap and erosion of *kibbud horim*

u'morim in a society where even the youngest of children are intuitively adept and able to navigate apps, order from Amazon (I have a seven-year-old student who was featured on national television for ordering \$3500 worth of random Prime items delivered to her grandparents' home as she played on their phone), and where savvy tweenagers can circumvent filters and blocks. Like the early 20th century, when most immigrants did not drive while their teenagers embraced their new freedom of movement, the digital divide between immigrants and natives must not be denied nor glossed over.

Pancake People

We are forced to confront the educational implications of the superficial information explosion with facts and figures at our fingertips, creating the 'pancake people' syndrome of students knowing a lot but being unable to think deeply and critically. Principals must direct and model for their teachers how we might use quick and easy access to content knowledge to dive deeply and synthesize such information into concept-based instruction, challenging students to rich, strategic and extended thinking learning opportunities.

By way of example, in teaching *Parshas Bamidbar*, a teacher might assign a technology-based census project, beginning with having students use the *pesukim* to create a Google spreadsheet comparing the numbers of each *shevet* in *Parshas Bamidbar* with *Parshas Pinchas*, analyzing the total population numbers and tribal counts, which dramatically increased or decreased over the 40 years, subsequently creating a digital model of the location of their camps and *degel simanim*, and then coding them to actual march according to both of *Rashi's shiot*. They might then extend the learning activity by providing research or specified

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sites on world Jewish population pre- and post- Holocaust, or American centers of Jewish population from the early or mid-20th century to today, which students then create into an interactive Tiki-Toki or Flourish digital timeline to share with their peers or other authentic audience.

Screen Zombies

Finally, principals must address the neuroscience of the 'screen zombie' effect as it impacts student focus, blurs the lines of artificial or augmented reality versus real reality, and stifles creative thinking and communication. Most significantly, they must contend with technology's inherent obsessive or addictive nature which invites and incites a spiraling spiritual *yerida*, totally independent of the internet or content viewed. Metaphorically, it is akin to *avoda zara* whose ubiquitous worship, decoration, and closetting beyond cabinet doors, depicted in *Sefer Yeshayah*, plagued *Klal Yisrael* throughout the period of the *Shoftim* until the destruction of the first *Bais Hamikdash*.

My father, Rabbi Wein, *shlita*, compares the advent of technology with the disruptive innovation of the printing press in the late 15th century in revolutionizing education and literacy for the masses. In considering the message and content of technology, he notes the fascinating parallel to our digital milieu, that the two most commonly printed materials were Bibles and pornography, opposite sides of the spiritual continuum.

Opportunities for the Digital Natives

Seen through the positive lens of expanding *limudei kodesh* Judaic instruction opportunities, principals might focus on McTighe's Curriculum Mapping 3.0 which moves beyond

Most significantly, [principals] must contend with technology's inherent obsessive or addictive nature which invites and incites a spiraling spiritual yerida

description, scope and sequence of content, and even beyond alignment with standards, to the next frontier of the presentation platform, highlighting student outcomes by providing rich and motivating project 'voice and choice' extensions, predicated upon Webb's Depth of Knowledge Level 4 skills: proving, creating, synthesizing, designing and applying concepts.

Ted Talks, infographics, authoring and illustrating books for a younger audience, videos, or student-created escape rooms are each designed to simulate real adult world skills in a results-focused continuous improvement culture. The

Garage Band app facilitates music creation as a *Tanach* summary, NearPod and Explain Everything apps allow students to present research projects on a myriad of Jewish history or *chagim* topics, while Flip Grid, Book Creator, and CoSpaces can be utilized to share family tree interviews, connecting students in Israel with our own through a shared grandparents project such as the one sponsored by the ANU (formerly Diaspora) Museum. Emerging virtual reality (VR) tech like MERGE Cube and Spatial can be used to create immersive experiences within places or objects.

As principals we can advance our students' 21st century critical and creative thinking skills, communication and collaboration, digitally in routine instruction. For example, challenging them during a Hebrew *luach* lesson to find the corresponding secular date for a *chag* in 2054 or asking them to determine when the next *shmitta* would be. They could choose to use the Comprehensive 100 Year Jewish Calendar book, Google the answer, or ask Siri, and will be shocked to find out that often referencing the book is fastest. Similarly, students can be tasked with writing an overview to the date, names, *minhagim*, and *mitzvot* of a *chag* as a Wikipedia entry in English or *Ivrit*. Afterward, as an anchor activity or opportunity for differentiation, they could compare it to what is actually out there in cyberspace.

Innovative multigrade and/or cross curricular integrative project ideas which foster student agency through unique technology opportunities and expositions of learning include a student designed and docented Holocaust museum (<https://hhaihm.weebly.com/>), or a digital *siddur* project for both a younger and middle school level, creating Thin-

glinks connecting *tefillot* to engaging activities like playing notes on a harp for any of the *pirkei Tehillim* or a game simulating the fall of *Yericho's* walls for *Aleinu*, each coded by the students themselves. This kind of technology use is

the stuff of inspiring emotional memories in *Yiddishkeit*.

Conclusion

Technology in Judaic instruction is the future. In this future, profiles of our graduates will likely include evidence of these very student outcomes of learning, augmenting standardized assessments like the JSAT. CoJDS curricula like *L'havin U'lehaskil*, as well as their new *navi* and *tefilla* offerings, afford rich and engaging digital resources for student rehearsal of content and mastery of textual skills, ongoing feedback through interactive assessments, as well as linked songs, videos, and maps.

Technology is really a force to be harnessed in the present. As technology advances, many of the human roles of today may be replaced by computers and intelligent robots. What about teachers? The mantra of a 21st century learner in the digital age is that there are two ways in which human beings are

inherently superior to technology in the realm of education generally, and Jewish education specifically. Computers cannot be empathetic while teachers must always be, nor can computers exude passion, an attribute our students must consistently strive for in becoming future *bnei aliyah*. □

This kind of technology use is the stuff of inspiring emotional memories in Yiddishkeit.

Mrs. Miriam Gettinger has been a principal for the past 30 years, currently at the Hasten Hebrew Academy of Indianapolis and previously at the South Bend Hebrew Day School, as well as at the helm of Bais Yaakov High School of Indiana. A graduate of Beth Jacob Teachers Institute of Jerusalem as well as Touro College, she has taught Limudei Kodesh to all ages from elementary to adult for over 40 years. Contact Mrs. Gettinger at mgettinger@hhai.org.



Principal Think Tank x Differentiated Education: Meeting the Learning Needs of All Students

MONDAY, JULY 24-TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2023

YOUNG ISRAEL OF LAWRENCE CEDARHURST
CEDARHURST, NY



DIVREI BRACHA:

HaRav Sholom Kamenetsky

Rosh Yeshiva, Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia, PA

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:



Richard Altabe, *Principal, Hebrew Academy of Long Beach*

The Special Opportunity of Special Education



Dr. Victor Fornari, *Director of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Long Island Jewish Medical Center*

Psychopharmacology: What Every School Leader Needs to Know About Medication

SESSIONS PRESENTED AND FACILITATED BY THE FOLLOWING EDUCATORS:

Rabbi Daniel Alter

Rivkah Denburg

Rabbi Shlomie Denburg

Rabbi Isaac Entin

Temima Feldman

Miriam Gettinger

Josh Gold

Dr. Yitzchak Goldberg

Ahuvah Heyman

Rabbi Reuven Kamin

Rabbi Baruch Noy

Ronit Pasternak

Dr. Yisrael Rothwachs

Rabbi Yaakov Sadigh

Dr. Sara Seplowitz

JULY 25

SPECIAL TRACK FOR



SPECIAL TRACK FOR

GENERAL STUDIES PRINCIPALS

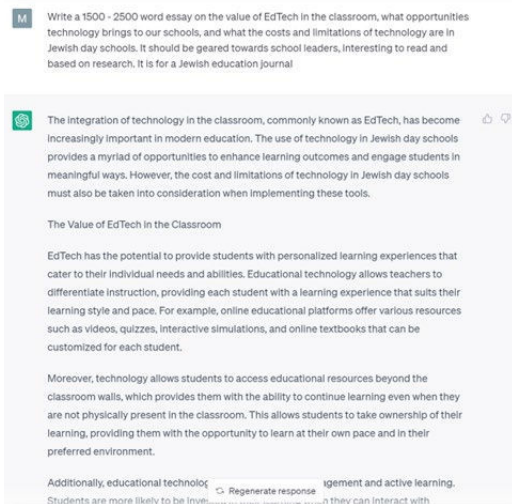
Did ChatGPT Write this Essay?



Mushkie Lipsker

I asked ChatGPT: “Write a 1500–2500 word essay on the value of EdTech in the classroom, what opportunities technology brings to our schools, and what the costs and limitations of technology are in Jewish day schools. It should be geared towards school leaders, interesting to read, and based on research. It is for a Jewish education journal.”

I waited two minutes, and there it was! Don't believe me? Check out the image below.



With technology on the rise and artificial intelligence being available like never before, teachers who may have not integrated much tech into the classroom are forced to wonder: Can technology help me as a teacher? Can technology bring my classroom to a better place? Can technology increase class engagement, collaboration, and creativity? (Spoiler alert: the answer to all those questions is yes!)

Together with amazement and wonder comes some worry: Where is the future going? Will it be all digital? Will AI replace me, their teacher?

Almost 30 years ago, in 1995, Newsweek predicted “Why the Internet Won't Be Nirvana” and said that the Internet wasn't easy

enough to navigate and was destined to fail, nothing more than a passing craze. Similar predictions were made about the iPhone and online shopping. How wrong they all were. From shopping to banking, traveling to healthcare, this world has evolved so much with the growth of the internet. Siri replaced dictionaries; we have Google Maps and Waze instead of paper maps. Schools don't teach typing anymore, yet today, even newborns are taking their parents' phones and typing random letters and emojis on WhatsApp groups. Thirty years ago, writing an essay meant researching physical books; today, ChatGPT can write it for you in a matter of thirty seconds or so.

In 1992, there were a total of ten websites. Now? 547,200 new websites are created each DAY. That is six websites per SECOND! (Yes, you read that right!)

As mind-blowing as the changes of the last three decades have been, the change still to come in the next three decades isn't even something we can truly fathom. The job predictions for 2053, when our current students will be adults, are drone traffic optimizers, outer space tour guides (how much do you think those tours will cost?!), digital removal specialists, and AI ethicists. How do we teach for the future when we can't even imagine what that future world will look like?

Well, let's look at which skills will NEVER expire:

- critical thinking
- communication
- collaboration
- creativity

Canva, MidJourney AI, or even ChatGPT will never replace these 4 C's of 21st century learning. No matter how advanced tech-

Can technology help me as a teacher? Can technology bring my classroom to a better place? Can technology increase class engagement, collaboration, and creativity?

nology gets, these four skills will always be critical to success. Technology may be an extremely helpful tool, but some things can never be replaced. No, educators, your job is not replaceable by a computer. Because you give over so much more than just information. You give over your perspective, warm touch, and passion for your curriculum. Just as the power drill didn't make construction workers obsolete, AI and other technology won't replace teachers. Educators are the force behind the tool.

Not only is technology not a contradiction to the 4 C's, but it can be a great tool to teach the 4 C's more effectively. Using technology is not only helpful for your students in the classroom, but it can also help YOU save time, plan lessons more quickly, or grade quizzes automatically, giving you energy and time to focus on what matters most - your relationship with your students.

The 4 C's

Here are several ways I brought the 4 C's into my classroom, with some website recommendations so you can use them:

Critical thinking

- As a teacher, you can use ChatGPT to generate open-ended higher-order thinking questions and prompts related to a specific topic or subject. These questions can be used to stimulate discussion and encourage students to think deeply about the topic (chat.openai.com).
- Students can take part in polls and then defend their opinions (polleverywhere.com or Kahoot's polling options).
- Students should be able to use critical thinking to safely navigate the internet, see if sources are credible, etc.
- The internet gives such vast amounts of information. Through using the large research pool, students can compare and contrast texts and sources and make informed decisions.

