



DEPLOYMENT GUIDE

FOR STANDARDS BASED LEARNING

*Zekelman Standards
for Judaic Studies*  *Data Driven
Instruction*

CONTENTS

- 3** Introduction
- 4** *Part 1*
Before You Start: Readiness Criteria
- 6** *Part 2*
15 Steps to Standards Based Learning
- 19** *Part 3*
Making it Work: Suggestions and Strategies
- 26** Appendix A: Readiness Rubric
- 26** Appendix B: Sample Deployment Calendar

INTRODUCTION

The Menachem Education Foundation (MEF) was founded in 2008 to professionalize education in Orthodox schools. MEF's program for Standards Based Learning combines two important innovations, one in Judaic studies and one in the general world of education.

The first is the Zekelman Standards for Judaic Studies. These standards were developed, and are continuing to be developed, over a number of years by a team of highly professional and dedicated educators from around the world. They provide benchmarks that define what mastery in Chumash or Gemara looks like at every step of the way. Without a road map and clearly marked destinations, we have nowhere to begin. The Zekelman Standards are that roadmap for Yeshiva schools.

The second is Data Driven Instruction (DDI). DDI links instruction to actual data about student achievement, closing the feedback loop between what teachers are striving to do and what students are actually achieving. DDI is a nationally emerging framework that has been developed by a number of pillars in the educational world. Its ingredients are simple: curriculum, assessments, data and action; but it creates the framework for teachers to reach every child's needs.

Since launching this initiative in 2011, MEF is bringing these two innovations to a growing network of schools, along with providing the support necessary for schools to succeed in their implementation. This Deployment Guide is part of that effort.

A tremendous amount of thanks is due to my dear friend, **Mr. Alan Zekelman**, a visionary philanthropist who has chosen to stand behind the cause of Jewish education. Alan funded and encouraged the development of the Zekelman Standards, and continues

to enable every effort to bring those standards and their successful implementation to Yeshiva schools worldwide.

This initiative is due to the vision and efforts of **Rabbi Yossi Rosenblum**, who recognized the need for Standards Based Learning in Orthodox Schools, and has driven this multifaceted process from its start. Thanks is also due to **Mrs. Chanah Rose** for preparing this handbook, and for the broader role she has undertaken in easing the process of deployment for participating schools. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire Standards Development Team for their ongoing input into the Zekelman Standards for Judaic Studies and their successful deployment in schools around the world: **Rabbi Y. Rosenblum, Mrs. C. Rose, Rabbi M. Greenbaum, Mrs. S. Rosenfeld and Rabbi M. Perelstein.**

I wish you the utmost success in implementing Standards Based Learning in your school. This handbook is designed to make that process easier for you. Its success will be realized in the fulfillment of the Posuk:

אל תקרי בניך, אלא בוניך. – בניך לימודי ה' ¹ *All of your children will be learned in G-dliness, says the Navi, but by changing the pronunciation we can read the word "children" as "builders." I.e., our children are our builders. May we merit to see these words come true in all of the children in our care.*

Sincerely,

Zalman Shneur

Rabbi Zalman Shneur,
Executive Director
27 Adar 1, 5774

¹ ישעיהו, פרק נ"ד, פסוק י"ג

PART 1: BEFORE YOU START

SCHOOL READINESS CRITERIA

Are you thinking of implementing standards based learning in your school? Have you already signed on, and are ready to do what it takes for your school to succeed? Before you even begin the process, delineated in part 2 of this handbook, you need to think about your school's readiness to embark on this journey and to succeed.

The following 5 items are what we call "School Readiness Criteria" – aspects of school culture and functionality that need to be in place, or put into place, before you begin.

1. Administrative Functionality

To begin a school improvement endeavor such as this one, the first step is to ensure that the school has basic administrative functionality and a certain level of professionalism in its governance structures.

- ▶ *Participating schools must have functional administrative processes and procedures as evidenced by regularized payment of staff and an organizational chart with clear lines of supervisory authority.*

2. Instructional Leadership

Are you the principal, curriculum director, or instructional leader of your school? If you are a principal with many aspects of school leadership on your plate, perhaps you should consider delegating this project to a designated instructional leader. An instructional leader, with the time and resources to devote specifically to the **learning and teaching** (as opposed to administration, discipline, hiring, policy setting and myriad other responsibilities a principal typically has) is critical to the success of this program.

