

Enduring Dilemmas of Teaching and Educational Leadership

Recognizing and analyzing teaching dilemmas can help us do the following:

- Raise our level of consciousness about choices we have as teachers
- Match how we teach to what we are teaching and the goals of our teaching
- Support other teachers reflect on their work
- Support students in learning about the process of learning

Some examples of enduring dilemmas:

1. Discovery versus didactic teaching
2. Depth versus breadth
3. Skills versus big principles
4. Keeping to a plan versus spontaneity, going with something that arises in the moment
5. Content goals versus social connection goals
6. “Hard” or “honest” feedback versus encouragement
7. Individualized curriculum versus asking all students to learn the same things in the same ways
8. Emotional connection versus intellectual understanding of a topic
9. Another: _____
10. Another: _____

In pairs or trios, choose one or two dilemmas that interest you, and respond to the following prompts:

1) Think of how your chosen dilemma might play out in the context of a real classroom and real content. Pick your own dilemma and your own content area. What are your options? What are the trade-offs? On a separate sheet, make a table and take notes on your chosen dilemma and content area.

E.g., how might the “discovery vs didactic” dilemma play out when you’re teaching parashat b’reshit, the first Torah portion of the week with a group of 10 year olds.

	Discovery/constructivist teaching	Didactic teaching
Parashat B’reshit		

2) These are **dilemmas** because each side of the dilemma stands for values that we hold dear. We don’t want to trade either of them away. Look at your dilemmas and discuss what are the values underneath them. On a separate sheet, take notes on the values connected to each of your dilemmas.

	Discovery/constructivist teaching	Didactic teaching
Values underlying this choice	Joy, integration of learning . . .	Efficiency, accuracy . . .