Communication

- As a teacher, you can ask ChatGPT to generate writing prompts or conversation starters that require students to express their ideas clearly and concisely (chat.openai.com).

- Students can conference with students from another school to work on a project together and/or learn from one another such as learning about their culture or practicing a new language. (They can use Zoom, Google Meet, etc. for this.)
- Students should learn how to be good digital citizens, especially with a more digital future.

Collaboration

- Teachers can ask ChatGPT for tutorials or tips on how to set up a virtual classroom, how to add students to the platform, and how to assign and grade assignments so students can work collaboratively on an online platform, such as Edmodo or Google Classroom (chat.openai.com).
- Students can collaborate via docs and other collaborative apps (all google drive apps, for example).
- Students can discuss a topic/question on discussion forums and then respond to each other's thoughts (the *navi* platform through CoJDS was great for this).
- My students even collaborated with students from another school to design a mini website using wix.com.
- Students can design a website to which they add throughout the year as they learn more on the topic. (We made a *Shofetim* website on wix.com to which we then added sections throughout the year as we learned about each *shofet*.)
- Students work together to create a game as a review for a unit assessment (using kahoot.com).

Creativity

- ChatGPT can inspire creativity by generating prompts for creative writing, art, or design projects. Teachers can ask ChatGPT to provide students with prompts that challenge them to think outside the box and come up with innovative solutions to problems (chat.openai.com).
- Students can create 3D models of the *keilim* used in the *mishkan* and print them on a 3F printer. (We collaborated with the engineering teacher and the students worked in Tinkercad.)

Teachers can ask ChatGPT to provide students with prompts that challenge them to think outside the box and come up with innovative solutions to problems.

- Students can create comic strips based on a story in *Tanach* (storyboardthat.com).
- Students can create business cards for famous personalities they are learning about (vistaprint.com or canva.com).
- Students can write and design guidebooks, answering the essential questions of the unit (canva.com).
- Students can design videos to teach an idea or theme to their classmates (animoto.com).
- Students can create mock text message conversations that “could have” happened based on the text they are learning (ifaketextmessage.com).

The SAMR Model

As great as bringing technology into the classroom can be, it’s important to be mindful of the purpose of the tech. Bringing Chromebooks to your classroom just for the sake of ticking off the “I bring technology into my classroom” check box isn’t enough. There should be a goal in mind that technology can help you accomplish.

The SAMR model is a framework for integrating technology into teaching and learning, developed by Dr. Ruben Puentedura. The model is based on four levels of technology integration: substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition.

- 1. Substitution:** This level involves using technology to replace traditional tools and methods without changing the fundamental nature of the task. For example, using Google Docs to write a paper instead of handwriting it.
- 2. Augmentation:** At this level, technology is used to enhance or improve the task, but the main task remains the same. For example, using a spell-check tool or grammar-check tool to improve the quality of a written document, or using a virtual whiteboard to draw and present ideas in real-time.
- 3. Modification:** This level involves using technology to modify the task in a significant way. For example, using a digital portfolio to showcase student work can allow them to present it more dynamically and interactively, which wouldn’t be

possible on a printed portfolio. It can include voice recording, video, and opportunities for the viewer to interact (vote, comment, etc.) with the material.

- 4. Redefinition:** At the highest level of the SAMR model, technology is used to create entirely new learning experiences that were not previously possible. Learning is completely transformed, enabling new types of learning, collaboration, and creativity. For example, students may use virtual reality to explore places they are learning about in history or create a narrated Google Earth tour for a social studies unit. This can also include polling and getting opinions from around the world in a volume that simply isn’t possible without the new tech.

In the early 1950’s, a girl and her parents once went to meet the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The little girl looked very worried and so the Lubavitcher Rebbe asked her what was wrong. She said she was nervous about nuclear energy and she asked, “Is nuclear energy good or bad?” The Lubavitcher Rebbe answered, “Do you have a knife in your kitchen? Are knives good or bad?” “It depends on how you use it,” she said. “Exactly,” the Rebbe told her, “It depends on how you use it.” Just as with many things in life, technology is neither good nor bad, but it is what you make of it. Using the SAMR model, teachers can ensure that technology is integrated effectively into the classroom, supporting student learning and engagement, and serving its purpose.

It’s important to take proper precautions when bringing technology into the classroom. It’s important to put safeguards into place and teach students about digital citizenship and the dangers of the internet. But technology can and should be embraced. Don’t be like the old newspapers and deny the future - embrace it and let it help both you and your students.

And to answer the question in the title, no, ChatGPT didn’t write this. While ChatGPT could come up with a theoretical essay, ChatGPT couldn’t write about my experiences, my point of view, or my perspective. Only I could. And in an era of artificial intelligence, that human touch of the teacher can never be replaced. ■

Mushkie Lipsker, M.Ed., is the founder of Ever-Growing Educator, a resource for teachers to develop and sharpen a growth mindset. For practical education tips that are so easy to implement, you can start using them the same day (!) follow @EverGrowingEducator on Instagram. You can sign up for weekly emails at EverGrowingEducator.com or contact her at EverGrowingEducator@gmail.com

Automate and Educate: Streamlining School Processes with Automation



Schools, like all organizations, stand to benefit from technology's ability to automate tasks and processes. One well-understood (and yet often ignored) benefit of automation is the improved efficiency achieved by automating common, time-consuming tasks. Automation can also improve accuracy or prevent mistakes from occurring.

There are things which work in small schools or organizations that become unwieldy as the school grows. A Florida man learned the hard way that scaling up an idea can be difficult when he used his warm car to transport frozen iguanas he planned to sell. Unfortunately, the iguanas woke up while he was driving and while he may have been able to deal with one awake iguana in car, a bunch of them were too much and he had to let them all go! Scaling up a successful idea can be difficult, as it can become unmanageable – like driving a car full of iguanas. The solution to this is often automation.

Would you believe that there is a large school in NY that processes millions of dollars on credit cards each year with each payment entered manually? That there is a box in the office containing index cards with all the credit card information and the cards are ordered by the date they should be processed. There is someone whose full-time job is to sit there and process credit cards. This is nightmarishly inefficient, error-prone, and an insecure (maybe even illegal?) way to store people's credit card information.

The second major benefit of automation is accuracy. Besides the time and energy manual processes consume, they are prone to errors. Albert Einstein is misquoted as having said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting

different results." In this context we can say that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again manually and expecting the same results!

Here are several areas you may not have thought of that could be automated in schools, leading to efficiency and reducing mistakes or oversights:

1. Automated internal emails: Some examples include an email to the person in charge of recruiting every morning with a list of new families who are in the system but have not yet registered. A principal could get an email with a list of students who were marked absent three days in a row. During dinner season, someone in the office could get a daily email each morning listing yesterday's new dinner reservations.

2. Automated external emails: This could be an email to parents that their child was marked absent today (particularly relevant for high school students who may travel to school on their own), or an alert to a parent that a fee payment will be processed in a few days, or a reminder to parents who indicated on the application that they would be seeking a scholarship but have not yet filled out the scholarship application. Another example is an automated email to a food vendor with updated and last-minute lunch order numbers.

3. Onboarding new employees: Think about all the steps that must take place when a new employee joins the school and try to automate the flow of these processes. If new employees fill out their demographic information into a form, that form could trigger work orders to IT to create an email account and add the new teacher to active directory, automatically input the demographic information into the employee database, alert the payroll department that a new employee was hired, email the

Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again manually and expecting the same results!

new employee whatever payroll department forms need to be filled out, inform the benefits person to add the new person to health insurance, and let the webmaster know to add their picture and bio to the school website. Other steps that may need to occur in a school include printing an ID badge and setting up accounts on the school's LMS or other systems.

4. Inputting crowdfunding campaign data into your development database: Many schools have an annual crowdfunding campaign and since this donor information is gathered and payment processing done by the campaign platform, many schools never even import this valuable data into the development database, creating a huge development blind spot. Even schools that do import this data often do it later, when the campaign is done. Imagine how great it would be if you had access to this data, in concert with your previous development data, during the campaign? This can be done with all the crowdfunding platforms I know of and is a powerful example of automation at work.

5. Google Apps Manager (GAM): If your school uses Google (for email, Drive, Docs, Classroom, etc.), GAM is a powerful tool used to manage your Google Workspace. It allows you to automate common, often annual, tasks, such as new user creation, user updates (promoting to the next grade or division in the school), changing organizational units, resetting passwords, suspending and re-enabling users, or setting up

Google Classrooms for your teachers. Many of these tasks are time consuming and some IT departments spend much of the summer laboring through them manually.

6. Clever: Greatly reduce password reset requests or wasted time due to being unable to access accounts. Teachers can easily log in their entire class of students to various platforms with the use of Badges for younger students or Single Sign-On (SSO) for older students, saving time and effort.

It's good to remember that since automation takes time to set up, it's not worth it for tasks that happen only occasionally, while it greatly increases efficiency for tasks that happen frequently. I would rather spend ten hours learning how to automate a common task that only would have taken me an hour to do manually, since the task needs to be done frequently. However, don't get carried away automating one-off or rare tasks.

An interesting organizational question is, who are the right people in a school to make decisions regarding automation? Automation is helpful in many areas of school and educational management, and the people engaged in those areas need to be involved. But I find that it always makes sense for the IT person to be part of the conversation, as he or she often knows what tools are available. Working with other departments, IT pros can help create processes that are automatic and that introduce efficiency into the organization. 

Working with other departments, IT pros can help create processes that are automatic and that introduce efficiency into the organization.

Avrohom Eliezer Friedman has been the IT Director at Yeshiva Toras Chaim Toras Emes for over 15 years and is a kidney donor. He is always ready to help solve problems as long as he has a Starbucks in his hand. Email him at aefriedman@ytcte.org



Feedback? Email us at sgewirtz@cojds.org



Journal of Jewish Day School Leadership Invites You to Lend Your Voice!

The topic for our next edition is

Social-Emotional Learning

The **Journal of Jewish Day School Leadership** is accepting submissions for our upcoming edition, devoted to the topic of

Social-Emotional Learning

Articles could explore the role of SEL in the Jewish day school, how it relates to and complements the Judaic studies, highlight interesting or innovative programs and ideas, or describe the expected outcomes of a successful SEL program.

