

Phoebe Potts
Journal Entry

eliminate "x" factors:

- Simplify text
- interrupt conversation to practice ASKING/EXTENDING

- o What parts of the school day can I add this practice to?
- o What is the manna I would use to

After the session, create a journal entry (which will be shared at the June Seminar) in which you discuss:

What happened? (Describe the workshop)

→ repeat, repeat, repeat to help them practice?

The workshop was during a regular staff meeting with two classroom teachers and seven teaching assistants, or madrichim. An hour was reserved for this workshop within the meeting. Using the prompts from the assignment, I gave a brief introduction about having text be the third point of the teaching and learning triangle. As we have the habit of setting a kavanah, or intention, for our teaching and learning each school day, I said that my kavanah was to give them the opportunity to study a Jewish text and practice being supportive and questioning of their hevruta partner. I asked about how we learned- when someone talked at us, when someone was in conversation with us, when we were asked questions about our ideas. They unanimously picked Option C. I said that the goal was to learn how to put the student's thinking first, rather than simply drive home our own argument.

→ what are the steps I would use?

We read the text together as a group, and listed any words we didn't know and any clarifying questions we had. We defined the words for each other, and listed our questions on the board. We broke into hevruta- I put the two professional teachers together to a) get to know each other better and b) to honor their expertise rather than put them in a position where they would feel like they were "teaching" on their professional development time. The madrichim paired off on their own. The prompt was to listen to the other in your hevruta, and be able to report back to the group what the partner had said. Additionally, any questions that were raised needed to be written down.

The groups then paired up again, this time to dig a little deeper by focusing on the other person and their questioning. Their prompt was to help the other think the idea through without agreeing or disagreeing. I explained that we were practicing this, and we agreed that it is challenging to keep our own need to be heard (and to be right!) at bay in order to honor the other person in the hevruta.

How did you (or did you not) use the prompts and language that were provided in the guidelines for the assignment? I wish I had memorized them, I found myself reading some of them aloud, which felt artificial because I wanted to "get it right" by Elie or MTEI's standards. Gail responds: seeing you try something new is a gift to teachers.

How did this compare with what you assumed or hoped would happen? The engagement with teachers and some of the madrichim surpassed my expectations- they enjoyed learning and talking about this way of teaching and learning. One group of madrichim seemed a little bored and perplexed by this exercise- perhaps because they didn't see how it related to what they needed to do as a madrich. We practiced the hevruta learning again with parents and students the following week during a Shabbat text study, and all the madrichim reverted to their old patterns of declaring their own opinions, and openly disagreeing with the opinions of the younger students. While this wasn't always a negative, it made me think about how much practice would be necessary (and follow up reflecting) to put this kind of supporting/challenging hevruta learning into practice.

→ o How what can we ask him/her to allow them to think more?
o what else can we ask?

Were there aspects of what happened that surprised you?

ask Sharon:

ACCOUNTABLE TALK MOVES

Were there aspects that pleased you? Why?

Two comments from participants made me think that this idea was worth studying, and it was being understood. After the hevruta groups had met a second time, one of the professional teachers mentioned that she didn't think there would be much more to talk about, and she was surprised and pleased that she and her partner could find more to discuss, and more to the text. One of the madrichim acknowledged that she energetically puts her opinion first, wants to be heard and often wants to show the Other where they are wrong. She admitted this was a challenge, but a valuable one. I saw some nodding from fellow madrichim when she said this.

What did participants report about their experience and/or learning?

Read the Journal entry you wrote on your learning of these practices during our last seminar: Anything new you've learned? Any new question or insights you have about your learning of these practices? Any new question or insights you have about teaching these practices to colleagues?

I ended the session talking about the triangle, the I Thou and It. The madrichim and morot seemed to drink this up-- it was new to them, and yet they recognized it from their own teaching and learning. They were excited about learning something new, or seeing something old in a different way. This may seem basic, but it showed me that staff meetings are not just about keeping the trains running and administrative work, but they can be used for real engagement with teachers about teaching.