



Organizational Charter

December 2021

AS PROVIDERS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO EDUCATORS WORKING IN JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS, we have established the DEEP Consortium to leverage our combined expertise, experience and influence to strengthen both the capacity of teachers and school leaders to furnish the next generation of Jews with the highest-quality education and the capabilities of our own organizations to achieve this larger mission.¹

BACKGROUND

Research and experience have established the unequivocal link between better teaching and superior student outcomes. Likewise, one of the key drivers of instructional quality is ensuring educators of all types participate consistently in professional development—the constellation of activities and opportunities teachers engage in to learn, demonstrate, and reflect on the art and craft of their teaching and its influence on their students' learning.²

Within the ecosystem of Jewish day schools, the commitment to implementing high-quality professional development for teachers varies greatly. A study by CASJE revealed that a majority of teachers in Jewish formal and informal education are not participating in the kind of professional development opportunities that might have lasting impact—ongoing, job-embedded, content-rich, focused on student outcomes, and collaborative learning experiences.³

Our years of experience have also taught us that catalyzing change within the field of education, including Jewish day schools, is a steep challenge. While we are each doing our part to generate such positive change through a “one school at a time” approach, we also appreciate that our collaborative effort holds the potential to drive broader impact. In promoting the principles and practices of high-quality professional development with a unified voice, we believe that the ambition and the reality of stronger teaching will become more widespread within the field and, over time, become the norm.

The sections that follow delineate our shared principles. They present a vision of what we strive for in our work as individual organizations and as a consortium of organizations that share the common goal of making the field of Jewish day schools the best it can be.

SCOPE OF WORK

We hold fast to the belief that the purpose of professional development is to promote deep and lasting improvements in schools, and we do so by engaging every school as a partner, ready to join honestly and fully in the collaborative enterprise of setting data-informed goals, driving real improvement in educator practice and, ultimately, elevating education for all students.

Toward this end, we have formed a Professional Learning Community, meeting periodically to share approaches, techniques, effective practices, and challenges. Through this sharing we seek to identify ways in which our combined efforts can promote and deepen our engagements with individual schools and, in turn, broaden the impact of professional development across the field of Jewish day school education.

Together we explore how we might collaborate in all three phases of any professional development engagement: (a) identifying areas of need to support teacher practice; (b) implementing interventions to address the identified need(s); and (c) assessing and sustaining the impact of the interventions.

In addition, we advocate for research and other activities that foster understanding of the value of professional learning among day school educators such that they commit to and engage in a cycle of continuous improvement.

DEFINING HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Though our intervention models vary, we endeavor to structure our engagements with individual schools around seven evidence-based components of effective professional development (a term we use interchangeably with “professional learning.”) These characteristics include:

- **Focus on instructional content** – We promote teaching strategies as they relate to specific curriculum, materials and/or resources so that teachers can apply these pedagogies immediately within the classroom.
- **Active learning** – We shape professional learning experiences around doing (designing, experimenting, practicing and revising), modeling the style of learning we encourage teachers to use with their students. We generally avoid trainings that are primarily frontal in order to maximize teachers’ time spent reflecting on their own teaching and taking steps to strengthen their practice.
- **Collaboration** – We endeavor to work with teams of teachers such that they form (or build on) communities of learning and join together to change culture and instruction.
- **Integration of proven models** – We provide educators with frameworks of effective practice through which they can align their own teaching. These frameworks can entail both written resources (e.g., lesson plans) and pedagogical methods.
- **Coaching** – We often play the role of offering direct guidance and support to individual teachers (and/or supervisors) and, in some cases, we train school-based personnel to assume this responsibility with their peers (and/or supervisees).

- **Ample opportunity for feedback and reflection** – We build in time for educators to take a critical eye toward their own practice, including receiving detailed feedback from peers and experts, knowing that analyzing one’s current instructional philosophy and methods is a necessary first step in the process of incorporating different approaches.
- **Extended time** – We hold a strong preference for engaging with individual teachers and whole schools for a sufficient duration to ensure substantial time for learning, practice, and reflection. We understand that the nature of human learning means changing behaviors (and the mental frameworks that underlie them) requires gradual and steady application of new ideas and approaches in real time and within consistent settings. Further, extended engagements typically mean that we are able to work with more school staff over the course of our interventions.⁴

We recognize that specific circumstances and resources often mean that we are unable to optimize our professional development work to incorporate each of these characteristics to their fullest extent, but we hold out these seven components as an ideal and strive to implement them.