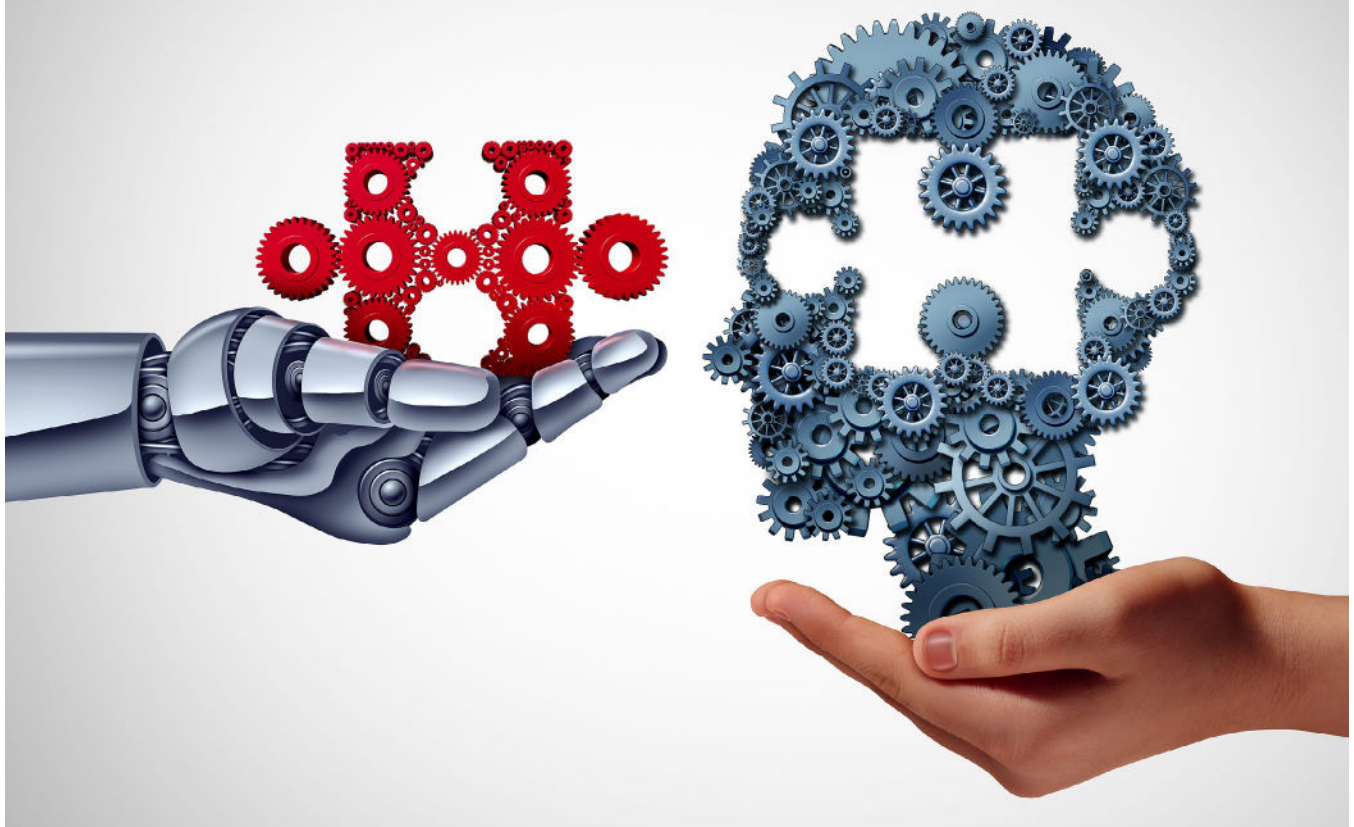
Submissions of 1,500-3,000 words are being accepted by the Journal.

Please email Rabbi Shimshon Gewirtz
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Artificial Intelligence and Education: Challenges and Tools



Rabbi Baruch Noy

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been on the rise since science fiction media predicted its eventual creation. Since that fictional picture of what an artificially intelligent machine can accomplish, people have been attempting to build it. While AI has been in use among specific niche use cases and industries for a number of years already and has been embedded on devices such as cameras and smartphones, only recently has it become available to the greater public at no cost and with no specific hardware necessary other than an internet connection. GPT, a method of training the artificially intelligent computer system that is already on its fourth generation, just launched recently. There are a number of methods and platforms that are training artificially intelligent computer systems, but GPT became the most famous for having developed ChatGPT. ChatGPT harnesses the capabilities of the GPT method and platform of AI, and further allows people to interact with the AI platform through language-based prompts.

In truth, there are many different platforms that will produce different forms of media based on utilizing an AI platform. ChatGPT creates text output but does not (yet) create pictures or videos. Other AI-based platforms will take the same text-based prompts, but produce an image, video, or slideshow presentation based on the AI engine that it feeds from. Even mainstream tools that are not directly associated with AI have incorporated AI-based elements, such as Microsoft desktop products or Adobe Photoshop. By the time this article is published, Google will have also inserted AI-based creation elements into Google Docs and Google Slides. One can see very easily that AI has already affected certain business industries. The ability to produce text written in a professional style, graphics that can be based

on famous works and automated lighting and color schemes, and videos showing engineered footage that can replace mistakes in filming, has already had an impact across professional industries, and will only continue to affect even more industries.

Plagiarism and Cheating When it comes to education, there is, understandably, a tremendous amount of hesitancy. So much of our focus as educators has been to teach students the skills that they need to produce original works, whether it be in writing, media, or mathematics, just to name a few subject areas. The “P” word has always been the clear red line that no student shall ever cross, for fear that their entire academic career, and likely their occupational career, will be forever derailed. At least it is in the minds of the educators. Meanwhile, it seems that students for around two decades already have never really had a good grasp of plagiarism, not its meaning, applications, or even consequences.

Donald L. McCabe was a professor at Rutgers University in the Business School for 26 years. During that time, having transitioned into academia from the corporate world, he noticed a huge trend of students participating in activities that were certainly labeled as academically dishonest, but without too much hesitation. He began to study the issue of academic integrity and continued to do so for many years. During that time, he founded the International Center for Academic Integrity. Dr. McCabe passed away in 2016, and so he did not witness the AI revolution. However, he did witness the technology revolution of the early 2000’s, and how that impacted academic integrity.

In a paper from 2005, McCabe wrote:

“In these Web surveys of over forty thousand undergraduates on sixty-eight campuses in the United States and Canada,

So much of our focus as educators has been to teach students the skills that they need to produce original works, whether it be in writing, media, or mathematics.

conducted over the last two academic years, 21 percent of respondents have acknowledged at least one incident of serious test or exam cheating, and 51 percent have acknowledged at least one incident of serious cheating on written work. Although most had engaged in other cheating behaviors as well, four out of every five students who reported they had cheated on a written assignment acknowledged that they had engaged in some form of Internet-related cheating—either cut-and-paste plagiarism from Internet sources or submitting a paper downloaded or purchased from a term-paper mill or Web site.”

In that same year, McCabe had other findings related to high school students.

If those were his observations in 2005, one can imagine that those statistics continued to rise. Yet, there is no need to imagine. McCabe continued to produce alarming statistics for many years afterwards, all pointing to a single theme: Since the advent of computer technology in the home, students have become almost completely desensitized to using someone else’s original work.

On the flip side, McCabe produced a good amount of research showing that when schools clearly communicated the importance of producing one’s own content and the importance of true integrity, the actual numbers of students reporting academic dishonesty declined. In other words, just because it has become so commonplace for students to use the original work of others as their own, does not mean that we cannot contend with this phenomenon.

If you would ask educational leaders and classroom teachers how many of them communicate clearly to students about the technicalities of plagiarism, you would hear very few affirmative answers. If you would ask the same group how many of them stress the importance of original work that truly reflects their own thoughts and feelings or stress the importance of one’s integrity, you would receive even fewer affirmative answers. In our schools, we so often make assumptions about our students’ knowledge of, and attitude towards, plagiarism that do not align with reality. We suffice with having a policy in a handbook and the fact that these things are obvious. In reality, an overwhelming majority of our students are clueless about true academic integrity and possibly just true integrity. Our students are often defined as “digital natives”, or members of a certain generation denoted by a letter. One thing is for certain: they are members of the copy and paste generation, and it is habitual.

Based upon this background of the last two decades, AI tools that will create new content are even more unrecognizable as academic dishonesty. If the AI tool created the text, it is even less dishonest than copying and pasting for this text was never

taken from any person. (In fact, institutions of higher education have amended their academic integrity policies to now say that a student’s work was not derived from someone or “something” else.) If anything, the more industry adopts these tools, the harder it will be to contend with any kind of dishonesty.

Education The main thrust of our response as an educational community has to be just that: education. Students need to understand the benefits and necessities of creating original content. Students need to understand the truths behind these AI tools. In particular, any AI tool that creates text, such as ChatGPT, has a human element behind the scenes that is currently directing the platform as to which responses are “more optimal” and which are “less optimal” (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Step 2 of the ChatGPT model, that includes human rankings of responses.

In other words, humans are directing the nature and content of the final product even if they are not producing the end result. As such, students need to ensure that any AI-produced text truly reflects their opinion and feelings on the subject matter at hand.

Similarly, any large-format writing assignment must have elements of opinion, hypothesis, and expression of feeling on the issues. These are the human elements that a survey of facts cannot produce. Some call it “higher-order thinking”, and others have other names for the concept, but this is a shift that must take place if it has not already. Once again, this is not a new adjustment; it is an important adjustment that has needed to take place since the dawn of the information age and the internet highway. However, it is pressing now more than ever.

As many others have pointed out, it might also be wise to shift assessments and writing assignments to live-action presentations or other forms of media production that are

not scripted by AI. While this strategy might be correct, it does not detract from our educational mandate to help students understand the fundamentals of originally produced work and academic integrity. If we only shift assessments to alternate forms of assessment and do not tackle these important issues educationally, we will have done a disservice to our students.

Using AI to Improve Education On the flip side, use of AI tools like ChatGPT could allow students access to high-level sample work. Given the proper guidance, students that are weak at specific elements of writing can learn how to produce work of a higher quality and focus on the specific elements that they have trouble with. For example, if a student has written four paragraphs of a five-paragraph essay, but struggles with well-written conclusion paragraphs, they can feed their existing four paragraphs into the tool and prompt the tool to write a conclusion paragraph. Once generated, the student can see a very specific example of a high-level conclusion paragraph upon which they can base their own originally created conclusion paragraph. If used as a resource for style and language and to target specific elements of weakness, such AI tools can be invaluable.

Another area that could gain from AI tools, and could apply to the Judaic studies classroom as well, is graphic images created through AI. Whether utilized by the teacher with students' input or utilized by students themselves, one can enter a prompt and produce a realistic simulative image for instances where we have no such graphic documentation. This is especially true when learning *chumash* or *navi* where it is challenging for students that are typically consumers of content to imagine on their own what it may have looked like. For example, Figure 2

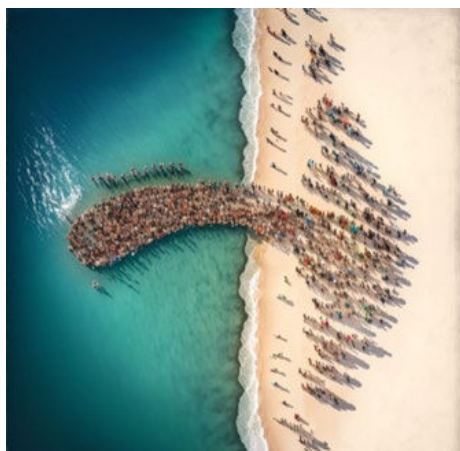


Figure 2: Image produced using Midjourney, an AI tool that produces images based on prompts.

Rabbi Baruch Noy serves as a high school principal in the Five Towns and directs JEDIT for CoJDS. He works with schools across the continent in all areas related to IT and EdTech and previously served as Director of STEM Education, IT, and EdTech at HAFTR. He has a master's degree in education focusing on Curriculum and Instruction and is currently a doctoral student in Educational Leadership. Having been a classroom teacher of Judaics and General Studies, as well as an administrator across many capacities, he is able to work with schools to help them upgrade in many areas.



Figure 3

is an image produced with a prompt that briefly describes the Jews going into the sea before it split. The image clearly conveys graphically the amazing sense of dedication and faith that they must have had.

Another image, Figure 3, could be a realistic image of *Eliyahu Hanavi* on top of *Har HaCarmel*, speaking to the people below. Figure 4 might be the moment where he looks up in prayer and says "*Aneini Hashem aneini*".

While it is extremely important to preface that all of these images are fictitious and do not necessarily reflect the person, place, or event, it is also extremely helpful to have some method of creating a realistic picture of the awesome nature of the event. In fact, using AI to create the image and being able to refine the image using the prompts is far superior to any graphic that was created by someone ignorant of the details of the event or person. The teacher or student can include authentic elements of the event that reflect the true details of the event, all by using an authentic prompt with detailed information that they gleaned from the text. Another major benefit of using the AI tool in a guided environment is that the student is being introduced to the tool in the context of an authentic use case and is being taught how to be constructive with technology tools.

[A note of caution: These examples are by no means an endorsement of any platform to use in the classroom. Every new technology and platform must be vetted to ensure that it is safe and in compliance with educational laws, as well as the hashkafa of the school.]

The challenges of producing original, creative work in the era of freely accessible AI tools are serious. At the same time, there are likely to be some benefits that can be reaped by our schools and students towards making their learning more authentic and successful. □



Figure 4
Images produced using Midjourney, an AI tool that produces images based on prompts

What One Tech Rabbi
Thinks You Should Know About
**Educational
Artificial Intelligence**



Broadly speaking, artificial intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science that deals with the creation of intelligent agents, which are systems that can reason, learn, and act autonomously. AI research has been highly successful in developing effective techniques for solving a wide range of problems, from autonomous travel to medical diagnosis. AI is becoming increasingly present in our world, provides a lot of possibilities for our schools, and is widely being used to personalize learning, provide feedback, and identify areas of improvement.