- ▶ *In order to implement a standards based learning, the school must have an instructional leader. This can be the principal, assistant principal or another individual designated and empowered by the principal. Instructional leadership is committed to the core business of teaching, learning and knowledge. Specifically, this involves setting clear goals, managing curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and evaluating teachers regularly to promote student learning and growth.*

3. School Culture of Ongoing Staff Learning and Collaboration

Do you have time in your school calendar to devote to professional development and instructional growth, or are you willing to allocate that time? Making time may include arranging for extra compensation for teachers, or substitutes to free up teachers for collaborative work. As in every area of life, the only things that actually happen are the things that we make time for.

- ▶ *Establishing and maintaining a culture of ongoing learning for the staff is crucial to the success of the program. This includes creating a calendar that allows for professional development prior to the school year, as well as during the school year. This also calls for a daily schedule which allows for meetings between teachers and administration.*

4. School Culture of Change and Improvement

How much do you want this program to succeed? How willing is your staff to value progress and instructional growth? Complete buy-in is not necessary; you do not have to have every last teacher fully on board. But you do need to have, or at least be willing to create, a culture of striving for excellence and openness to new ideas in your school.

- ▶ *The school leadership and staff must be committed to improving their practice and student learning through new educational approaches and initiatives. Implementing the Zekelman Standards requires time and a willingness to try something new, which can be overwhelming at first.*

5. Instructional Rounds

Are your teachers kings of their castles, resistant to a guest in the classroom? Or are they comfortable with observations, with instructional rounds routine in your school? Your school will need to develop a team ethic to allow for this program's success.

- ▶ *Principals and teachers will need to conduct classroom walkthroughs in order to observe teaching and learning. This collaboration and observation of actual classrooms is crucial in helping educators solve instructional issues and devise interventions for students who need additional attention.*

PART 2:

15 STEPS TO STANDARDS BASED LEARNING

1. Select your focus
2. Create Your School Calendar
3. Professional Development: Introducing the Content – Zekelman Standards
4. Professional Development: Introducing the Method – Data Driven Instruction
5. Curriculum Mapping
6. Create Interim Assessment #1
7. Administer Interim Assessment #1
8. Chart and Review Assessment Results
9. Analysis Meetings
10. Action Plans
11. Follow Up
12. Repeat Steps 6-11
13. Professional Development
14. Summative Assessment
15. Get Ready for Next Year!



1. Select your focus - תפסת במרובה, לא תפסת

The goal of standards and DDI is to succeed, not to turn your entire school into a standards based institution overnight. To ensure success, you want to go slow and steady. What you are looking at is generally a five to seven year process, depending on your particular school, with meaningful gains every step of the way.

Therefore, step 1 is to choose your focus. There are a few ways to do this, but don't forget that success breeds success, so choose the approach that you think will set your school on a forward moving path toward standards based learning!

APPROACH ONE: Choose a grade level. This might be because you feel that a particular grade, or its teacher(s), is ripe for this kind of change. The most intuitive way is to start from the beginning, with first grade (or the first grade addressing Chumash or Gemara in your school). That way, you are starting with a relatively narrow focus, and are laying the foundation for standards based learning in the upper grades as this pilot group of students progress. If you feel that your school is ready for a bigger bite, start with grades 1 and 2.

Occasionally, a school will choose another grade to start with, either because that particular class or teacher is the best choice, or because they feel confident that their students have an adequate foundation of skills and it will not be too difficult to catch them up to the grade level in the standards.

APPROACH TWO: Choose a specific area of focus in the standards themselves. You can decide that the whole school will take a deep dive into one area of the standards this year, changing your teachers' approach to comprehension, for example, or language skills. Alternatively different groups of teachers or grade levels can be assigned a particular standard to work on, based on what is most needed or most realistic.

