

KEEPING AN EYE ON PTI

WINTER 2025



SPOTLIGHT ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Starting with the L'havin U'lehaskil חומש curriculum, CoJDS has been producing high-quality materials for Jewish day schools for over a decade. L'havin is currently in use in over 200 schools worldwide, reaching thousands of students in English, Ivrit, Spanish, and Yiddish. The program encompasses 27 workbooks with detailed Teachers Editions for each one and covers all פרשיות in ספר בראשית and much of ספר שמות. Moving beyond חומש, CoJDS has now published new curricula on נביא, including ספר ויקרא, ספר מלכים א' and שמואל, with volumes on תפילה, ברכות קריאת שמע, שמונה עשרה, and ברכות אחרונה.

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PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES

Over the last two years, CoJDS' professional communities have emerged as vital networks that empower Jewish day school educators and leaders by fostering collaboration, support, and the exchange of innovative ideas. Professional communities, including **Menahalim Talking Chinuch**, **The Support Suite**, **The Principal Podium**, **The Morah Vaad**, and **Menahalos Talking Chinuch**, have allowed participants to engage with peers and mentors beyond their own institutions, gain fresh perspectives, and refine their approaches.

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SPOTLIGHT ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT



עז למלכו ספר שמואל א' ושמואל ב'

MRS. SARAH CHAIYA FEINSTEIN

Curriculum Developer, CoJDS

Middle School Morah,
Yeshiva Day School of Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV



Mrs. Sara Chaiya Feinstein recalls her first year of teaching, feeling lost with preparation and not knowing where to start. A veteran teacher came to her rescue, kindly lending her a נביא with her notes of classroom ideas in the margins. Over the years, in the various schools and communities where she taught, she saw that many teachers were overwhelmed with the amount of preparation required to teach the subject properly. She wondered: What if there were comprehensive teacher guides to help with preparation and lesson planning? What if there were high-quality student workbooks for נביא?

Her efforts, working with Mrs. Leah Hoenig, became the עז למלכו עז curriculum on ספר שמואל, which has grown to six teacher guides and five student workbooks, covering all of א' and ב'. The curriculum

has been well-received, with new teachers appreciating its clear guidance and flexibility and veterans excited to enhance their lessons with depth and creativity after teaching שמואל for decades!

The עז למלכו עז curriculum on ספר שמואל ensures that teachers can make a clear and accurate presentation to their students, even when sensitive topics come up. נביא is a לימוד that has the power to engage all students. It has an exciting story and typically less of a focus on skills than a חומש class, offering a chance for all students to feel the depth, relevance, and excitement of learning תורה.

Looking ahead, Mrs. Feinstein plans to prepare similar teacher guides and workbooks on topics in חומש, starting with מתן תורה.



DAVENING WITH DEPTH- לעבדו בבל לבבכם:

RABBI YAAKOV FEIT

Curriculum Developer, CoJDS

Middle School Assistant Principal
Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva, Edison, NJ



It seems that tefillah is hard for so many students (and adults). This fundamental aspect of being a Jew, an opportunity to connect with Hashem several times a day, remains a challenge for so many. **Rabbi Yaacov Feit**, observing this, also saw that little, if

any, time is devoted to teaching תפילה in schools. He began to work on a תפילה program for his own school, and it has grown into CoJDS's Davening with Depth curriculum for middle school and beyond.

Much more than just ביאור תפילה, the Davening with Depth curriculum spurs the students to think about davening. Teachers use the books to teach students about Jewish values, including ideas related to בין אדם לחבירו. The workbooks prompt students to personalize their תפילות in a way that is relevant to them and include stories and beautiful graphics to help with understanding. Teacher guides provide ideas for activities to extend the learning and cross-curricular suggestions and identify goals for the teacher in areas

of halacha, skills, and social-emotional learning.