One of the areas where AI has already provided many benefits to teachers and students alike is the category of natural language processing (NLP). NLP deals with the development of algorithms that can understand and generate human language and is used in a variety of applications, such as spelling and grammar checking, machine translation, voice recognition, and text summarization. This technology began to show up on the scene in American schools many years ago when the first PC “spell-checker” tool appeared on the Commodore system in 1981. NLPs were developed further by Microsoft during the 1990s, and by the mid-1990s school computer labs (including the Torah Day School of Atlanta computer lab, in which Mrs. Davida Levin taught me to type and write book reports) were filled with PCs utilizing Microsoft Office. During this time “spell-check” and “grammar check” became a staple of anyone who had a book report or essay to write.

In the 2000s, NLP research began to focus on deep learning. Deep learning is a subfield of machine learning that uses artificial neural networks to learn from data. One of the first successful deep-learning NLP systems

was developed by Google in the early 2010s. This system was able to translate text from one language to another with high accuracy and was instrumental in the development of what we know today as “Google Translate.” In the 2010s, NLP research continued to focus on deep learning, developing AI’s ability to answer questions in a natural way.

I want to take the opportunity to share with the reader several accessible NLP tools that we can easily utilize in our schools:

Microsoft Office Editor Many of those in my generation grew up with the aforementioned Microsoft Office “spell-check” and “grammar check” features, though spelling was still an important skill in those days (written in jest). Microsoft’s AI tools have come a long way since then, and in the most recent version of Microsoft Office, they feature a tool called “Microsoft Office Editor,” which is a very robust writing assistant that is available in Word, Outlook, and as a browser extension. It can help one improve their writing by checking for grammar and spelling errors, suggesting style changes, and providing feedback on one’s writing. Even weaker writers can experience success and build confidence when they have Editor available to assist them in their writing.

To use Microsoft Office Editor, one needs to simply open the document or email that one wants to edit and click the Editor button in the toolbar. Editor will then scan the document for errors and provide suggestions for improvement. The user can accept or reject Editor’s suggestions or choose to ignore them altogether. Best of all, if one uses Microsoft 365, the feature is completely free. Additionally, a basic version of Microsoft 365 is available for free for all teachers and students through “Microsoft for Education.” Even if one is using an older version

AI is becoming increasingly present in our world, provides a lot of possibilities for our schools, and is widely being used to personalize learning, provide feedback, and identify areas of improvement

of Microsoft Office, as long as they have a Microsoft account, they can open their documents online and use Editor online for free.

There are many benefits to using Microsoft Office Editor. It can help one improve their writing by:

- Checking for grammar and spelling errors
- Suggesting style changes
- Providing feedback on one's writing
- Helping the writer to write more clearly and concisely
- Helping the writer to avoid plagiarism

Grammarly A good few of my colleagues at Derech HaTorah utilize an online tool called Grammarly. Grammarly is a free online grammar checker and writing assistant. It can help one improve their writing by checking for grammar and spelling errors, suggesting style changes, and providing feedback on one's writing. One can use Grammarly to compose bold, clear, mistake-free writing with their new AI-powered desktop Windows app. It is also available as a web app, browser extension, and mobile app. One can use it to edit text in most applications once it is downloaded, and, in my experience, it interacts very smoothly with Gmail. One of my favorite features it offers is a "tone" sensor. It will let the writer know the tone of their email, i.e., it lets them know if they sound friendly, happy, upset, stern, etc. It can be very helpful to know how one's email is perceived by a reader.

To use Grammarly, one has a few options. One can download and enable the extension on their browser, download the desktop app from their website, or go to their website and paste their text into the Grammarly editor and click the "Check Grammar" button. Grammarly will then scan one's text for errors and provide suggestions for improvement. One can accept or reject Grammarly's suggestions, or you can choose to ignore them altogether. Grammarly, like Microsoft Office Editor, is free to use, but there are also premium plans that offer additional features.

Gmail Long before it was popular, I was using Gmail to write essays and articles so I could use their AI editor features. I'd then copy and paste my material into Microsoft Word, as I was using an outdated version, and Gmail was a free alternative to upgrading to a newer version of Microsoft Word. Our students need to learn the life skill of writing emails of qual-

ity, and Gmail's tools offer a lot of assistance for perfecting this craft. Google has been using NLP technology in Gmail for several years, and it has become an increasingly important part of the email service.

Here are some of the ways that NLP is used in Gmail:

- **Smart Compose:** Smart Compose is a feature that uses NLP to help one write emails faster. It suggests words and phrases as one types, and it can even complete sentences for the writer.
- **Smart Reply:** Smart Reply is a feature that uses NLP to understand the context of one's emails and suggest quick replies.
- **Grammar and spelling checker:** Gmail's built-in grammar and spelling checker uses NLP to identify and correct errors in one's emails.
- **Spam filter:** Gmail's spam filter uses NLP to identify and filter out spam emails.
- **Search:** Gmail's search feature uses NLP to understand the meaning of one's search terms and return relevant results.

Google is constantly working to improve the way that NLP is used in Gmail. In the future, we can expect to see even more innovative ways that NLP can be used to help us manage our email and communicate more effectively. Like most items on this list, Gmail is free to use, and Google for Education can avail your school of free email and/or Google Classroom accounts for your teachers and students so they can utilize these features and the significant storage space that usually only comes with a monthly subscription.

Google Outside of Gmail, many teachers have been using Google and other search engines to prepare class materials, and our students have been using them to do research for reports and essays for many years. But Google is no ordinary search engine. It has risen to become one of, if not the most, powerful sources of information on the face of the planet. Google can help our teachers and students prepare written materials and presentations in a number of ways.

First, Google can help one find the information they need to write their material. One can use Google Search to find articles, websites, and other resources that are relevant to their topic. One can also use Google Scholar to find academic articles on their topic.

Our students need to learn the life skill of writing emails of quality, and Gmail's tools offer a lot of assistance for perfecting this craft.

Second, Google can help the researcher organize their thoughts and ideas. They can use Google Docs to create an outline for their essay. They can also use Google Sheets to create a table of contents or a list of bullet points.

Third, Google can help one proofread their essay. They can use Google Docs' built-in grammar and spell checker to identify and correct errors. They can also use Google Translate to translate their essay into another language.

Finally, Google can help one format their material. The writer can use Google Docs to format their essay according to the style guide they are using. One can also use Google Fonts to choose a font for their essay.

It is important to point out that using the vast package of Google research tools should be done with the proper content filters and firewalls in place to protect oneself and one's students from coming in contact with inappropriate material.

Overall, Google is a very valuable tool that can help one write and format a variety of projects more effectively, and, of course, it's free.

Google Translate For the dual-curriculum format of many American Jewish day schools, it is very useful to have a tool that can easily help teachers and students translate their ideas from English to Hebrew. Google Translate is a machine translation service developed by Google to translate text, documents, and websites from one language into another. It offers a website interface, a mobile app for Android and iOS, and an API that helps developers build browser extensions and software applications.

Google Translate was launched in 2006, and it has been constantly improving ever since. It now supports over 100 languages, and it can translate text, speech, and even real-time video.

Google Translate uses a neural machine translation system, which is a type of machine translation that is based on artificial neural networks. Neural machine translation systems are more accurate than traditional statistical machine translation systems, and they are also able to translate more complex sentences.

In our Jewish day schools, Google Translate is a valuable tool that can be used to help our students build their Hebrew vocabulary, work on Hebrew writing skills, and

communicate with Hebrew-speaking people the world over. It can also help students to learn Hebrew language by assisting them in understanding Hebrew language content. Like the Google features mentioned above, Google Translate is free to use.

It is important to point out that Google Translate is not a flawless product, and it can make mistakes. It is important to be aware of the limitations of Google Translate before using it. For example, Google Translate is often not able to translate colloquialisms, slang, or idioms accurately. One will often find that it has difficulty with Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew.

Google's Bard Experiment Now, I do have to admit that this entire article was a large-scale experiment for me. Google is in the process of creating a massive language model from Google AI, trained on an enormous dataset of text and code. It is called Bard and is currently in testing, and I leaned on it heavily in writing this article to see what it could do for me. It can generate text, translate languages, write different kinds of creative content, and answer questions in an informative way. It can perform many kinds of tasks and is a sophisticated version of what already existed in the form of the "Google Assistant." The difference is that, while Google Assistant would compile a long list of sources and websites to answer one's questions, Bard can:

- Follow one's instructions and complete one's requests more thoughtfully.
- Use its knowledge to answer the user's questions in a comprehensive and informative way, even if they are open-ended, challenging, or strange. In the past, Google Assistant would just present a list of relevant websites.
- It will generate different creative text formats of text content, like poems, code, scripts, musical pieces, emails, letters, etc., and can match the personal requirements the user sets.

To quote Google directly:

It's a really exciting time to be working on these technologies as we translate deep research and breakthroughs into products that truly help people. That's the journey we've been on with large language models. Two years ago, we unveiled next-generation language and conversation

...Google Translate is a valuable tool that can be used to help our students build their Hebrew vocabulary, work on Hebrew writing skills, and communicate with Hebrew-speaking people...

capabilities powered by our Language Model for Dialogue Applications (or LaMDA for short).

We've been working on an experimental conversational AI service, powered by LaMDA, that we're calling Bard. And today, we're taking another step forward by opening it up to trusted testers ahead of making it more widely available to the public in the coming weeks.

Bard seeks to combine the breadth of the world's knowledge with the power, intelligence, and creativity of our large language models. It draws on information from the web to provide fresh, high-quality responses. Bard can be an outlet for creativity, and a launchpad for curiosity, helping you to explain new discoveries from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope to a 9-year-old, or learn more about the best strikers in football right now, and then get drills to build your skills.

We're releasing it initially with our lightweight model version of LaMDA. This much smaller model requires significantly less computing power, enabling us to scale to more users, and allowing for more feedback. We'll combine external feedback with our own internal testing to make sure Bard's responses meet a high bar for quality, safety, and groundedness in real-world information. We're excited for this phase of testing to help us continue to learn and improve Bard's quality and speed.

Special Education One of the many hats I wear is director of special education at Derech HaTorah, and I am directly involved in the scheduling and administering of special education services for all of Derech HaTorah's students who receive services through our local school district. One of the many services our district offers is assistive technology (AT). Most of our students who receive AT receive it in the form of a district-issued Chromebook that we can lock down to meet our specifications. Those Chromebooks avail our students of several NLP tools that help them express themselves in writing, gain communication and typing skills, and bridge the gap between themselves and their peers. The two most useful tools I have found (aside from spelling and grammar checking) are called "predictive text" and "speech-to-text."

Predictive text (PT) is a feature of some computer programs that attempts to predict the next word or phrase a user is likely to type. This is done by analyzing the user's past typing habits and the context of the current text. PT can be a helpful tool for speeding up typing and reducing errors. However, it is important to be aware of its limitations. PT is not always

accurate, and it can sometimes suggest inappropriate words or phrases. It is also important to remember that predictive text is not a replacement for proofreading.

Speech-to-text (STT) technology is a type of AT that allows users to convert spoken words into text. This can be done using a variety of methods, including microphones, headsets, and specialized software. We utilize STT technology in our resource room for students who have difficulty typing or writing. It can also be used by people who want to save time, such as those who take a lot of notes or who want to transcribe audio recordings.

There are several different STT technologies available, and the best one to use will depend on one's individual needs and preferences. Some of the most popular STT technologies include Dragon NaturallySpeaking, IBM Watson Speech-to-Text, and Google Cloud Speech-to-Text. There are free software applications and extensions that we have enabled on our Chromebooks, and I am happy to speak with any educators who would like more information about which extensions we use, and how we use them.