When you take this approach, it is advisable to select the standard or area of the standards which you feel will be easiest for your teachers to succeed in implementing. Or, flipping this theory on its head, you can choose a standard which will create the greatest innovation because you feel that it is most necessary for your school. Some schools might choose one of each standard type, to balance building teachers' confidence in standards based learning with important and meaningful instructional growth for the school.

Ask yourself:

- ? What kind of timeline is realistic for my school to successfully adopt standards based learning across the board?
- ? What will my progression be – by grade, by standard, or according to some other process?

- ? What milestones of achievement will I look for at various points on that timeline? What should I anticipate at the end of years 1, 2, 5, or 7?
- ? Where will I start this year?



2. Create Your School Calendar

Anything important takes time, and might perhaps take *away* time from other responsibilities and priorities. Standards based learning requires a commitment of time, and as much as possible, you want to provide that time for your teachers because they may not have a lot of free time to volunteer. Additionally, marking the school's (or grade's) calendar with the important dates related to standards based learning ensures that this endeavor will not give way to the myriad other priorities that arise in the course of a school year, and is that much more likely to succeed.

You will need to schedule the following dates when implementing standards based learning:

1. **Several days of professional development in the summer**, or at the end of the year before your first year with the standards. As you'll see below, you'll need time to introduce the standards, time to train teachers in DDI, and time for teachers to collaborate on curriculum maps and assessments. That is a lot of ground to cover. From March through August, see if you can pencil in five days altogether. (Don't forget that there will be plenty of other teachers' meetings and other work to be completed during the rush before the school year begins in September, so don't leave this all for the end!)
2. **Assessment dates – every 6-8 weeks throughout the year.** Your school year will be divided into at least 3 to 4 instructional periods, marked by interim assessments at the end of each. To make this happen, decide on the assessment dates before the year begins. This way teachers will be able to map their curriculum and plan their instruction accordingly.



To schedule interim assessments, work with your existing school calendar. Yomim Tovim and other school breaks might naturally break up the school year already, so work around them. 6-8 weeks is the recommended number, but some schools might have to customize that number.

In South Africa and Australia, for example, the school year is divided into four segments with short holidays between each, unlike the long school year followed by a three month summer vacation in the Northern Hemisphere. These schools should plan to administer one interim assessment at the end of each segment (leaving a week before the holiday for re-teaching while the information is still fresh), and can attempt to schedule in more when possible.

3. **Analysis meetings – every 6-8 weeks throughout the year.** Following assessment dates, teachers will have to mark the assessments, fill in data charts, and participate in analysis meetings. Analysis meetings can take place individually between each teacher and the instructional leader, or with groups of teachers of one or more grades together.



If you choose to conduct group analysis meetings, you will have to schedule a morning or afternoon for this to take place, making other arrangements for the students. If you meet with teachers one-on-one, you won't need to give students a day off, but will have to plan for substitutes or other arrangements. If your school can afford the time to give teachers to mark assessments and fill in data charts, then all the better – your teachers will only thank you for it!

Note to steps 3 & 4: Don't forget that one of your interim assessments will be a summative assessment, which will also require time for marking and analysis. When you schedule this last assessment, be sure to leave time for the follow up work to take place before your teachers are on vacation.

4. **Professional Development/In-Service - 3 days throughout the year, before or around interim assessments.** The key to successful standards based learning is to support your teachers throughout the process. This kind of support will take on many different forms. Chances are that as the year progresses you will notice one or two areas in which most of your teachers could benefit from a focused professional development session. Even if they are sailing smoothly, teachers will appreciate some enrichment that reinforces what they already learned in the summer, renewing their interest in and commitment to standards based learning. A day focused on PD also acts as a powerful demonstration to teachers that the school administration is there for them and wants to help them grow.



Schedule PD to take place before or around interim assessments. That way you can continue the training that took place during the summer, before new steps in the process are undertaken. For example, before the first interim assessment would be a good time to teach teachers about data analysis.

Suggested topics to address in subsequent PD sessions: a particular content or skill area of the standards ["I'm trying to teach Dikduk, but I never learned it properly myself!"], a challenge teachers are encountering in standards based learning ["The data from my interim assessments is not telling me what to do next!"], or anything else ["I would love to learn more about higher order thinking in Chumash/Gemara class!"].

