

MTEI Cohort 7- Seminar 2
Sikkum
November 15-18, 2015

We began this seminar with deep sorrow, for the tragedy in Paris, with a moment of silence and the *misheberach* prayer, for the renewal of spirit. This moment reminded us, as Jenny would say later in the seminar, that the outside world is always in our intimate space, shaping and being shaped by what we do.

We opened our binders, seeing familiar faces, trying to remember names, refinding our places in the room, in the space. We welcomed three new faces - Oren, Jenny and Barry, completing our group to its full number of ____ people. We walked around with post its on our shoulders learning that people here write in Dr Seuss rhyme, ride motorcycles, sing in choirs, juggle, have children who are engaged, are moving into cohousing.

Elie, introduced us to the Lost Niggun, a signal that learning is a sacred activity, a melody that would help us start each day. With the final notes lingering in our ears, Elie launched us into a key theme of this seminar - reading classroom practice. We built on ideas from seminar 1 - We project our prejudices on what we read, and we want to become aware of this so we can "take it back" so that we can see the other person more clear.

קרא (say the letters slowly)

With this word, we are reading, we also calling out, we are naming. When we read, we are calling upon the text to say something.

We met Rav Shimi and Rav Papa. We considered the story from the perspective of the teacher and perspective of the student. We added lines to the story. We considered: Who do we have empathy for? Rav Papa? Rav Shimi? What happens when people are stuck in their own kind of naming, instead of calling. How do we not get stuck in our own projections?

After our first of many meals together, we met in partners to share our assignments of attentive listening, to share what we learned, struggled with, the benefits and challenges of listening in this way.

We regrouped on Monday morning. Was that the same niggun we sang yesterday?

Jenny opened the day helping us think about Making Teaching Visible, a key way of helping us learn to read teaching. Amazingly, almost bizarrely, she seemed to know everyone's names already.

What does the Art of Japanese cooking, Dr. Shakshuka and a Wedding cake have in common? This was not our first math problem, but our first set of metaphors. What

does it take in the back kitchen to produce these works of art? What do we not see?
Finished products disappear the work.

What makes teaching so hard to see? And with this question we met our first math problem of pennies, nickels and dimes. How do we define the problem space? Do we have one penny in our pocket and the rest quarters? Do we have a pocket full of change?

We worked on the problem - did we use the representations of the coins? PND? Or 1,5,10. How do we know when we have them all?

We clapped for Kathy's elegant solution... but Barry didn't get it.

We debriefed our strategies, and asked important questions and offered insightful reflections. Where does our self-doubt come from? How often do people give me a task to trip me up? Some did the exercise did it with confidence, and then tried it out to figure out whether this was true with other combinations of three. If students trust the teacher and the context, then they may feel safer doing the problem and have more capacity to actually solve the problem.

"I was very nervous. I sucked at math. I never learned." There is a whole other issue of how teaching effects the emotion and the confidence.

What is the proper level of complexity?

What are the developmental considerations?

This is the backroom, kitchen work of teaching that teachers do before they present the problem to the class?)

And then we watched vintage film...Jenny asked for unfiltered responses. And unfiltered they were...

Some of us were...Bothered, frustrated and underwhelmed.

Kids looked like they needed to interact, speak, do.

Ability to employ wait time. Silence. Nervousness (being taped).

She never praised. She wasn't the authority to say if the answer was right.

Went from abstract to concrete.

Looking at it from the student perspective - I would have been so bored.

Looking at it from the teacher perspective - she was teaching for understanding. She was teaching for transfer.

She never smiled...

What were the lenses that we bring to the viewing of video?

"Teacher never smiled." Is this descriptive? Is this interpretive?

Can we take a descriptive stance to see more fully what she IS doing? Can we describe her moves? How do we take a strength-seeking stance.

Jenny suggested that we take a view of teaching that is investigative - a stance that shifts from telling people what do to, to we investigating together, to learning together.