Summary of The Benefits of AI and NLPs NLPs have developed significantly since I have been in the field of education, and they are a tremendous resource for teachers and students alike. They can be employed in the general education classroom to help our students build proper writing skills and can assist teachers in teaching Hebrew language as well. They can be incredibly useful for students with learning differences and can help those students bridge the gap between themselves and their peers. NLP is also used in a variety of products and services, such as Google Assistant, Siri, and Alexa, all of which can be very useful for educators with the proper content filters and firewalls in place; but I would strongly recommend against access to such "AI assistants" for our students.

The Biggest Drawback of NLPs Though NLPs have brought a lot of good to our classrooms, it is clear that there are a couple of drawbacks, and the foremost that I have observed is plagiarism. I have already encountered examples of students who utilized AI to completely create their book reports and essays. AI can be used to generate text that is similar to human-written text. This can be used to create plagiarized essays, reports, and other types of academic work. AI can also be used to summarize text. This can be used to plagia-

Our students need to learn the life skill of writing emails of quality, and Gmail's tools offer a lot of assistance for perfecting this craft.

size work by taking a summary of a text and passing it off as original work. In addition, AI can be used to write different versions of the same text. This can be used to plagiarize work by submitting versions that are slightly different from the source material, or different versions of the same text to different teachers. Our students are resourceful and often learn new technologies quicker than the adults in their lives. As AI technology continues to develop, students will likely find new and innovative ways to use AI to cheat.

Educators need to be aware of the ways that students are using AI to plagiarize their work. Educators should also be aware of the limitations of AI-based plagiarism detection systems. AI-based systems are not perfect, and they can be fooled by students who are determined to cheat.

Educators should take steps to prevent plagiarism, such as:

- Creating a culture of academic integrity in the classroom
- Teaching students about plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarism
- Using plagiarism detection software
- Monitoring student work for signs of plagiarism
- Providing students with opportunities to receive help with their writing

Plagiarism is a serious problem, and educators need to take steps to prevent it. By being aware of the ways that students are using AI to plagiarize their work, educators can take steps to protect their students from the consequences of plagiarism.

The next great drawback of NLPs is the breakdown of core skills that used to be a hallmark of the American education system. As we have become increasingly dependent on word processors and NLPs, spelling and writing have been put on the back burner in most classrooms within the United

States. NLPs lead to students relying too heavily on them and not developing their own writing skills. If students can use NLPs to generate text without having to put in the effort to write it themselves, they may not develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are essential for good writing.

There is a growing concern in the academic community that NLPs could lead to students becoming less creative in their writing. If students can use NLPs to generate text that is already formatted and organized, they may not be as motivated to come up with their own unique ideas. As teachers, we need to strengthen our resolve to teach our students how to be quality writers. Our students will gravitate to AI tools that will help them complete their work, and without the diligence of educators pushing students to develop their own talents, these skills will continue to decline.

The Future In the 2020s, AI researchers are continuing to develop new and innovative ways to use AI in education. Some of the most promising areas of research include:

- Using AI to develop personalized learning experiences for each student
- Using AI to provide students with real-time feedback on their work
- Using AI to help students with problem-solving and critical thinking skills
- Using AI to help students with their writing skills

Overall, the use of AI in education is a rapidly growing field with the potential to revolutionize the way we learn. I would like to thank Google's Bard Experiment for all of its AI assistance in writing this article. Its potential is truly amazing. As always, if any readers have questions about the contents of this article, they are welcome to reach out to me for more information. 

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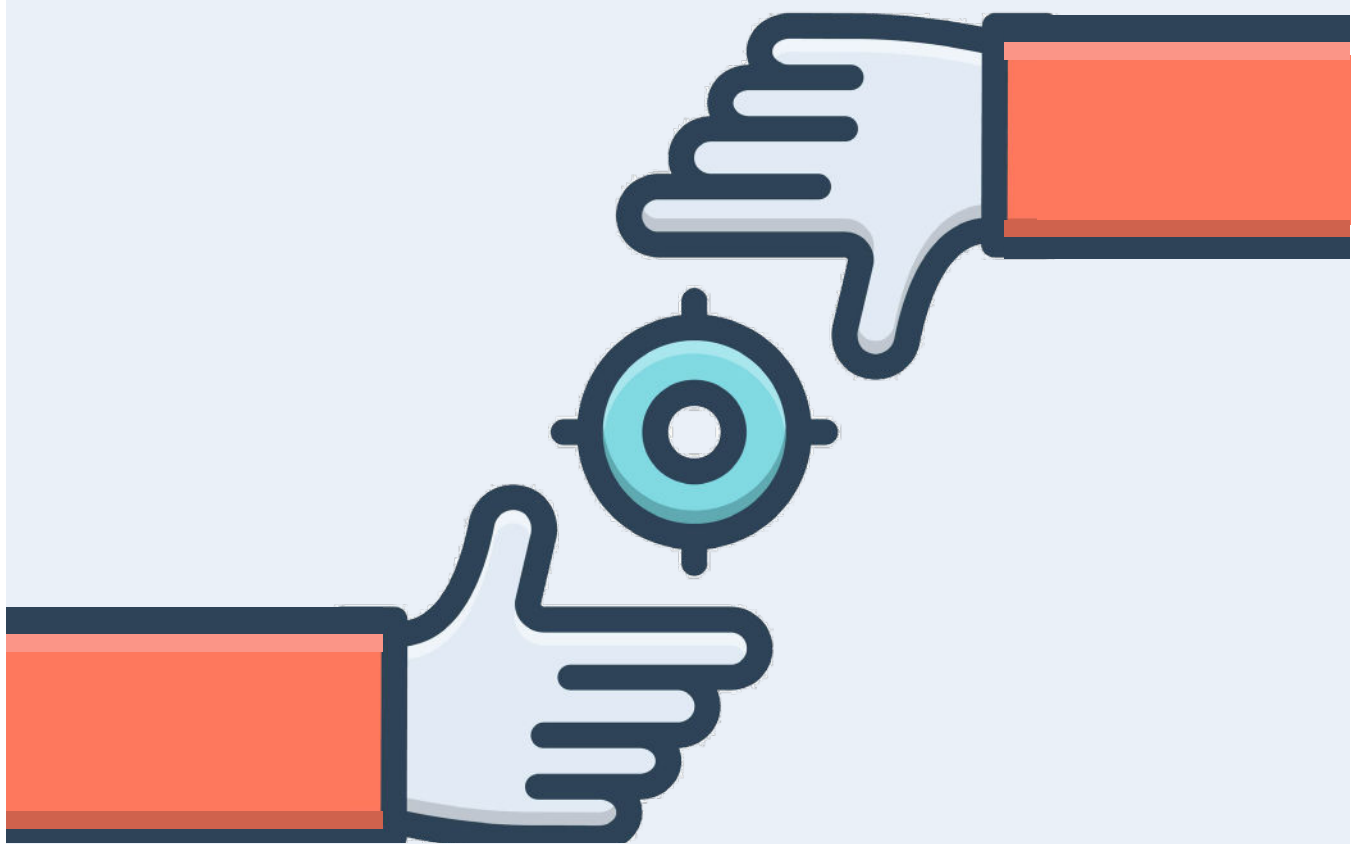
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Rabbi Chastain welcomes feedback at rabbichastain@derechhatorah.org

Three Technology Focal Points for Schools



People have a lot of opinions on the intersection of technology and education. Some parents and educators worry rightly that technology is not safe, that it can be a distraction, and that kids already have enough screen time. However, “technology” is a very broad term. We would benefit from a more nuanced conversation about what technology is, what we hope to get from it, and how we can best use technology to benefit the learning in our classrooms. Goals need to be clearly identified and articulated beyond “we want to use more technology” or “we need to use our smartboards.”

In my work helping Jewish day schools with professional development, teacher training, and edtech implementation, we’ve identified a great need for tech education. This can be broken down to three areas of development: two goals for students and their learning and another goal for teachers and staff. The three goals should define how technology should be integrated into our schools.

1. *The cultivation of general technology skills in students*

We call this **digital literacy**. Are students graduating with skills to create documents, make presentations, use Excel, skills we know are vital in the modern-day workplace? Perhaps these skills have traditionally been taught in a “computer class,” but from our experience, integrating tech education throughout the curriculum is key for actual skill-building.

To achieve a more integrated approach to tech education in Jewish schools, we

work on creating a tech-centered scope and sequence, and training teachers how to effectively teach digital literacy. Students should learn how to use documents while writing their English papers, create presentations for their history projects and use design tools in their science classes. This frees up the traditional computer class for the second facet of technology education.

2. *The cultivation of more robust tech skills from students*

This includes computer science knowledge, coding skills, and many more targeted tech skill sets that will give students a leg up in their professional lives. New York public schools receive resources through initiatives like CS4All, but non-public schools don’t have access to the same programs. This makes teaching computer science incredibly difficult.

To add to the challenge, coding programs are notoriously difficult to staff. The few Jewish schools that do teach coding generally rely on self-paced coding instructional platforms; unfortunately, these may be ineffective and boring. Our organization has developed robust and customizable coding programs for students from grades three through twelve. By providing curricula and weekly professional development, we have been able to help schools build unique and effective computer science programs. These programs help

By providing curricula and weekly professional development, we have been able to help schools build unique and effective computer science programs.

students learn incredibly useful career skills and work on problem solving, creative thinking, and grit.

3. *The cultivation of tech skills in teachers*

If teachers have access to proper professional development programming, the technology education experience can be enhanced for students. This includes everything from using an LMS, such as Schoology or Google Classroom, to give grades, building a reservoir of the proper learning materials to present to students who are visual learners, and digitizing the sharing and collecting of digital assignments (to limit paper use and improve expedience). This can often be facilitated through the integration of edtech software. Integrating software streamlines the submitting of grades, learning management, report card

generation, intervention planning, and blended learning (which is a whole world unto itself).

It's important for school leaders to realize that technology is just another way to best prepare students for success in the real world, and it does not always require an increase in screen time. Even before tech education reaches students, the integration of technology in classrooms can begin with teacher training and infrastructure building through the implementation of edtech software.

In conclusion, there are many ways to bring technology into your school, whether it's student-facing or just aimed at teachers and administrative staff. The process of implementation can seem daunting, but schools do not have to go about this alone. External support is available, and solutions can be highly specialized to reflect the values and priorities of each Jewish day school. □

Technology is just another way to best prepare students for success in the real world, and it does not always require an increase in screen time.

Morris Kishk is founder and Executive Director of Revolution Learning and TeachCS, LLC



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The Case for Technology in Schools



It can be clearly observed that the style of education, and especially *Torah* education has transitioned over the past century. Children used to learn 1-on-1 or in small groups with a *melamed* around a table, often with only one *sefer* to share. Over the years, *Torah* education has grown from the *melamed* in the back of the shul to single-classroom schoolhouses to high-tech academic campuses. More recently, the largest impact on education is the usage and availability of technology. In a sense, teachers and adults are immigrants to the modern digital age in which students and children are natives. Being an immigrant to technology is defined as having not been raised in a digital environment and being less comfortable or even fearful of technology (Čut, 2017). As natives to technology, children do more through the usage of technology offered in a tech-savvy world. Natives to technology have a large-scale social life that exists within the digital world allowing their thoughts to be highly influenced by digital media (Wang, et al, 2013).

One of the main missions of schools is to prepare students for the future. It is therefore imperative for schools to implement technology into the everyday lives of their students. Success for students will be measured by digital abilities as most jobs now and in the future will require tech-savviness. Schools not offering an opportunity for students to access their education and nurture their technological inclinations are remiss. (*Each school should consult Da'as Torah for guidance on this.*)

Despite the importance that technology plays in everyday life, it also creates many issues and distractions in the classroom and at home. Children may walk around the house with earbuds in, limiting the organic interactions between parents and children

and between siblings. As well, overstimulation from the amount of usage and connection to technology can lead to ADHD-like symptoms and classroom disruptions (Pepper, 2022).

Another issue is when school-related social drama continues after the school day ends on messaging apps and other digital media platforms. It goes without saying that all devices must be filtered, monitored, and locked down. Like everything else that we introduce into our lives and our schools, technology must be presented to the students with caution, explaining to children how it too can be best used to serve *Hashem* and enhance our level of *kedushah*.

