

Hilary Kamin

yes, you may share w/ my name

I chose the Rabbi Nehunya text to share with my teachers, as I thought that it was a great way to set the tone for the year. I shared it with my staff of 20 teachers during our teacher orientation in August. I used it as an opening activity to start the meeting off, it came second only to food! When I first thought about what I wanted the teachers to gain, I thought that I wanted them to be comfortable with doing text study. However, I quickly realized that that wasn't what I meant at all. Text study should be anything but comfortable... what I wanted was for them to be open minded. Being open minded was not something I expected them to gain from this text study... so I am settling with this... I want the teachers to gain insight, from inside themselves or perhaps from a colleague. Either way, I would see that as a success.

There were two things about this text study that I felt like worked particularly well. The first was that I met with another educator who was also preparing this text study and although we each planned on our own, we gave one another feedback. This also gave me added confidence going into it. The other thing that I know was extremely helpful was that I assigned the teachers a seat around the large table. I did not tell them who they had to be chevruta partners with, but I felt like I enabled them to make better choices by setting them up for success with the seating arrangements. I know they are not children, but many of us are guilty of indulging in conversations with friends during a staff meeting, and I didn't want it to happen during the text study.

The only moment that came up that could have been challenging was that I noticed a particular group didn't have any momentum in their conversation. I had asked the Rabbi to hold back from joining a pairing, and when I saw this group was struggling, I asked him to join them, and it worked out quite well.

I had a brief survey that the teachers filled out after the activity and I was very please with the responses. Most of them said they were more comfortable with the text study that I had anticipated. (meaning a reply of 7 or higher on a scale of 1-10) My favorite response to the question "What would you add or change about today's text study" was "more time". It stayed with me in the most positive way that even one teacher enjoyed it so much that they wanted more time!

The greatest challenge I face with most professional development is time. Although I have a few days built in for my teachers, the hours are few. Even when I have the funds to pay them, the time still seems so short! I was thrilled with how my Rabbi supported me, (and dare I say) learned from me. It felt supportive and awesome! Teacher Orientation was a perfect venue for text study, but moving forward the next time or two will be a greater challenge to find the time.

Hilary Keemin

Hilary's copy

Text Study for Teacher Orientation (15 minutes total)

Introduction: 1 min

Talk about my own professional development and how it motivates and excites me in my career.

Teachers will break up into Hevruta partners with a person that they are sitting next to. There will be assigned seats.

2-3 minute: Teachers will be given the text of Rabbi Nechunya's prayer and allow for free conversation.

Guided Questions: (5 min)

Why do you think Rabbi Nechunya said this prayer upon *entering* the Beit Midrash (House of Learning) ?

As a teacher, how do you find this relevant to your work?

What does this text tell us about Jewish role models?

Sharing with group: 2-3 min

Conclusion: 1 min

As educators, things around us are constantly changing.... our students, the grade we teach, parts of our curriculum, and our own ideas about what and how we teach. Teaching this text to you was a risk for me, as we have never engaged in this type of text study as a group in the past. I hope that you all found some value and meaning in it, and I will be asking for some feedback. I invite each of you to do the same thing in your classrooms. Take risks, find something new to try with your students and then take the time to ask them for feedback. This is how we can grow as a school. I pray that Rabbi Nechunya's prayers is true for each of us as we begin this new school year!

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Feedback for Text study

How comfortable do you feel with text study on scale of 1-10? \_\_\_\_\_

How was this experience studying text on a scale of 1-10? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything you would add or change about today's text study? \_\_\_\_\_