The Davening the Depth tefillah program covers ברכות קריאת שמע and שמונה עשרה, as well as ברכות אחרונה. Currently in development is a curriculum for teaching פסוקי דזמרא. Future additions to the program will address ברכות השחר and the תפילות of Shabbos. Davening with Depth is in use at schools across the country and is carefully designed to be appropriate for Jewish schools of all types.



COMING SOON: ספר מלכים CURRICULUM

MRS. MIRA STOKAR

Curriculum Developer, CoJDS

*Former teacher, Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey, River Edge, NJ
Naaleh High School for Girls, Fair Lawn, NJ*



After teaching for nearly 15 years, including 10 years of teaching ספר מלכים to 8th graders, **Mrs. Mira Stokar** made aliyah, giving her the opportunity to focus on writing curriculum. No stranger to this work, Mrs. Stokar taught in a small high school for several years, each summer preparing to teach a new לימוד.

The ספר מלכים curriculum will cover all of מלכים א' with teacher guides and student workbooks. The teacher guides are very visual, giving teachers ideas and suggestions, even showing the teacher how to use the classroom board to make things clear and engaging for their students. The first volume is written

and is in production, and the second volume is being written this year.

Mrs. Stokar values making the נביא relevant to the students, using its engaging narratives to guide the curriculum and bring out the important themes found in the נביאים. One of her goals is to make students feel comfortable asking questions they have, and the teacher guides anticipate these questions and provide responses and resources for teachers. The ספר מלכים curriculum is geared toward middle school students and is coming soon.

To learn about all our curriculums, please visit cojds.org/order

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES



MENAHALIM TALKING CHINUCH: SUPPORTING CHINUCH NATIONWIDE

RABBI DOVID ENGEL

Director of Leadership Development, CoJDS

Former Menahel, The Toronto Cheder, Toronto ON

The Consortium's flagship professional community effort is **Rabbi Dovid Engel's** twice-monthly Zoom meeting. Called Menahalim Talking Chinuch (MTC), this effort has grown into a community of well over 100 mechanchim and branched into two cohorts to accommodate the participants' different time zones and schedules. With Rabbi Engel's Daily Memo, school visits, professional development trainings, and the MTC Shabbos conference held in December, Menahalim Talking Chinuch has become a force and resource for Jewish education nationwide.

Rabbi Engel leads most of the meetings and invites guest facilitators to lead the rest. A list of topics is sent several days before each session, allowing the participants to consider the issues and share ideas

meaningfully during the meetings. Although the range of topics is vast, Rabbi Engel often returns to his favorites, developing a theme of professional chinuch leadership and pushing the participants towards school improvement.

The MTC Shabbos in December was a testament to the impact of the Menahalim Talking Chinuch initiative, with a diverse group of over 75 menahalim spending several days learning, debating, and collaborating. The success of this program, with the Zoom meetings at its core, has led to the development of our other collaborative communities for Jewish educators, empowering, developing, and improving Jewish day schools across North America, promoting best practices and using traditional Torah values.



THE SUPPORT SUITE: SUPPORTING SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

DR. ELI SHAPIRO

Director of Educational Initiatives, CoJDS

Director, Digital Citizenship Project

CoJDS has launched a professional community for Jewish Day School mental health staff, including school counselors and social workers. Under the direction of **Dr. Eli Shapiro**, The Support Suite meets virtually every month for conversations about

common challenges. Members support each other, forming a network of professionals who serve in geographically diverse communities in similar roles.

Dr. Shapiro leads some meetings, while guest facilitators lead others. Participants submit ques-

tions and topics in advance, and together the group identifies resources for specific issues and strategies related to common school-based challenges. Originally one cohort, the Support Suite has separated into a regional group for school-based professionals in Bergen County and another national group. This kind of regional cooperation is promising, as many

resources available to students and families are specific to individual states or cities. School-based mental health professionals have a difficult job, and within the bubble of their school, they often have no one to collaborate with. The Support Suite offers mutual aid and support for these critical members of the Jewish education community.