Implementation Acknowledging that technology creates challenges is important, yet, when used appropriately it can be a positive and beneficial educational tool in schools. Technology can be used in the classroom in several ways, including review games, interactive projects, digital entrance and exit tickets, and evaluations.

The usage of games as a review is one of the more effective ways to engage students with materials already taught in class. Educational gaming platforms allow students to interact with the materials taught in classrooms in a fun way. Some of these platforms include Google educational suites, Pear-deck, Kami, Jamboard, Kahoot, Ed puzzle, Quizlet, Class Dojo, Seasaw, Go Noodle, Gimkit, and many more. Each of these platforms offers a unique experience for the student to interact with and study topics that have been taught in class.

Rethinking Teaching Technology invites teachers to rethink their teaching. Instead of just supporting their old methodology, teachers should think of ways to enhance the learning experience, using technology

Like everything else that we introduce into our lives and our schools, technology must be presented to the students with caution, explaining to children how it too can be best used to serve Hashem and enhance our level of kedushah.

as a proactive teaching tool rather than a reactive review tool. One teaching platform that encompasses technology is the concept of the flipped classroom, or flip-teaching. In flip-teaching, the teacher pre-records their class or shiur and sends the video home as homework. In the classroom, the teacher then works in small groups to support the students as they work on the worksheets or online reviews that would have otherwise been assigned to be done at home. This method proactively uses technology and advanced education and the learner's experience in school. This approach is extremely helpful in *Torah* learning, especially to support students from families that have a weaker Judaic-studies background.

Because flipped classrooms rely on teachers pre-recording classes, students can feel engaged in the classwork since the class is built on a technological and digital platform. Flip teaching teaches students in their native language and casts their teachers as digitally savvy and therefore relatable. Another added benefit is that students who are struggling with skills can review the videos on their own, but with their teachers. They can replay the video to find the point that they became confused about and identify their own learning needs. For students who need more time and additional instruction, the same videos that will be posted to the entire class can be sent a day ahead. This not only will give the struggling student a head start, but will also build their confidence in class the following day.

Another example of rethinking teaching involves the use of the Google Education Suite. Google has several powerful extensions that support teacher presentations, interactive classroom activities, and individualizing each student's learning experience. Google shared docs can be used to have students work together on projects, share notes, or gather teacher feedback in real time. An extension like Pear Deck allows the students to learn at their own pace while feeling engaged and connected with the work. At the same time, the teacher can monitor each student's work and give individualized attention to students who may be falling behind or to the

gifted students who need additional work.

Technology has also changed the way that students go about project-based learning (PBL). PBL is designed to teach students to try and solve real world problems and present possible solutions. Before the use of technology as a learning tool, students would sit together and work on one file or paper presentation. Now, with shared work access through platforms like Google, students can sit in their own space and work together, proof each other's work, and work collaboratively on the problem they are trying to solve. The presentations can also be multi-faceted with media files, review sheets, and question-and-answer forms. This helps to create a more engaged-looking presentation while allowing the instant intake of data.

Gaming platforms such as Kahoot are commonly used in classrooms as review activities. Gaming platforms can be used to see how much students gain in a class or on a topic but should also be followed up with reviews. Most gaming platforms offer data collection. This allows the teacher to track the progress of their students. This data is critical in evaluating the usage of technology in each classroom. Like

For students who need more time and additional instruction, the same videos that will be posted to the entire class can be sent a day ahead.

many other gaming platforms, Kahoot offers the ability to pull reviews of each game. These reviews include the number of easy and hard answers, how many students completed the game, and which questions students struggled on. It also identifies individual players and their scores, as well as which questions they got right and wrong. Using all these tools in a classroom enables teachers to track their students, engage their students, and advance students' learning experience. Following the exciting game, and utilizing the game platform, it is a good idea for teachers to prepare written review sheets. This allows the students to reflect on the game and the answers and move the review from a game to an educational experience. □

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Sharing Your Vision with Podcasting



Bob Snyder

As a leader, you know all about the importance of communication. One could contend that leadership is all about communication - the ability to relay your message to a targeted community. How that message best gets relayed, in a way that evokes the passion you've intended, is where the medium of podcasting has made staggering inroads - inroads with business, academics, and non-profits. For this group, podcasting provides a conduit between leader and community that is long-form, first-hand, intimate, and now wildly popular.

If you have thought about podcasting as a personality-driven entertainment vehicle, you would not be wrong. Since its infancy in 2005, the bulk of attention on podcasting has centered around high-profile celebrities flocking to an unregulated, relatively inexpensive pipeline to the world. And while a bulk of the five million podcasts that are available on Apple Podcasts are entertainment driven COVID brought about a rush by enterprises looking to find new methods of communicating with a narrowcast audience. Today, a scan of Apple Podcasts will convey a wide range of podcasts used specifically by leaders promoting resources and sharing messages of brand, mission, and hope.

Mass media technology has grown as fast as any other notable technology sector. YouTube videos, Facebook posts, digital magazines, streaming networks, and on-demand audio (podcasting) have taken over as dominating influential vehicles for content providers to reach content consumers. Often, the type of content being disseminated dictates the best outlet to use, and of late, podcasting has won the hearts, minds, and wallets

of those looking to inform or entertain. While video and print are for the eyes, podcasting is exclusively for the ears with the added unique benefit of being a multitasking friendly medium - you can always be doing something else when you listen to a podcast. As an on-demand medium, podcasting happens where the user wants, when the user wants, and on whatever device the user wants.

From archives and oral histories to employee relations and consumer education, from event promotion to membership engagement, podcasting is at its core communication of information you want to be shared with a targeted audience with benefits that can match or exceed many of the virtues of a website. In the same way a website is meant to attract, inform, and in some cases entertain, podcasts are websites for the ears, with the information converted to long-form audio.

In the non-profit and academic sectors, using podcasting to create a digital library in the sky can be invaluable. The oral history of an organization often then leads to a series of episodes on specific subject matter that can be retrieved and resourced at any time.

One example that might resonate in the non-profit and academic sectors is the passionate use of podcasting by Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School. The Toronto-based organization promotes history and exceptional academics in a unique downtown setting. In this case, Paul Penna DJDS publishes two to three episodes per month talking with the people who make the school stand out. To hear more and to see how podcasts are displayed in a podcast directory, search Apple, Spotify, or Google Podcasts for Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School

...podcasting provides a conduit between leader and community that is long-form, first-hand, intimate, and now wildly popular.

and take a listen to one or more episodes to stir up your own ideas.

This all brings us back to being a good leader and one who is looking to effectively communicate with a constituency. Podcasting, as a contemporary form of

communication and public relations, is becoming a solution to a common problem - how, as a contemporary administrator, can I more effectively inform and engage the school community? If you've considered the benefits of podcasting, you may well be on your way to a purposeful solution. □

In the same way a website is meant to attract, inform, and in some cases entertain, podcasts are websites for the ears, with the information converted to long-form audio.

Michelle and Bob Snyder run PERENNIAL PODCASTING PARTNERS (formerly Hometown Podcasts, LLC.) Bob has led radio and media organizations for three decades, including ESPN Radio in Chicago. Michelle previously served as Director of Communications at Maimonides School in Brookline, MA. The company focuses on creating branded digital content for businesses and organizations of all sizes by incorporating podcasts into their outreach and communications strategy to inform, educate, hire, motivate, and serve as an overall perennial resource for a community of like-minded people. Bob can be reached at rmsnyder@perennialpodcasting.com.



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Solving Problems with Innovation and Flexibility



Technology. Can't live with it, can't live without it.” Hashem gives us tools with the choice to use them to elevate society, or not use them and let the opportunity go unexplored. When students open their computer for a teacher's lesson, they open a device to help them experience the material in new and exciting ways. “The World Wide Web was created to meet the demand for ... information sharing between scientists in universities and institutes around the world.”¹ This information sharing has proved to be an incredible asset, especially for our generation's educators and students. The games, lessons, and content that are created and built by our teachers and others provide an extra dimension of learning in and out of the classroom. Using technology in this way allows for an unparalleled individualization of learning. The benefit of this is seen by anyone watching a student interact with the lesson. Technology allows for both student learning and teacher collaboration to enable more complex yet individualized lesson plans.

The problem we all face is what happens when there is too much information sharing. “The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) was enacted by Congress in 2000 to address concerns about children's access to obscene or harmful content over the Internet.”² This act is a baseline for content filtering at schools. However, in our specific educational communities of Jewish Orthodox education, our need for filtering may be stronger than what is federally mandated. Every school needs to identify its guidelines for “content” and then proceed in teaching its students in the best way that honors their educational goals. Some institutions may shy away from any content; however, I

believe that with enough creative solutions, technological educational tools can be available to all.

Another question facing school leaders, especially in smaller schools or schools still in the process of adopting technology, relates to staffing. Who is in charge of the technology? Who should decide what technologies should be available – or even required – in the classroom? How does a school make the correct technology choices, especially in light of the content filtering challenge we mentioned?

There are many staff members with varying degrees of talent at each institution, and allowing their input on issues will help create avenues for growth and allow schools to fix issues “in-house”. My personal story shows just how much we can utilize our staff and help enhance our schools' visions while creating additional opportunities for staff development and professional growth.

In 2020, I was working as a fourth-grade teacher. COVID-19 hit and, like the rest of the educational world, our students needed devices to access educational content remotely. While our school purchased computers and filtering software, the devices and software were not compatible even though the companies we purchased them from assured us they would be. The school was advised to purchase Windows devices as they can last longer and have more capability, and we were told to use GoGuardian to be the “filter”. GoGuardian does work with a lot of Windows devices and servers, however our school had an Active Directory with Azure that was not completely supported by GoGuardian at the time. Finding devices during COVID was a challenge so we needed a fix for our Windows computers, and fast.

Every school needs to identify its guidelines for “content” and then proceed in teaching its students in the best way that honors their educational goals.

¹ <https://home.cern/science/computing/birth-web>. Accessed 09/18/2022

² <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act> Accessed 11/03/2022

As someone naturally intuitive with technology, growing up in a family of “techies,” I offered to help. I called around to every computer contact I had, the school had, and others I found on social media and help sites with the mission of how we “filter” these devices for our school’s needs. After many phone calls and emails, technology plans, and talks with multiple software companies, we found solutions that worked best for our institution. Interestingly, the solution we selected was from a Jewish person who commented on a tech post on a national non-Jewish question board. We ended up hiring the company he worked for to remotely help us install a new solution.

Years later we have morphed with the curve balls and we currently have many technologies running at the same time to achieve our current, ever-changing and expanding needs.

When creating comprehensive technological solutions for an institution, the first step is to make a roadmap of what the primary goals are. Then one can create a plan of software and hardware purchases and strategies that will allow the institution to reach its educational goals realistically and efficiently.

One of the first choices a school has to make is what hardware to purchase. Two cost-effective options are Chromebooks and Windows laptops. With Chromebooks, whitelist filtering can be done straight from the Google Admin Suite. Policies and levels of filtering can be set for each of the organizational units within the school, such as teachers, lower school students, and upper school students. Chromebooks can be inexpensive compared to other devices. A drawback of Chromebooks is that they only receive updates for a relatively short period of time, and the devices a school purchases may need to be replaced in just a few years. Additionally, Chromebooks work with the Google suite of software, such as Docs and Sheets, but not with Microsoft Word and Excel.

The next choice is utilizing Microsoft Endpoint to set specific policies specifically for Windows devices. This was the fix that was recommended for us at the time and it worked well. You can set policies to “lockdown” the devices and add a whitelist as well. Windows devices are thought to allow for more capability offline and don’t suffer from the end-of-life dates found with Chromebooks.

There are great companies that provide all-encompassing filtering solutions for a variety of devices, such as Techloq, Gentech, and Netspark. The benefits of each should be

researched to ensure it will meet the needs of your institution. The biggest challenge of using these services is they tend to be more expensive.