Now you can bring your teachers on board!



Professional Development: Introducing the Content – Zekelman Standards

Gather your teachers who will be working on standards based learning together as early on in the process as possible to introduce them to the Zekelman Standards.

There are a few questions you will need to answer for your teachers:

- ? Why standards?
- ? What are the Zekelman Standards?
- ? How will we go about using standards?

We propose to do this backwards: Help your teachers identify what their ultimate goals are for their students, and then to recognize what it will take to get them there.

An MEF trainer will conduct this session, introducing the Zekelman Standards to your staff (except in a case of geographic distance or other impediment, in which case you will be trained in how to do so). They will utilize the documents entitled “Portrait of a Student,” “Using the Standards,” and “What Standards are Not,” can be found in the introduction to the Zekelman Standards for Chumash.

1. Your teachers will be asked to think about what an eighth grade graduate who has successfully completed an elementary school course of study in Chumash/Gemara should look like. Then they will be asked what steps are necessary to get a child to attain those goals.
2. Teachers will be guided through a sample of the Zekelman Standards for Chumash and/or Gemara, and then will be provided with the actual standards they will be working on over the course of the year, based on the focus that you selected in step 1.

At this point, you will provide teachers with the opportunity to become at least somewhat familiar with the standards themselves, whether by studying them in pairs or groups, or with an instructional leader guiding them through the material.

Also provide your teachers with the various resources that MEF created to supplement the standards: the expanded and compacted versions, appendices, and other materials that has been made available to increase your teachers’ comfort and ease with the standards.



Your goal right now is for your teachers to have a thorough familiarity with the standards. Mastery can continue to be achieved step by step, throughout the year. Be sure to provide your teachers with sufficient time and guidance to be thoroughly comfortable in at least one standard, and to be sufficiently familiar with the remainder of the standards that they will be mapping into their curriculum, in anticipation of mastering them at a later date. Allowing your teachers to become experts in something, while avoiding the overwhelm of having to become experts in everything,

is key to building the confidence they need to begin the journey of standards based learning.

This session should be concluded by asking teachers to reflect, either orally or in writing, on the answers to the original questions posed above.



4. Professional Development: Introducing the Method – Data Driven Instruction (DDI)

Give your teachers some time to absorb your introduction to the standards, and then launch into the method for implementing them: DDI!

As with the standards, when introducing DDI you will have to address the questions of “Why?” and “How?” We will start with the why. The short answer is that data is the only systematic way to ensure that **each** of your students masters **each** of the standards towards becoming a self-sufficient learner of Chumash or Gemara.

Once your teachers are convinced of “why” (although it is not necessary to convince them completely – their success will convince them as the year progresses), we will provide an overview of the “how:” the four steps in the DDI process.

1. **Curriculum Mapping:** This is where standards meet DDI, taking their place in the instructional landscape of the coming school year. Curriculum mapping consists of identifying which standard can best be reinforced in each segment of the syllabus, or material to be covered. Show your teachers a sample curriculum map that does this effectively, and explain that they will be creating full or partial curriculum maps for the beginning of next year at the end of this session.
2. **Interim Assessments:** We will demonstrate how assessments can be designed to tell us not only the mark that students will receive on their report cards, but what they have or haven’t mastered, and why. We will also show teachers how assessments are actually the starting point for instruction, not the end point, since defining what students should know and be able to do on an assessment is the best way to define how we intend to teach them. Primarily, teachers will learn that effective assessments can drive instruction, and that frequent assessment (every six to eight weeks) can yield valuable data about student mastery.

While the training will primarily focus on steps a and b, which need to be completed before the start of the school year, only a brief overview will be provided for steps c and d. It will be necessary to revisit and delve more deeply into Data Analysis and Action Plans before they take place for the first time, following the first interim assessment.

3. **Data Analysis: Marking an assessment can tell us so much more than what number or letter grade a student receives! Teachers might be able to suggest what else one can learn from an assessment.**

4. **Action Plans: Data** is only as useful as what we do with it. This step might be the one speaks the teachers' language best, as it recognizes the need to take specific actions to help both individual students and the whole class learn, and provides a format for doing so successfully.

