

Collaborative Lesson Planning

The lesson that you see in this multimedia package is the product of a collaborative process in which teachers, administrators, and teacher educators worked together over an extended period to develop a lesson plan. This process is loosely modeled after a professional development practice known as "Japanese lesson study" (Stigler & Hiebert, *The Teaching Gap*, 1999).

The collaborative planning began with considerable study of the content for this lesson at the adult level. The group started by studying the lesson's content: Biblical texts about the Jewish people's connections to the Land of Israel. The group then turned to study issues of pedagogy for children: Which qualities and skills do we intend for children to develop in this lesson, and which formats and activities best support that? This involved multiple sessions with many proposals that the group considered before deciding on the lesson plan you see in this package. As part of the lesson planning process, the group also designed assessments that would depict what students learned from the lesson.

The collaborative nature of lesson planning serves a number of aims:

- Educators learn from one another, and they learn to see different possibilities they might not have considered when planning alone;
- Their knowledge about content and about teaching content grows through this kind of process, and the process builds a kind of collegial culture at the same time;
- By planning together, multiple voices generate greater possibilities, offer various perspectives about students, contribute to the group's content knowledge, and build a cohesive unit focused on student learning of substantive content.

All of this work is centered on instruction—the specifics of a particular lesson as it will play out in the dynamics of the classroom. Such focus on instruction can give teachers knowledge that they carry with them as they plan and enact lessons outside of the group, as well.