THE PRINCIPAL PODIUM: SUPPORTING GENERAL STUDIES PRINCIPALS

MRS. BRITTNEY FRIEDMAN

*Director of LINKed, CoJDS
General Studies Principal
Hillel Academy of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA*

The Principal Podium is a professional community of general studies principals who meet monthly to collaborate, share ideas, and work together with others serving similar roles in Jewish day schools across the country. Led by **Mrs. Brittney Friedman**, general studies principal of Hillel Academy of Pittsburgh, these monthly virtual meetings are part of the Consortium's broader LinkED initiative to support general studies principals, which includes a book club, newsletter, and monthly webinars.

At the Principal Podium meetings, Mrs. Friedman presents a topic to start the conversation, trying

to keep things relevant to the upcoming events in schools throughout the year. Her goal is for participants to leave the meetings with quick yet impactful takeaways. They've discussed topics including the Eisenhower Matrix, mastering feedback, navigating difficult conversations, and differentiated leadership.

A principal from an out-of-town community who has participated in every meeting so far, shared that for years she had no one to discuss her work with, but now she has found a community: the Principal Podium, a place of collaboration, support, and actionable solutions.



THE MORAH VAAD

MRS. MIRIAM GETTINGER

*Senior Educational Consultant, CoJDS
Former Principal, Hasten Hebrew Academy Indianapolis*

An exciting new project is a professional community for 4th-8th grade morahs. Led by **Mrs. Miriam Gettinger**, the Morah Vaad is a graduate-level se-

ries of interactive presentations designed to bring morahs to the next level. Each session focuses on a specific topic in a way that is anchored in theo-

ry but is primarily pragmatic so that participants can implement what they learn in their classrooms right away. Topics include knowing your students, focusing on understanding the talmidos of today and on specifics like grouping students in the classroom, academic engagement, including the ratio between knowledge and understanding, and assessment, with a focus on shifting the paradigm to extracting knowledge in a personalized way.

The group of over 30 morahs is drawn from schools across the country and represents a diverse range of school types, offering participants a rich professional community to learn from and collaborate with. Participants have told Mrs. Gettinger

that what they're learning has been transformational, giving them a solid understanding of what their chinuch goals should be, and that they've come back to watch the sessions multiple times.

Looking ahead, the Morah Vaad will be expanded to more grade levels and participants. This first cohort will culminate with a Morah's Day Out in March, when some of the participants will gather in New York for a day of chizuk, with opportunities for visiting schools and learning more about resources available to schools and teachers. For more information or to join the Morah's Day Out, please email chertz@cojds.org.



MENAHALOS TALKING CHINUCH: SUPPORTING FEMALE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

DR. AHUVAH HEYMAN

Director, Bnos Yisroel of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD

Building on the success of the Menahelim Talking Chinuch program, the Consortium has embarked upon a “sister program” for women in leadership positions in Jewish education. Menahelos Talking Chinuch was launched this fall under the leadership of **Dr. Ahuvah Heyman**, school director of Bnos Yisroel in Baltimore.

The group includes principals, assistant principals and heads of school, leaders of girls' schools and boys' schools, and runs the gamut from preschool through high school. As the Consortium looks to support female school leadership, MTC provides

a place to connect and have candid conversations, sharing learning and ideas. Mrs. Heyman explained that “leadership is sometimes lonely, particularly in very big or very small schools,” so providing this kind of forum can give school leaders the clarity and strength they need to provide high-level chinuch in their schools and communities.

Participants found the tone of the meetings to be safe, meaningful, and personal. Mrs. Heyman stresses that “everyone is welcome” in the group and is excited about how this initiative stands to help further develop female educational leaders.

Visit cojds.org/events to see our ongoing events

WINTER CONFERENCES

CoJDS continues to provide opportunities for Jewish day school leaders to gather, collaborate, and grow professionally. This winter, we hosted a delightfully snowy weekend conference for principals in upstate New York and a surprisingly snowy National Winter Conference in Dallas, Texas!

