

INTRODUCTION

The Mandel Teacher Educator Institute (MTEI) created these films in order to support educators in having discussions about teaching and learning. These DVDs provide a great way to "observe" classrooms without actually having to be there, and they make it possible for groups to observe classrooms together. Neither the teachers shown here nor MTEI intend these to represent "model" moments of teaching; rather, they are real moments of teaching that can provide us with opportunities to investigate this complicated practice.

These DVDs provide excellent material to explore the following issues:

1. Use of small learning groups
2. Use of tangible materials
3. Teachers' choices on how to respond to individual students
4. Teachers' expression of their passion for Israel
5. Developmental issues related to teaching a complex topic (Israel) with 3 – 5 year olds and 7- 9 year olds
6. Goals for teaching Israel; what is it we're trying to convey when we teach "Israel"

If these are issues that interest you, you'll want to watch these DVDs.

DESCRIPTION OF VIDEO SEGMENTS

Disc One: Early Childhood Classrooms in a Jewish Community Center

The three classroom segments in this DVD take place in an early childhood center sponsored by a Jewish Community Center. Two of the segments take place in Betty's room; the children are three year-olds. The third segment portrays morning circle (which is not about Israel) in Anna's class of four year-olds.

- **Betty Café (3:02)**
Betty engages children in a conversation about Israel using pictures from the book, *Sammy the Spider Visits Israel*. Next, children move to snack time, which takes place at a table situated next to a map of Israel. Using slides projected on the wall, children choose to have their snack at a specific "virtual" café in Israel.
- **Betty Café with Narration (3:02)**
The same footage of the conversation on the rug and at snack time, but this time we hear Betty's narration, recorded after the class. She talks about her own love and connection to Israel, the way in which she introduced the study of Israel to these young children and how she came to use the overhead projector to create more vivid experiences of Israel.
- **Betty Mosaic (10:35)** This segment opens with a discussion about the creation of a mosaic floor like the one in the ancient synagogue in Tiberias and then moves to a longer segment in which we see Betty and the children creating a replica of the floor using clay and tiles.
- **Betty Mosaic with Narration (10:35)** As the viewer watches the same footage, Betty describes the way in which children's ideas are motivators of activities; the challenge of incorporating children's comments and talents with her own goals for children's growth and development; and the value of photographing children and displaying their work.

- **Anna Morning Circle (8:23)**
Anna's morning circle includes prayer, a text from *Pirkei Avot* and yoga.
- **Anna Morning Circle with Narration (8:23)**
As the viewer watches the morning circle, Anna narrates how and why she developed her routine for the opening circle. She comments on her own personal growth as well as her understanding of the needs of four year-olds.
- **Director's Overview (7:52)**
The director describes the goals of the school, as well as some of the unique and important features of the school for teachers, parents and children. We see and hear the voices of teachers and the director.

Disc Two: Eight-Year Olds Learn about Israel

This footage focuses on children in a congregational religious school affiliated with the Reform movement. Eight year olds attend school three times a week. This classroom sections on this video depict selections from Daniella's Sunday morning class that meets between 9:15 and 11:45. The video includes footage of her class as well as interviews with the director of congregational learning, the rabbi and some of the children.

- **Daniella's Class (19:23)**
This video has four distinct segments:
 - (4 minutes) Daniella opens class by introducing the study of Israel.
 - (8.5 minutes) She divides children into small groups to work on a variety of projects. After she describes a project, the film follows children as they work together.
 - (6 minutes) Several groups of children present their projects to the whole class.
 - (1 minute) The class concludes with an Israeli snack and song.
- **Daniella's Class with Narration (19:23)**
While the viewer sees the same classroom footage, Daniella describe her goals for children's learning as well as her detailed preparation for their group work.
- **Children's Insights (4:59)**
Some of the children in Daniella's class talk about why they think their parents send them to religious school, what they learned about Israel, and the importance of working in groups. The segment includes footage of the class that is connected to their words.
- **Director and Rabbi Overview (10:29)**
The director and rabbi describe their goals as well as some of the unique aspects of their relationship, the congregation and the curriculum of the school. In addition to footage of the interactions between children and other teachers in the school, we also hear Daniella and the children in her class comment on some of the same issues.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES USING THESE DVDS

Step One: Preview the whole DVD before sharing it.

These films can be used to focus on a variety of questions. As you preview, you might want to determine your particular focus for using the DVD at this time with your intended group.

Possible areas of focus—in most cases, it will be useful to choose just one or two of these:

- What content goals does the teacher seem to have for her students?
- What is the nature of teacher/student interactions?
- What is the teacher doing in order to help kids learn?
- What is the nature of the classroom climate and culture?
- What do you notice about how the children work together? Does the nature of the project seem to affect the nature of the group interactions?
- What does the teacher do during group work?

Step Two: Decide on Goals and Select Appropriate Footage to Support Them

Given your goals, how much and which sections of the DVD do you want to show? (Sometimes showing just 2 minutes of a tape can be provocative and useful.)

Step Three: Plan your Professional Development Session(s)

- Is there a conversation that you want to have with your group prior to showing the DVD?
- Do you want them to watch with particular questions in mind?
- Do you want them to take notes on what they see?
- Do you want them to try to distinguish between what they observe and what they think or feel about what they observe?
- Do you want them to focus on any particular element of the instructional triangle: teacher, learner, or content?
- Do you want to show the segment once, or two or more times?
- Are there issues or questions that you want them to take back to their own classrooms to investigate?
- Are there connections between this activity and classroom observations that your teachers might do? If so, are there ways you want to make that connection explicit?
- If, when and how are you planning to use the teacher narration and/or the overview?
- How will you debrief your session?
- How will you ascertain what your participants took away from the session?
- How will you follow up?

If you have questions about MTEI or about these materials, contact Dr. Gail Dorph, gaildorph@gmail.com