

## USING VIDEO IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Videos offer a close approximation of actual practice, a window into the interaction of teacher and students in context. Watching and discussing them is one strategy for helping teachers learn to “see” and think about teaching. Even though each video represents one specific classroom, teacher, and group of students, it can serve as a catalyst and reference point for discussing the enduring tasks and dilemmas of the practice of teaching.

Viewers can:

- Describe and analyze what they see;
- Learn about others’ divergent perspectives on the same video-captured moments;
- Generate alternative ways to respond to students;
- Create new questions or lesson plans, and;
- Discuss the implications of their conversations for their own practice.

For Jewish educators, it is both helpful and instructive to think about classroom videos as *texts*, which can illuminate the interactive aspects of teaching and learning. Rather than viewing these video records as exemplary models of practice to be emulated, we view these videos as texts for study. They give us opportunities for inquiry. Studying these videos the same way we study texts means educators will be:

- a. Engaging in a “close reading” of each classroom, **describing** what we see. What do we see the teacher doing? What do we see the students doing? (We might call this the *p’shat* of the video footage). Here we simply observe; interpretation will come later. Learning to observe and describe without judgment or interpretation can help us “see” more and later be open to broader and divergent interpretations of action.

Example: “Three students raised their hands after the teacher asked, ‘What does it mean that Israel is a promised land?’ Two other children were tapping their pencils on their desks at the same time.”

- b. **Interpreting** what we have observed, but only after careful work on describing, as in “a” above. (Perhaps we would call this the *d’rash* of the video). In this stage, we explain our interpretations.

Example: “I don’t think that the children who were tapping their pencils were paying attention. In my experience, that kind of behavior usually means that they are bored and disengaged.”

Another possible interpretation might be offered for the same action, for example, “The students who were tapping their pencils actually seemed highly engaged. They continued to look at the teacher and their *hevruta* partner throughout, and had much to say during the lesson that indicated involvement and interest.”

c. **Personalization and ongoing inquiry:**

Does the video depict a challenge or dilemma that I face in my classroom? Is there a practice or idea that I'm inspired to explore? What questions does this video raise for me about teaching and learning that I would like to investigate further?

Example: "What does it look like to "personalize" Bible study in a meaningful way? And how might I continue to inquire into these questions?"

Learning to think and act like a teacher is intellectual work. It requires ways of thinking and of doing that benefit from thoughtful reflection and analysis before, during, and after the actual teaching. The collaborative study of classroom videos is a powerful strategy for helping educators develop pedagogic reasoning skills.