

The model of Talmud instruction in Jewish Day schools has remained mostly intact for decades. Units are centered around a Rebbe's designed curriculum of what he plans to teach to a group of students. The pathways for student learning and teacher planning are primarily based on the chronological order of topics mentioned in the text. The trends suggest that a higher percentage of middle school students are graduating with weak Talmud skills, and a lack of understanding of the purpose of Talmud and appreciation for its role in Jewish life. This has led many schools to even consider abandoning Talmud in middle school curricula under the assumption that the students are "too young" developmentally to grasp the complexity of Talmud.

I designed a new innovative approach to middle-school Talmud instruction that we believe to be a game-changer. With a team of Rabbeim that includes both experienced and first-year teachers with limited technological skills, I've worked to establish a successful growth mindset and collaborative culture around the transition to personalized learning in Talmud. Our data-driven model is used to create personalized learning pathways that students progress through based on proficiency and mastery in eight specific domains that provide a comprehensive understanding of Talmud - including content, vocabulary, functional structures, and real-life application. In just a few months of powerful onboarding and personalized training, we've been able to:

- Develop a set of primary & peripheral Talmud skills domains.
- Map our curricular goals to teach and assess competency in these domains on a shared google sheets template.
- Establish a common language for the skills we focus on across all grade levels and how we assess and communicate student proficiency.
- Design a compartmentalized assessment model to provide detailed, real-time feedback on student proficiency in the specific domains of skills.
- Conduct weekly data analysis meetings, as a team and on an individual basis, focusing on how to collect, record, analyze, and utilize data to ensure that our planning meets the needs of all students, from remediation to enrichment and everything in between.
- Conduct student conferences after each test to promote student agency and to establish a plan for improvement and remediation when necessary. This also provides the framework for a conversation around time management, studying, and note-taking skills.
- Implement data-driven personalized learning pathways, utilizing a rotational model and incorporating flipped classroom strategies to provide time for small-group targeted instruction as well as independent and collaborative learning.
- Pilot a new time allocation design called "50-35-15". This provides a framework for students to spend 50% of their weekly class time in whole-class instruction, 35% of their time on personalized learning pathways and differentiated learning activities to reach greater levels of proficiency, and 15% of their time working with their peers in collaborative learning. All of this centers around the small group instruction which provides incredibly valuable time with a Rebbe to foster a meaningful and substantive relationship with students.
- Utilize innovative alternative assessment models such as multiple intelligence choice boards and game-based learning activities. These provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of concepts and skills in an active, creative, and meaningful way.
- Cultivate a team culture amongst the faculty in the Talmud department to share assessments, lesson plans, and materials with one another to solicit constructive feedback and to share best practices.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for providing this special opportunity for educators all over the world to share their materials and celebrate their successes. Please reach out if you'd like to learn more about the work we are doing.