After a break, we watched the video for a second time. We discovered she called on 12 or more students in this short time of teaching. It was the first day of math class and she knew their names, she asked questions like "what do other people think about that?... She smiled.

We met the instructional or relational triangle for the first time. The, teacher, student, subject matter and environments/contexts. This triangle, with its vertices, was to become a model we would and will return to.

After our first lunch, Kathy led us into an inquiry of dilemmas - trading off values that we hold dearly, values that are in conflict. Dilemmas need to be managed, not solved. Dilemmas are different from problems. Dilemmas are part of the kitchen work of teaching - we deal with them behind the scenes, but they shape how we work, plan, and the choices we make. When we consider this kind of difficult thinking, mental juggling, we build our capacity for compassion, and empathy for the work of teaching.

We worked in small groups, identifying dilemmas and values that are manifest in our own worlds:

Dilemmas and values:

Honoring Conservative Judaism
Break time (rest, rejuvenation)
Responsiveness to clientele

Connecting W/ congregants
Teaching time (Human time)
Resources

We took the idea of dilemmas into our next session. The G.L.U. The glue of our group, the Group Level Understanding. Liron took us on a Prezi ride to June 29, to that Monday evening when we offered our thoughts on 35 different prompts and shared the process that a small group constructed looking for themes, values and challenges. We sat in small groups, sharing the ways these themes resonated, the new challenges that we are facing, the regrouping of the values. Important ideas were offered - where is the discussion of vision of PD? How do we create that shared vision? It's not just about how much time we have but how we use it. Time and money should be different categories. Conflict and communication should be two different themes. Where is Israel in our data? Where is gender?

Building on the cornucopia of themes, challenges and values, we centered our minds on three dilemmas - skills vs content, honoring teachers voice vs professional development goals, shared vision vs. my leadership. We each had our roles, presenter, consultant, observer. We debriefed. What does this protocol offer us? How can it help us build an investigative stance as leaders, as teachers? What does it mean to bring these dilemmas to a group of colleagues? How can that change the ways we work?

In the evening, we met in groups of three to share our text study groups. Rav Nechuniah hovered in our midst. We talked about the role of text study in PD. We were surprised by how positive our teachers were. We wondered how you can adapt a text for our needs and find a text that is aligned with our goals? And it was evening. We were tired. Some of us went to sleep, some sat by the fire with drinks and schmoozed. Some took over the bar.

We awoke to breakfast with energy. Enjoying the fruits of the labor of those who are literally in the kitchen, preparing our food, our bountiful, plentiful food. We met Harvey, who spent the morning with us, documenting our learning, our interactions, trying to capture our millions of words through his picture. The even more familiar *niggun* opened our study of learning through sharpened collegiality.

We were to attune ourselves to the impact of colleagues ideas, comments, and question on the improvement of our own thinking, understanding and learning. We explored the idea of "mutual sharpening": the importance of taking each other's ideas seriously, by "digging" in more in what they said, which is so different from the "great idea" kind of discourse.

We dove into the power of metaphors, the invitation to become more aware of an idea. We shared our reflections - when iron sharpens iron, it leads to sparks, so when people sharpen one another sparks are created. When iron is together with iron, we are strengthened.

Yachad (together) *Lchaded* (to sharpen) , *nityachda* (to commune with), sharpening as a metaphor for intimacy.

Iron with Iron, Iron Sharpens Iron. Proverbs, Breishit Rabbah, And stickers from Jerusalem on the Ohio, Iron Sharpens Iron personal training.

With a little more time for stretching and email, we returned to two groups, studying with Barry and Gail. We dove into parshat hashavua, Jacob, the stone, the ladder, the angels, the pillar. We explored our questions, what we surmise would be the children's questions, and the difference between the two. "For my whole life I have wondered about the ladder? What's the deal with the ladder?" "What can we learn from the repetition of "makom" "What's with the rock? Was it a pillow?" "What's with the pillar?" "What's with the oil? "What's up with the angel?"

We read the text that the students we were to see later that day in the video of Susan. We read above the line and below the line. We wondered what opportunities and roadblocks did this version of Torah offer the students.

