



The William Davidson Graduate School of JTS Offers Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project for Teachers of Tanakh

JCDS, Boston's Jewish Community Day School, is proud to have been one of several select Jewish day schools across North America to have participated in the Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project during the 2013–2014 academic year, working in close collaboration with staff at the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of The Jewish Theological Seminary. This initiative enhances the teaching and learning of Tanakh by offering Judaic studies faculties and leaders a year of intensive and distinctive professional learning. These skills and techniques have the potential to positively impact other Judaic studies disciplines.

First grade teacher and Lower School Jewish Studies Teacher Leader Yaffah Korinow has worked hard this year to integrate this project into our school community. “We are establishing a collaborative culture which has produced not only a deep sense of collegiality,” says Yaffah, “but significant changes in our teaching and professional development. We study *Tanakh* together once a week as a team. We learn, coach and inspire each other in small groups as we plan units for our specific classes. We share pedagogic practices as well as student work, which we look at using protocols for feedback. We brainstorm common issues and devote one meeting a month to discussing them. Most significantly, we know that we are not teaching in a vacuum, but rather have each other to rely on, and to insure that the curriculum spirals appropriately from grade to grade.”

The Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project supports teachers and leaders of its participating schools as they develop a coherent vision for teaching and learning Tanakh and a methodology to do so. This methodology encourages and fosters the development of higher order learning skills, such as innovative thinking, effective communication, exploration of biblical text for meaning, and the development of an appreciation of Torah as an inspiring resource that informs values, moral commitments, and ways of experiencing the world.

Our school has benefited greatly from this year of professional learning. Over the course of the year, our faculty has been given opportunities to reexamine and renew our teaching practices and engage our students in meaningful Torah study. Lead educators from JCDS joined participants from the other selected schools for a series of institutes

at JTS in New York City, and a consultant from the project has visited JCDS throughout the year to work closely with our faculty.

“We are thrilled for the opportunity to work with JCDS. Our primary goal is to support Jewish day schools in their efforts to improve the teaching and learning of *Tanakh*,” says Charlotte Abramson, director of the Standards and Benchmarks project. “We are gratified that schools have found this professional development project transformative for their teachers. It has led to improvement in the instruction of all Judaic subjects, and meaningfully engaged students with Jewish traditions.”

The Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project, now in its 10th year, is generously supported by The Davidson School of JTS and the AVI CHAI Foundation.

The William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of JTS is North America’s largest pluralistic school of Jewish education, granting graduate-level degrees in Jewish education and providing professional development and curricula programs to educators currently in the field. It continues to fill the ever-growing demand for well-trained, competent leaders in Jewish education across the continent and beyond.

For additional information about the Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project, please contact Dr. Janette Silverman at The Davidson School: jasilverman@jtsa.edu or (212) 678-8850.