With technology, we all have to be creative to make it work for us. It is also imperative to expect curveballs because often such technological initiatives may not perform as planned once launched, and being flexible with the roadmap is critical for its success. However, when we get things to work it is an amazing feeling to be an integral part of that success, in addition to the success of our greater goal – enhancing student learning.

After our school’s COVID experience, I was hired as the Director of Innovation. In my current position I work on the greater innovative practices, specifically focusing on the marketing and technological capabilities of the school.

Some great examples of technology usage include:

- Teachers use Smart Boards during interactive lessons, such as students highlighting specific parts of *pesukim* and *meforshim* as they explain it on a deeper level.
- Students send in their thoughts on a virtual sticky note as the teacher is teaching and soliciting feedback simultaneously.
- Recording songs in music class while using computerized instruments and software.
- Research done on a variety of school subjects.
- Students accommodated using text-to-speech software to help with essay writing.
- Songs and videos are projected as a learning tool.
- Interactive games for content review.

I am amazed every day at just how much is added with the technological capabilities that we have today. It is up to us as administrators to make sure that we follow “*lifnei iver lo setain michshol*.” When we give technology to children we must have it filtered within the guidelines of respect toward our communities. At the same time, we also need to allow our students to utilize and learn with technological tools in the best way possible.

Supporting technology and software is an absolute pleasure of mine. It’s one thing to give over information via direct teaching (something I love to do as well); however, it is another thing entirely to guide those with the awareness and knowledge to access information appropriately and efficiently for themselves. The learners will be able to support their own learning - a skill they retain for life. ■

Lakie Blech, educator by day and fitness instructor by night, currently serves as Director of Innovation at the Phoenix Hebrew Academy. Lakie, an out-of-the-box thinker, focuses on the betterment of institutions. She is on track for her Master's degree in Education and Innovation (Principalship) in May of 2023. Lakie can be reached at MorahLakie@gmail.com

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A Conversation About Technology in School: Balancing Teacher and Parent Perspectives



Rabbi Aaron Kutnowski and Dr. Leanne Morris

Much of this article is presented in the form of a conversation to allow the medium to function as part of the message. Conversations have an important place in guiding any change in school culture.

Modern North American society is highly educated with more than half of Canadians going on to higher education. Recently, though, there has been significant stagnation in tense topics being discussed openly and constructively. At times, communities will be in a gridlock around certain ideas and do not seem to be able to get past it to a consensus or resolution. For some topics, it can be even more complex. Technology has become such a topic especially for how it should be utilized in schools. Teaching pedagogy has mostly embraced the use of technology with minimal limitations, especially when it has been proven through data that a particular curriculum will speed up the process of learning and achieve learning outcomes.

Some do ask the question: At what expense? Parents can feel left at the sidelines. It can be difficult to balance desires of parents for greater exposure, as well as balance required legislated curricular outcomes in a timely fashion. This is especially difficult when also navigating a dual curriculum. One of the first stages in beginning to implement a technology policy is truly understanding the constituents of the group i.e., school. This can be accomplished mainly through open and meaningful conversations.

“One of the first pieces of advice Rabbi Dovid Engel ever gave me as a new school administrator was to hold on to the *rebbe*/teacher perspective,” stated Rabbi Aaron Kutnowski, Head of Judaic Studies at Halpern Akiva Academy, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

“You need to remember what it was like and empathize when you requested certain support from your administrator and weren’t able to receive it,” shared Rabbi Engel.

Teacher Perspectives

Recently, at Halpern Akiva Academy, teachers were asked to express some important uses they have found for technology in the classroom. The administrative team, Mrs. Cameron, Principal, and Rabbi Kutnowski, Head of Judaic Studies, are hoping this will lead to the school developing an appropriate technology philosophy. Teachers shared the following benefits of technology:

It can provide a broader range of books for children to read than keeping a large physical library, while being less expensive for the school. Many online resources provide a built-in assessment management system. Instead of requiring students to re-write their essays by hand, they can easily be corrected on the computer.

Additionally, “the use of technology can save a tremendous amount of teacher preparation,” expressed a seasoned teacher at Halpern Akiva Academy. “We can help students advance or catch up at their own rate in a specific area of study with technology, in a way that we just can’t without it,” she attested.

Teachers were then asked to share some concerns they have with the use of technology. One teacher expressed that plagiarism is a growing concern. How to properly cite needs to be taught well and in earlier grades. Another concern was that students have significant difficulty judging the quality and authenticity of the information on the internet. This can pose an issue for adults as well.

“Digital citizenship is part of our wellness curriculum and students explore this topic with their gym teacher. Students are encouraged to continue utilizing critical thinking skills when navigating the internet or while on devices at home,” shared Mrs. Cameron.

Teaching pedagogy has mostly embraced the use of technology with minimal limitations, especially when it has been proven through data that a particular curriculum will speed up the process of learning and achieve learning outcomes.

Some of the learning outcomes of the digital citizenship unit are understanding appropriate, responsible behavior with regards to technology use, promoting and practicing safe, legal, and responsible use of technology and information, and exhibiting appropriate behavior in the use of technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity.

A Parent Perspective

Dr. Leanne Morris recently returned to her hometown of Calgary, Alberta, with her family and has enrolled her three sons at Halpern Akiva Academy. “At first we had many concerns, as any family would have when switching schools, but Rabbi Kutnowski was willing to talk openly and listen to our perspective, especially around technology and device use in the classroom.”

“My experience working in pediatrics is that when it comes to technology, more is not necessarily better. Emerging data suggests increasing exposure to technology can displace opportunities for socialization and often interferes with, rather than enhances, learning,” commented Dr. Morris. “My fear is all of this exposure to technology without education around its pitfalls makes kids vulnerable to tech addiction, mindless consumption, and may result in children and adolescents that are less likely to successfully navigate the digital world around them. Unfortunately, I see children with these struggles regularly, and am so grateful that HAA has been so thoughtful about appropriate exposure to technology,” shared Dr. Morris. “Despite constant pressure to adopt the newest technologies, schools should be increasingly thoughtful about what, if anything, each technology adds to learning and development, and perhaps, more importantly, what it displaces, before allowing it into our children’s classrooms,” concluded Dr. Morris.

“When I originally spoke with Mr. and Dr. Morris, I immediately noticed their earnestness and passion for education,” recalled Rabbi Kutnowski. “As we have gotten to know each other even more, we continue to find more and more common ground.” Rabbi Kutnowski continued, “Even from that initial conversation, we broached touchy subjects, but with an openness to properly explore it. In an out-of-town community with a much broader spectrum of the Jewish community as

constituents of the school, it can be a real juggling act making sure everyone feels heard and facilitated. Halpern Akiva Academy does not want to be in the dark ages, but we do embrace technology with caution.”

Dr. Morris clarified her suggestion. “If I could distill down the one thing I think is paramount in ensuring the success of our children in our hyperconnected digital world, it would be establishing a digital plan, ideally one we create together as a community. This requires starting with the goals and values we have for our children’s development and education and working backwards to critically appraise every new technology for evidence of clear, significant benefit with minimal harm before allowing it into the classroom. With this philosophy, agreed upon as a community, we may find there are a very small number of technologies that actually make the cut.”

The Conversation

As a result of these conversations, the Calgary Jewish Federation, in conjunction with several other Jewish organizations in Calgary, including Halpern Akiva Academy, will be hosting an event at JCC for parents entitled, “Screen Savvy Parenting: Navigating Healthy Screen Habits for Our Children” given by Dr. Morris. “I had been talking to Dr. Morris at length about having a discussion around technology with our parent body so that we will best be able to construct and implement a technology policy. Other local institutions were eager to jump onboard and we were happy to work with them,” Rabbi Kutnowski reflected.

“It can be a hard conversation to have,” confessed Rabbi Kutnowski. “Many parents communicate that they expect their children to navigate technology and master it, even at a young age. Our school has embraced a data-driven decision-making process, but when it comes to technology, research is still limited. That being said, facts are beginning to emerge.”

“It can be tempting to buy into the fear that children will miss out on the ability to use technology if they aren’t exposed to it. However, research is emerging that suggests the opposite is the case and that high exposure at a young age is associated with decreased academic achievement and emotional regulation,” stated Dr. Morris.

“...this exposure to technology without education around its pitfalls makes kids vulnerable to tech addiction, mindless consumption, and may result in children and adolescents that are less likely to successfully navigate the digital world around them.”

In a smaller Jewish community like Calgary, one of the deliverables students receive is a greater amount of teacher attention. With smaller class sizes and student to teacher ratios, there can more easily be differentiation and individual attention. This does not only hold true for the students, but for parents as well. Parents can have an increased role in the school. Even volunteering can make a major impact. “It is not always easy for parents to get as involved as they’d like. Life can be so busy,” mused Mrs. Cameron, principal of Halpern Akiva Academy. “At the same time, if a parent is passionate about something and approaches administration, we want to facilitate their involvement.”

Schools cannot implement every parent suggestion, but it is feasible for many parent perspectives to be heard by the administration of smaller schools. At the same time, the teaching staff are regularly receiving professional development and is educated in pedagogy coupled with hands-on experience from the classroom. They are entrusted to be the experts of how to run their classrooms.

“It’s important to nurture a culture of having staff be active listeners to parents and parent input, and this is not specific

to discussions around technology,” commented Rabbi Kutnowski.

“Changing a school’s culture, even slightly, can take a long time, especially around something that can be as contentious as technology. Our school leadership is taking slow measured steps,” shared Ms. Kelsey Lovell, Director of Inclusion and Diversity at HAA.

“As a community school, we want to appeal to as wide a range of Jewish families as we can. In recent years, distance from technology has been superficially tied to a certain level of Jewish religiosity. Technology does not need to be framed that way. It is in our school’s best interest to not let that perspective take hold, especially if our school will be embracing a technology policy,” expressed Rabbi Kutnowski.

Rabbi Kutnowski has begun talks with Rabbi Baruch Noy, CoJDS’ Educational Technology Consultant, about how to best approach HAA’s technology policy. It will be interesting to see what comes out of this process, but without a doubt, opening the conversation has helped everyone understand the value of developing such a policy and created a stronger school community. ■

Rabbi Aaron Kutnowski is the Head of Judaic Studies at Halpern Akiva Academy of Calgary. He holds an honors degree in English Literature from York University of Toronto, various certificates from Geneva Centre for Autism, and a certificate of completion from the Consortium of Jewish Day School’s (CoJDS) Lilmod U’Lilamed program. Rabbi Kutnowski is passionate about facilitating a genuine relationship with Hashem, Torah and Mitzvot, and with the Jewish people. Contact Rabbi Kutnowski at rabbikutnowski@akiva.ca.

Dr. Leanne Morris, M.D., pediatrician, practiced in Toronto for over a decade before recently returning home to Calgary with her family. She currently works at the Alberta Children’s Hospital in addition to her community pediatric practice. As a mother of four, she finds herself giving parenting advice a lot less and laughing along with parents a whole lot more.

“...if a parent is passionate about something and approaches administration, we want to facilitate their involvement.”



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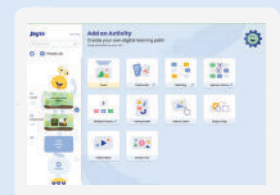
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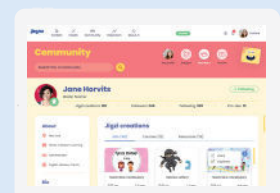
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Technology in the Classroom: Blended Learning



Although COVID has made many Jewish day school educators more aware of technology use in the classroom, the concept of blending learning and technology during class instruction is not new. As early as 2013 researchers were publishing articles about using mixed-mode instruction or technology-mediated instruction and its effectiveness and drawbacks. There are many schools that I have been able to see in action that successfully use technology side by side with their regular, more traditional instruction. In this article, I hope to define what blended learning is, describe what value it adds to the level of learning, and describe a blended learning classroom, including best practices for blended learning course delivery.