MTC SHABBOS

Braving snowy mountain roads, over 60 menahalim gathered at Oorah's campsite, The Zone, for a weekend of learning, connecting with others, and inspiration. The conference was an outgrowth of the Menahalim Talking Chinuch (MTC) program run by Rabbi Dovid Engel and the Consortium of Jewish Day Schools.



“I had a parent meeting about their son who has impulsivity ... and I was able to discuss it with them with such clarity and with real-time and helpful tips because I was fresh off hearing from Rabbi Russell.”

Rabbi Shlomo Newman
Menahel, Yeshiva Beth Yehuda, Detroit



The highlight of the event was Rabbi Shimon Russell's in-depth presentation on chinuch called “What Works and Why?” The menahalim also heard from Rabbi Hillel Shepard, menahel of Yeshiva Toras Simcha in Baltimore, on a comprehensive approach to classroom management that called “The Box.” Rabbi Yosef Bondi, from Yeshiva Aharon Yaakov/Ohr Eliyahu in Los Angeles, gave a remarkable presentation on teaching tefillah called “Essence of Davening: How to Make it Real and Engaging for Talmidim and Talmidos.”

In addition to these presentations, there were panel discussions presenting a range of perspectives on important topics. Rabbi Dovid Engel presented on Healthy Boundaries for a Menahel, focusing on the ways school leaders should (and should not) relate to their various constituents and also led a spirited and informative MTC Live session, bringing the collaboration found in the Menahalim Talking Chinuch virtual sessions to life.

“The conference was not just chizuk drashos -- it was practical, and the pilpul chaverim was so chashuv. The chizuk came from how practical the conference was and how many tools, yesodos, and ideas I was able to walk away with.”

Rabbi Aryeh Kravetz *Toras Chaim, Norfolk*

“The knowledge and connections I gained will undoubtedly influence my approach to leadership and help me better serve my students, teachers, and the wider school community. Sharing experiences and exchanging ideas helped me gain a broader perspective on issues such as student engagement, curriculum development, and school culture. I walked away with a wealth of resources that I am excited to implement in my own school.”

Mrs. Ana Mandelbaum *Zucker Jewish Academy, Five Towns*

The attendees returned to their schools recharged with new friendships and armed with fresh understanding. Rabbi Hillel Hexter, a menahel at TA in Baltimore, expressed appreciation to the “CoJDS and Oorah staff for organizing such a memorable and

impactful Shabbos. The networking opportunities were exceptional, fostering meaningful connections and the exchange of valuable ideas. The sessions were both collaborative and enjoyable, striking a balance of humor and content.”

NATIONAL WINTER CONFERENCE IN DALLAS

In January, the Consortium’s annual winter conference took place at Akiba Yavneh Academy in Dallas. In spite of an unexpected Texas winter storm, the conference attracted attendees from around the country, including Tampa, Tucson, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New York, and Houston. The one-day conference featured keynote presentations from Rabbi Baruch Noy on AI and Education and Dr. Eli Shapiro on Building a Comprehensive Technology Strategy. Additionally, Dr. Ahuvah Heyman led a session on Identifying our True Priorities, and Mrs. Brittney Friedman spoke about Aligning Vision with Action.

Mr. Jason Feld is the head of school at Akiba Yavneh, and he said, “Hosting the Consortium’s winter conference allowed Akiba Yavneh Academy to welcome talented Jewish educators from across the country to our vibrant Dallas campus, where we engaged in rich discussions about... enhancing student learning. The opportunity to network with fellow educators and share best practices was invaluable... and supporting the Consortium’s mission of strengthening Jewish day schools through professional development and collaboration aligns perfectly with our school’s values and commitment to educational excellence.”



Mrs. Katherine Simon is a teacher and EdTech specialist at Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy in Beverly Hills, and she reflected, “Attending the CoJDS Conference in Dallas provided me with a valuable opportunity to explore strategies for integrating digital programs and AI tools into school curricula. School visits offered firsthand insights into successful applications, equipping educators with practical ideas to enhance and grow their own institutions, which I eagerly brought back to share with our school leadership.”