Introductions have been made, and now we can begin!



5. Curriculum Mapping

Now that your teachers are familiar with the **content** of the Zekelman Standards and the **methods** of DDI, it's time to put it together. The first step in their journey will be to map out the year's curriculum, interspersing the standards that need to be taught over the course of the school year with the texts that will be covered.

A few things to bear in mind at this stage of the process:

1. At this point, you will need to share the calendar that you created in step 2 with your teachers. They will be mapping out their curriculum according to how you divided the year and scheduled interim assessments.
2. You should also share any syllabus, coverage expectations or material requirements that you have at this point. Teachers will be working with their syllabus for the year as their backdrop, plugging in individual standards where they best belong.



Just remember: **Using the Zekelman Standards properly may slow down coverage, but will accelerate mastery!** Although teachers might be wary of teaching less, it is more important that students are learning more. It may be necessary to modify syllabus requirements for the sake of properly incorporating standard based learning.

A few things for your teachers to bear in mind as they get started:

- a. Curriculum mapping involves **matching standards to the syllabus**. In other words, for every standard, a teacher asks himself: Which Posuk, Perek, Meforash or Gemara that I plan to teach this year is most conducive to teaching this standard? Which standards are best highlighted by the text that we will be covering?
- b. Remember to leave several days to a week after every interim assessment for any re-teaching that may need to take place.

Curriculum mapping may prove to be challenging at first, so be sure to provide plenty of time, guidance, examples and support to your teachers. By next year, they will already be pros, needing less of your support and completing their curriculum maps more quickly.



The instructional leader should carefully review every curriculum map, and make any changes, adjustments or recommendations when necessary.



6. Create Interim Assessment #1

After creating curriculum maps for the year, teachers will be ready to begin building their first interim assessment. Remember that the assessment needs to be in place before the teaching begins, as it is the best way for teachers to determine the level at which they will be teaching.

As with the first curriculum map, your teachers' first assessment should be created in the time that you carve out, with plenty of support and collaboration. For subsequent assessments, teachers may be ready to do the work on their own. However, creating time for them to do so will make it far more likely that their assessments will be in place before that particular segment of instruction begins.



The instructional leader should create a protocol for collecting and reviewing interim assessments and make any changes, adjustments or recommendations that are necessary, **before** the instruction begins.



7. Administer Interim Assessment #1

Your school's first year of standards based learning is underway. 6-8 weeks into the school year, your first interim assessments will be administered to students. A few pointers:

- a. You penciled in a date for each interim assessment on your school calendar in step #2. Teachers can be given leeway as to exactly when to administer the assessment. However, all participating teachers should give assessments within the same few days, to enable the subsequent steps of the DDI process to proceed on schedule.
- b. The entire assessment does not have to be given all at once! There are many manners of assessment, and some are more conducive to taking place during the course of instruction. For example:

Oral assessments: A teacher might choose to assess a particular standard or group of standards after they have been taught, through administering an oral assessment – also known as a *farther*. This could take place at any point during the course of instruction.

Performance assessments: Performance assessments require students to create a product or presentation, and usually assess a group of standards at a time.

Extended response: Usually referred to as essay questions, these can either be administered at the same time as a formal assessment or at any point during the course of instruction as an in-class or homework assignment [particularly if additional research is called for].

Written assessment: This is what most often comes to mind when we think of assessments, and includes multiple choice, matching, and written responses. This will most likely constitute the bulk of the assessment and be administered at once, at the end of the instructional period. However, for younger students, these may not be appropriate at all, with oral and performance assessments being far better choices.



Remember that subsequent interim assessments are **cumulative**, re-testing standards that have been taught earlier on in the year to make sure that mastery is retained.



8. Chart and Review Assessment Results

The following steps should be taken following an interim assessment, to make it a meaningful source of data:

- a. **Marking assessments:** Create and implement a policy of immediate turn-around, requiring assessments to be marked within forty eight hours to ensure that subsequent stages of analysis take place when they are still relevant.

If you have the wherewithal to show compassion for your teachers by providing them with time during the school day, or even the assistance of other staff members, in marking assessments – all the better!