What is Blended Learning? The Oxford Dictionary definition of blended learning is “a style of education in which students learn via electronic and online media as well as traditional face-to-face teaching.” The standard educational definition of blended learning is, “The thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences” (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Blended learning or ‘hybrid learning,’ is learning that combines the best of online learning and face-to-face instruction to enhance learning (*Cornell University*).

A class can be technology-rich, but not be considered blended learning. It’s more than just showing a video or playing a class game that a teacher downloaded from the internet. It involves developing higher-order thinking online learning activities that complement the class’s higher-order thinking face-to-face activities. It is a formal educational program where students learn partly online and partly through traditional

methods or supervised instruction. The technological part of the program should offer students some autonomy so they can be somewhat in control of their learning: pausing, skipping, and revisiting material as needed. This autonomy makes the learning personalized as different students will be on various levels and places depending on their mastery of the subject.

The Value Added by Blended Learning

School leaders might see such learning as radical, perhaps too progressive for their schools. But consider the fact that many of our students have been surrounded by technology all their lives and are used to, and expect, relevant, engaging, and interactive learning experiences. They are often unmotivated by the traditional and passive approach of lecture-style teaching with filling in sheets or notetaking. Blended learning can provide more meaningful learning experiences and engage students.

The benefits are not just for students. Both students and instructors become more engaged in reflection and conversation. This requires teachers to re-think and re-examine how they teach, along with the technology, resources, and time for this method of instruction. No matter how blended learning is presented or how motivated it might make students, it is asking for change from our teachers. As a coach, I see too often that our overworked and underappreciated, amazingly devoted staff might not be excited to take on new methods and change the manner they have been teaching for years.

For this reason, teacher buy-in is crucial. Teachers know that they cannot keep all children engaged all the time through frontal teaching. Many have accepted this as normal. We must show our dedicated teachers that another method exists. Blended learning allows teachers to give

There are many schools that I have been able to see in action that successfully use technology side by side with their regular, more traditional instruction.

individualized/small group instruction in a way that no children are left to daydream during lessons. Instead of trying to accommodate all levels in the classroom and feeling like they are only investing in the bottom third, a teacher using blended learning can now help each child reach their full individual potential.

Best Practices for Blended Learning The easiest and smoothest method is to have teachers teach at tables for selected parts of the day. The teacher sits at one table with a group of students, giving small-group instruction. Another group sits with an assistant and receives identical small group instruction or works with teacher-supplied worksheets (reviewing and reinforcing concepts and material they need to know). The other two groups work on Chromebooks preloaded with educational technology that children can then sign into and work at their own pace, with interactive work and games that gather data for teachers and administrators to see where and how the children are scoring and what concepts they are still struggling with. The period of allotted time is divided into three or four segments and the teacher has everyone switch what they're doing when the timer rings.

Classroom management is a concern for teachers being asked to adhere to this new model. If the teacher has her class under control in the traditional setting, she should not worry about it getting worse when splitting the class into groups. I have found when the teacher is clear during the mini-lesson, before having everyone begin their assigned group's work, the children are cooperative. Some teachers find that assigning names to each group (a candy theme, a car theme) allows an easy way of reprimanding and a great way to give "table points" as they scan the room to keep everyone focused. "Candy Canes, great focused work going on at your table!" "Laffy Taffies, you only have five more minutes, are you getting your work done?" Students respond to a teacher who is clear, structured, and consistent. If the teacher is clear about how group time runs, is structured and consistent in when and where each child learns at what times and keeps scanning the room and holding children accountable for their work, blended learning should be a wonderful asset for all classrooms. □

Blended Learning in Action

I spoke with Mr. Richard Altabe, principal of Hebrew Academy of Long Beach Lower School, grades 1-5. He is a passionate educator and is a leading voice in *chinuch*. He shared how blended learning helps differentiate learning in the classroom, as teachers can work with small groups as other children are tracked by the programs they are working on their individual Chrome devices. Mrs. Sherri Kaye, a 4th grade Judaic Studies teacher at HALB, concurs that using Lomdei (Lomdei.com), with its many skill-building and data-driven questions and activities helps her and all the teachers reach more children.

At YDE Boys' School, Mrs. Rochi Elbaum, principal, and Mrs. Nechy Falik, curriculum coordinator, use blended learning to ensure that math and ELA are taught in small groups, some on Chromebooks and some with the teacher, and then they switch. "All children deserve to be taught," Nechy explains, "and this allows us to teach each child where they are." For example, for ELA instruction, children are divided by ability so they can get the best instruction: Super Readers, Solid-On-Grade-Level Readers, On-Grade-but-Weak Level Readers, and Weak Readers. Monday is full-class instruction when the teacher introduces the reading comprehension skill and any pre-learning work. On Tuesday and Wednesday, the Super Readers and Solid-On-Grade level Readers work independently while the teacher and associate teacher/assistant work with the On-Grade-but-Weak level and Weak Readers. When they switch, the weaker students can now do the independent work, and the teachers can have

Students respond to a teacher who is clear, structured, and consistent.

deeper conversations with the children who could read independently. On Thursdays, the children work with the leveled readers that come with the program being used. Math is similarly thought through so every child can get the most tailored lesson.

Bnot Yaakov of Great Neck is not doing the full blended model yet, but Mrs. Rosenshein has the children learning *Ivrit* on Chromebooks as the teacher walks around answering questions and helping individual students as the need arises.



Mrs. Etti Siegel holds an MS in Teaching and Learning/Educational Leadership and brings sound teaching advice to her audiences culled from her over 30 years of teaching and administrative experience. Etti spent four years as an Adjunct Professor at Aspen University, three years at Concordia College of NY, and is now an Adjunct at the College of Mount Saint Vincent/Sara Schenirer. She is a coach and educational consultant for Catapult Learning and FACTS Education Solutions, is a sought-after mentor and workshop presenter around the country, and a popular presenter for Sayan (a teacher-mentoring program), Yachad/OU, Hidden Sparks, and the Consortium of Jewish Day Schools. She is a frequent contributor to The Journal of Jewish School Leadership and Hamechanech Magazine. She can be reached at ettisiegel@gmail.com.

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JSAT is designed to provide schools with the ability to implement data-driven instruction to improve student achievement. Results will provide data to help maximize the learning potential of each class and individual student.

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 Cheder Lubavitch Morristown. Boys Division, Morristown, NJ
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עֲשׂוּ זָכָר הֵלֶךְ לִקְרֹאתְךָ וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ עִמּוֹ

And the messengers
 returned to Yaakov saying

We came to your brother to
 Elsoy

and he is also coming
 toward you

and there are four hundred
 men with him

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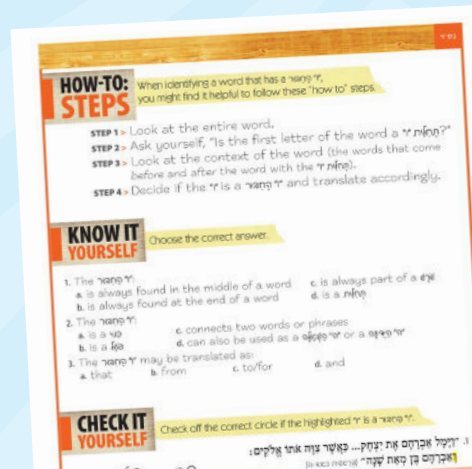


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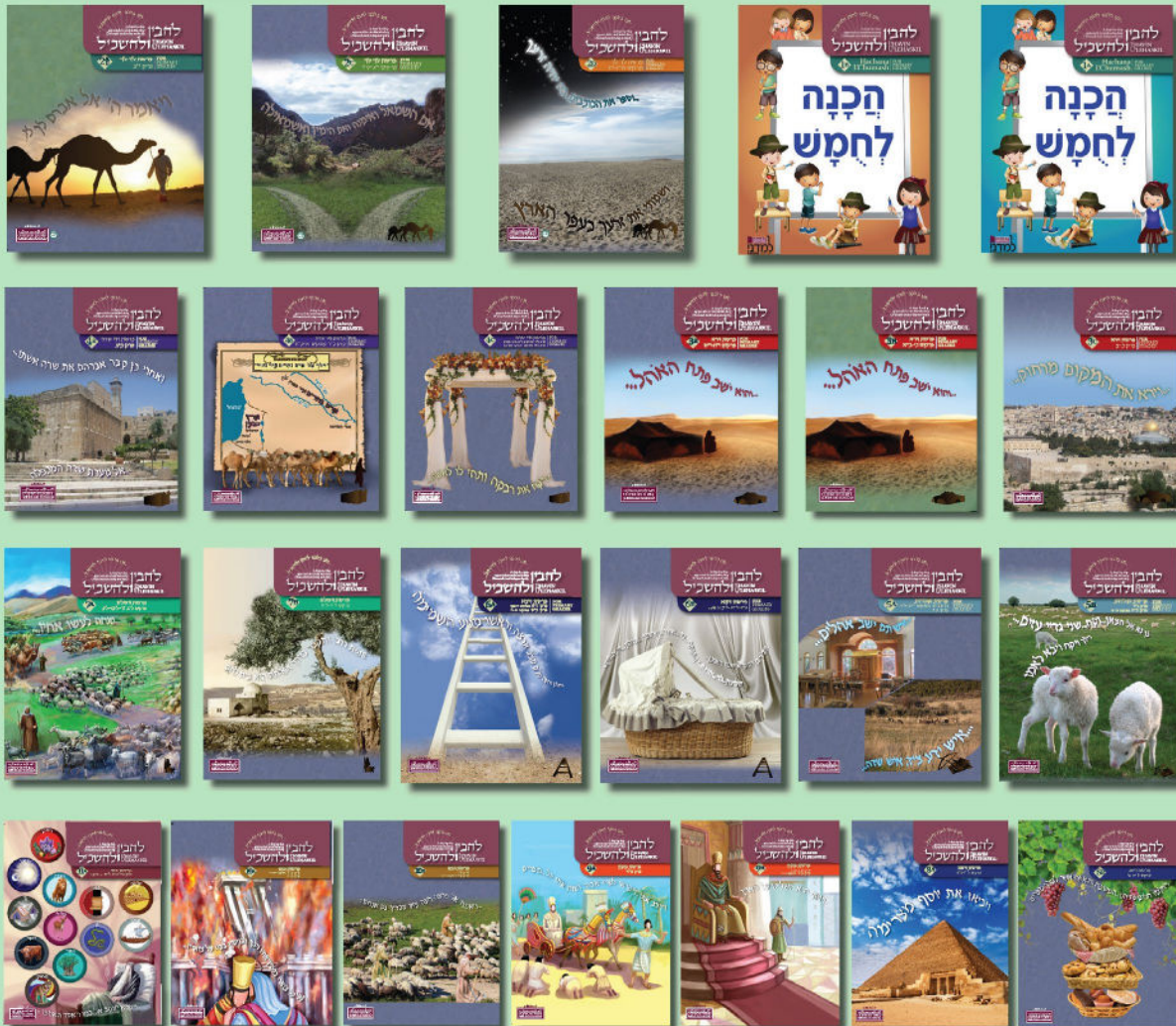
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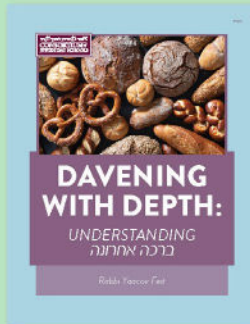
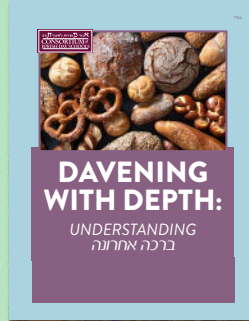
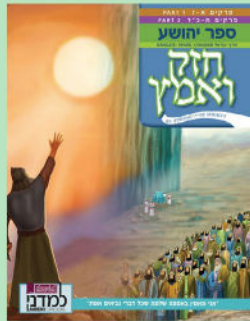
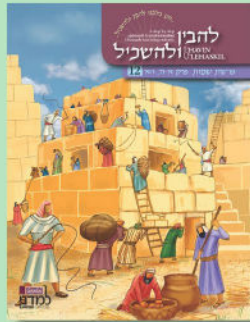
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