FOSTERING SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

As we work with educators in individual schools and, in some cases, with cohorts of educators across schools, we do so as true partners and, as such, hold to the following principles of working with school leadership and teachers that, when activated, help to ensure lasting impact of professional development engagements:

- **Communicating the usefulness of professional development** – When school leaders make transformative practice a priority and describe why such modifications in instruction or infrastructure or policies are necessary for student growth, the professional development designed to generate such improvements can fully take root. Absent such demonstrated commitment from leaders, teachers are far less likely to devote themselves to their own professional growth.
- **Infrastructure to support professional development** – School leaders must do more than communicate the necessity of professional development, they must also dedicate specific resources to the implementation of activities, such as financial compensation to teachers for participation and, most especially, time(s) within teachers’ work schedules for several dimensions of professional development to take place, including training, coaching, collaborating with peers, and reflection.
- **Accountability** – The most significant demonstration of leader investment is to hold staff accountable for implementing the newly introduced practices. Such accountability may take different forms, including formal and informal teacher evaluations and contractual requirements.
- **Flexibility and Adaptation** – Even as each of our organizations has developed proven models of professional development, we also value the uniqueness of each of the schools we work with. We endeavor to adapt and customize the professional development we provide in order to best meet the needs of specific teachers and expectations of school communities.

- **Sustainability** – We fully recognize that the professional development that each of our organizations provides is finite in scope and duration and, yet, our goal is catalyzing change in instructional practice and structural improvements that will endure long past our engagements. To promote sustained impact, we partner with each school to put in place strategies that foster continuous improvement.

ASSESSING IMPACT

We believe that the mere act of assessing how instructional practice may have improved as a result of specific interventions imbues all professional development activities with intentionality and direction. As such, we believe that the professional development we provide and promote will achieve maximal impact only when both we and schools collaborate to measure such impact.

Toward that end, we endeavor to put in place steps to assess the impact of our various professional development interventions. These steps include:

- a. Setting SMART goals for improvement, based on identified needs;
- b. Planning and implementing an array of professional development activities to meet these goals;
- c. Identifying key indicators of progress toward goals
- d. Collecting data from various sources that test how indicators are being met;
- e. Analyzing data to ascertain impact and identify further areas for growth; and
- f. Developing plans for sustaining impact and for further PD interventions, based on what data indicate are continued needs among faculty.

Throughout this assessment process, DEEP members will assist school staff in collecting and analyzing data to the extent that is feasible, given the scope of the working relationship.

SUPPORTING THE DAY SCHOOL FIELD

To promote the continued success and growth of the day school field, we will advocate vociferously for expanded investments in high-quality professional development, whether provided directly by DEEP members or not. Further, we will continue to explore and pursue additional opportunities through which to encourage such investment, including:

- a. Conducting and/or sponsoring research related to the state of teaching and learning within and across day schools;
- b. Securing philanthropic support for a wide variety of activities, especially as they relate to the implementation and measurement of high-quality professional development;
- c. Cataloguing and aligning professional development resources available for day school educators; and

- d. Consulting to individual schools on how to leverage professional development toward improved educational capacity.

Finally, we recognize that the day school community is markedly diverse demographically and with respect to stated educational goals and mission. In our efforts to build up the field we will aim to engage in activities that express no preference for any specific type or characteristic of school.

NOTES

¹ DEEP stands for Developing Embedded Expertise Programs. The Consortium lives under the auspices of the Jewish Education Innovation Challenge, a project of the Mayberg Family Foundation. Members include: BetterLesson, Facing History and Ourselves, Gateways: Access to Jewish Education, Hebrew at the Center, Hidden Sparks, Institute for Jewish Spirituality, The Jewish New Teacher Project, Jewish Standards & Benchmarks, Lifnai V'lifnim, The Lookstein Center, M²/Institute for Experiential Jewish Education, Pedagogy of Partnership, Prizmah, The Shefa School, and Sulam.

² Outside of individual student ability, the strongest predictor of student performance are factors that revolve around teacher capacity. For more information, see Hattie, J. (2003). [Teachers Make a Difference. What Is the Research Evidence?](#) (pp. 1-17) On the value of professional development for improving teacher practice and, in turn, learner outcomes, see [Raising Student Achievement Through Professional Development](#) (2021) and Ingvarson, L., et al (2005). [Factors affecting the impact of professional development programs on teachers' knowledge, practice, student outcomes & efficacy.](#)

³ Rosov Consulting (2021). [Professional Development for Jewish Educators: Time to Tap Its Potential](#) (Collaborative for Applied Studies in Jewish Education).

⁴ These characteristics are articulated fully: L. Darling-Hammond, et al (2017). [Effective Teacher Professional Development, Research Brief](#). For a more recent (and granular) rendering of the characteristics of effective professional learning, see H. Hill and J. Papay (2022). [Building Better PL: How to Strengthen Teacher Learning.](#)