- b. **Charting the data:** Provide your teachers with a data analysis chart (using or adapting the templates provided to you in the appendix of this document) to use for this purpose. It should include the names of every student on one axis, and columns for each standard and the corresponding assessment questions along the other. Encourage teachers to use color coding to make data more easily distinguishable. Any kind of assistance you can provide, similar to the assistance suggested for marking assessments, would be helpful.
- c. **Review the data:** The instructional leader should collect and review your teachers' analysis charts prior to analysis meetings in order to maximize productivity.



9. Analysis Meetings

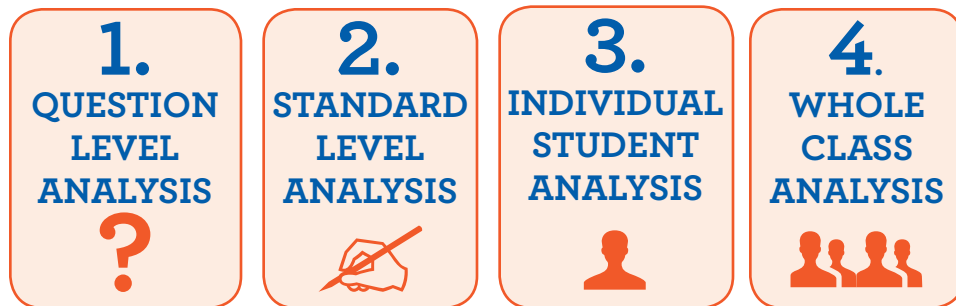
Now is the time to sit down with each of your teachers – either one-on-one or in a group setting – to analyze the data. Come prepared by having reviewed the data, but place the analysis in the hands of the teachers. Your role is to prompt and guide their analysis. Be supportive and create an open line of communication, making sure that teachers feel validated and heard. Help your teachers by asking them questions, such as:

- ? What does the data tell you?
- ? What else does the data tell you?

- ? Why do you think s/he/they selected this answer or got this wrong?
- ? What else would you like the data to tell you? (This question is helpful for honing the effectiveness of future assessments.)

Be sure that all parties who will be involved in creating and implementing action plans – i.e. the resource room teacher – are present at the analysis meeting.

Remember to analyze the data at four levels:



10. Action Plans - המעשה הוא העיקר

Standards based learning is at its best at this point of the process, when educators put their minds to advancing every student to the point of mastery of the standards that they have learned so far.

Determining action plans is an outgrowth of data analysis and takes place at the analysis meeting. Two kinds of action plans should be created: **individual student action plans** and **whole class action plans**. Action plans should target standards where mastery was not yet demonstrated, and can include review and re-teaching, or creative methods of instruction and reinforcement. The actions to be taken do not have to be taken by teachers alone, but can be delegated to parents (i.e. review at home) or special education instructors. Analysis and action plans provide a unique opportunity for special learning needs to be identified and addressed.



Teachers should **document action plans** on templates that you provide. Both the teacher and instructional leader should maintain a copy. This is crucial in ensuring accountability and professionalism in this and the following stage in the process.



11. Follow Up

It is the instructional leader's job to support teachers in carrying out their action plans and create a sense of accountability and responsibility for them to do so. Since you are the one driving this stage of the process, it does not have to be included in the school calendar. Instead, create appointments with yourself to follow up on the action plans: observe classrooms, check that lesson plans include the determined course of action, ask teachers to report on progress, speak to the relevant parties regarding special education and outside help, and so on.

Make these tasks a priority in the week or two following each interim assessment. Refer to documented action plans and make written notes on them. Within two weeks of the assessment, create a deadline for yourself to look over each action plan and check that the determine course of action was carried out. Successful follow up will make way for greater success in the subsequent instructional period.



Remember – every child is precious. This is the reason we are here, in the thick of standards based learning: to make success a reality for each child in our care.