After our Mexican lunch, Barry taught us about orientations Contextual, literary criticism, parshanut (interpretive), personalization, moralistic. We considered how we

get ready to study and teach torah, what resources do we use? "I pick up books, I go to the web, I go to svara, I write my column for my bulletin, I go to Rabbi Google."

How do we choose our orientations, From whence do they come? Our Childhood, Our adulthood, Our communities, Our Temperament and Talent.

With our orientations in hand, Jenny led us into Susan's classroom, helping us think about video investigations. How we can use records of practice to improve our teaching?

We remet the instructional/relational triangle, this time with arrows...many more arrows. We asked What is the place of the teacher-student relationship? How much primacy does it have? What is the environment? Is it what we create? Is it the outside world? Is it the classroom room? Environments in the model is plural - to represent all the environments.

We watched the video, from one vertex of the triangle, and met Susan, Leah, Samantha, Shira, Aviva, Daveed.

We shared our observations - Teacher asked for detective questions, I noticed they were sitting in a U, I noticed that on a couple of occasions T acknowledged not knowing the answer to S question, Susan drew a ladder on the board. Jenny asked us to think about the investigative questions that can emerge from the observations. "Teacher said hold the questions for now. From this we can ask "What do we do with all the questions students want to ask that we don't have time for?"

After another stretch break, Sharon and Kathy brought us back to our observations of Susan. And we took a different stance, thinking about how to enter into dialogue with a teacher about his/her teaching.

We thought about these observations, the questions these observations raised for us, and the reasons this matters to us. We considered the observations such as "I noticed that on a couple of occasions T acknowledged not knowing the answer to S question" The question we asked ourselves was "Was there intentionality about that answer, of not knowing?" This matters because I value the idea of "the more questions the better. This is central to Judaism. And we watched Sharon and Kathy role play:

1. Why did you answer all the questions that the students asked?
2. What were you trying to get at? Do you think it happened?
3. One of the things that stood out to me was kids' questions. One term you used was detective questions. I'm curious how you were thinking about it."

Imagine that you are about to walk into a conversation with Susan, what do you really want to talk with her about that. What will change if we shift our view of supervision from one of evaluation to one of shared investigation?

And we tried our hand at role playing too...

At last, a free evening. A time to recharge, leave the hotel, get to bed early. For the faculty, back to the kitchen...

On our last morning, with our suitcases packed, taxis ordered, flights delayed and canceled, more rain (which the Californians really see as a miracle), we regroup and sit by our regions. Who lives in our part of the country?

Kathy lead us off, asking us what are the stakes for the precision for language in observation? We need common ground. What is the difference between plucking the leaves off the plant and destroying the plant? What's the difference between being rude and sticking my tongue out 5 times?

Jenny brought us back to video investigations, how can we bring this practice back to our settings. We returned to Deborah Ball briefly, Ms Eliot/Connie, the power of saying back what we see, the power of feeling seen. We see the next 6 minutes of Susan teaching and we begin to plan how we might use this video with a small group of teachers, friends, who will help us figure out how video investigations can help us build a culture of shared inquiry.

We began to practice, how would we do this? What questions would we ask? Who will write the notes? What is the teacher doing to help students learn? How do I learn how to do this? How to take notes?

After checking out, Sharon began by talking about the art of observation and description. What are we looking for? What do we want to focus on? She teaches us that "our perceptions are shaped by our conceptions."

We look at our observations, and think about the questions we might want to ask. How can we ask the questions that can open up conversation, not close them down. What happens if we can drop the judgment - the praise and the criticism - how does our discourse shift? How do you honor without praising? How does our stance change? How does our work on observation, saying back what we see, posing genuine questions, shape our relationship with our teachers? Shape our role as leaders?

We leave today, back to the many environments that we can from, reengaging the external realities that face us. We go accompanied by our colleagues here, with the ideas, questions, dilemmas in our minds, and texts in our notebooks. We will see each other, after the long winter, in the spring.