12. Repeat steps 6-11

Keep the following points in mind as you proceed through the rest of the school year:

- a. **Support your teachers.** Nearly every teacher in a Yeshiva school is overextended with teaching responsibilities. The more you support teachers in standards based learning through allotting time during the school day, providing personnel to help with paperwork and administrative duties, and being available to provide guidance and mitigate challenges, the more empowered teachers will be to carry out this transformation. [See part 3 of this document for more ideas on this topic.]
- b. **Success breeds success.** Set your teachers up for success by making sure that you have created the conditions to make each stage in standards based learning doable [see the Readiness Criteria in section 1]. Then celebrate those successes! The key here is to build your teachers' confidence in their ability to switch over to standards based learning. After all, you can't do it without them.
- c. **Go slow and steady.** In step 1, we advised you not to bite off a chunk larger than you can chew, but the intention is to grow. If you feel that your teachers have mastered one area of the standards, or that standards based learning has become the norm in one grade level or division in your school, then you can keep building! Typically, you will want to wait until the subsequent year to embark on the next significant stage in the process, but you can make that judgment based on the particular circumstances of your school.
- d. **Be a team.** Cultivate a shared culture of standards based learning, making every member of the team important. Let parents know about this initiative to elicit their support for your teachers. Convey a can-do attitude and confidence in your teachers, not an attitude of imposition. Facilitate collaboration amongst teachers, as that is perhaps the greatest tool for instructional growth; provide opportunities for them to observe one another's classrooms, share teaching resources, and talk about insights and breakthroughs. When you want to expand standards based learning to other areas of the school faculty, the enthusiasm of teachers who are already on board will be your number one asset.
- e. **Stay in touch with MEF!** We are here for you. We also need your help to create a team atmosphere amongst **all** of our participating schools, by sharing your resources and contributing to the standards community. Respond to our

requests and inquiries, and don't hesitate to reach out in return! [Refer to your MEF MOU for more details regarding each of our respective responsibilities.]



13. Professional Development

Gift your teachers with one to three days throughout the year for them to invest in themselves as teachers. Address topics that they have requested, deal with challenges that have arisen, enrich your teachers with a greater scope of professional instructional strategies, or inspire them with the importance of the responsibility they hold. Alternatively, if you see that teachers are struggling to keep their heads above water, provide them with the time and space to complete their standards related workload, e.g. to create their interim assessments for the remainder of the year.



14. Summative Assessment

The summative assessment is a way for you to look at the big picture of how standards based learning has affected your school. Since it is provided by the Menachem Education Foundation, it is a great entryway to the larger community of standards based learning, and allows us to collect data about the success of our work and make adjustments accordingly.

As far as the work that you do around this assessment, the only major way that a summative assessment is different from an interim assessment is that your teachers don't have to create it. They still need to chart the data and analyze it. You still need to conduct analysis meetings. Your action plans, however, may look toward the following school year. It would be wise to consider including the teacher who will have a particular class the following year in the analysis of the summative assessment.



Be sure to administer summative assessments with enough time between the assessment and the end of the year for re-teaching, data analysis and meetings.



15. Get Ready for Next Year!

What do you need to do to carry your successful practice of standards based learning into the next school year?

First of all, you need to do steps 1-6, all over again. It's nearly certain that you and your staff will be more proficient this time around. At the same time, some things will be different.

1. Your task for step 1 is to **widen your focus**. Based on the lessons you learned, your successes and challenges during the year, decide where you want to go next. Another area of the standards? Another grade or division? You might decide to stick with the same teachers, or the same standards, until you see the level of success that you are looking for.

2. **Leverage your success!** You have successfully traversed that first leap into standards based learning, and something that has already been done always feels much more accessible. Let your new participants know of previous successes. Let your successful teachers from last year share their experiences. Instead of bringing standards based learning to new staff members by imposing it upon them as something new, do it in the spirit of inviting them to join something wonderful that your teachers, their colleagues, have already championed.
3. **Reflect, reflect, reflect.** Perhaps schedule a year-end meeting among instructional leaders and participating teachers, to talk about your school's experience with standards based learning this year. Ask yourselves the following questions:
 - ? What was key in moving us forward? (We want to do that again.)
 - ? What held us back? (We want to avoid that.)
 - ? Have we met our goal for this year in terms of gains in student performance? Why or why not?
 - ? What else have we learned – about our school, students, curriculum and staff?
 - ? What have we changed based on these lessons? What can or should we change before the start of next year?
 - ? What are we proud of?
4. **Get a head start.** Don't wait until the end of this year's standards related work to begin preparing for next year. If you are adding on one or more grade levels, you have new teachers to introduce to standards based learning. If you are plunging into another area of the standards, you have some in depth training to do. Start doing all this before the year is out.
5. **Once again,** stay in touch with MEF! You've been checking in with us throughout the year, and now is the time to renew your relationship. Besides for the formalities of signing on for an additional year, we will want to hear from you about your experience, and let you know of any updates or new support that you can expect from us over the summer or next year. As before, make contact before the school year is out – preferably around Pesach time.



Your school is now a full year into blazing a trail for Torah education with a level of quality that every one of your students deserve! Thank you for partnering with us to make this happen. As someone who has chosen to be out in the field of Chinuch, developing the minds, hearts and souls of our precious children, we salute you.

PART 3:

MAKING IT WORK:

SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Standards Based Learning is a community. Welcome! The following is a list of suggestions and strategies, gleaned from participating schools. New ideas? Strategies that succeed? Send suggestions based on your experience to us, and this list will grow!

1. Your Teachers Will Thank You
2. Additional Subjects
3. Involve the Parents
4. Involve the Students
5. Differentiated Instruction
6. Pre-Assessment
7. Educational Styles
8. Let the Walls Speak
9. Report Cards

1. Your Teachers Will Thank You

The state of affairs in most Yeshiva schools – if not schools in general – is that teachers are overwhelmed. They are in the profession in order to make a difference and help their students succeed, but in doing so, they are often struggling to keep their heads above water.

Enter standards based learning: interim assessments, data analysis, meetings, action plans and more. The more assistance you can provide your teachers to support their responsibilities in standards based learning, the more your teachers will thank you, and the more success they will enjoy. Even if their new responsibilities will not actually take up much more time than what they have been investing until now, just showing teachers that you respect their time and their efforts will clearly send them the message that you are on the same team.

There are many forms of assistance that you can provide your teachers. Here are a few:

1. Free periods or days off during which to create, mark, and analyze assessments.
2. Personnel [e.g. low cost assistants or student teachers] to assist with marking assessments and transferring results to data charts for the teachers to analyze.
3. Scheduling analysis meetings and in-service sessions to take place during school hours as much as possible, with substitutes or other activities arranged for students.
4. Pre-made templates for curriculum maps, assessments, data charts and action plans.
5. Personnel with basic computer and graphic skills to do the time-consuming work of formatting and designing assessments and curriculum materials, once teachers have spent their time and talent on creating the content.
6. Investing in a computerized educational system such as Engrade and customizing it to be standards based.
7. Award pay bonuses.
8. Awards, recognition, and other large and small signs of appreciation.

Seeing their successes unfold will be the most meaningful thank you that teachers can get, so be sure to invest in creating conditions for success every step of the way.

2. Additional Subjects

While the Zekelman Standards for Judaic Studies delineate the skills necessary to master Chumash and Gemara, those skills do not have to be taught solely during the time of day marked for those subjects. Many of the standards overlap with other subjects in your syllabus. Allowing them to spill over into those subjects has the following advantages:

A cross disciplinary approach reinforces the learning by presenting concepts in various contexts, making them more real and multifaceted for your students.

If you or your teachers are concerned about how to teach all of the standards for a particular grade in the limited amount of time allotted for Chumash/Gemara each day, delegating some of the standards to different subjects will address that challenge.

The standards will supply meaningful and rigorous content goals for additional subjects, especially when some subjects – such as Parsha and Yahadus – often lack an adequate curriculum and are prone to being filled with basic and repetitive content.

If you have one teacher in charge of multiple subjects, it will be easy for him or her to divide areas of the standards amongst subjects. If you have departmental learning with multiple teachers per class, encourage the other teachers to collaborate with the Chumash/Gemara teacher on standards based learning.

The following subjects naturally support the Zekelman Standards:

1. **Hebrew Language:** A significant portion of the Zekelman Standards, particularly the Chumash Standards, cover language skills. Many schools offer classes in Hebrew Language, whether they are referred to as Ivrit, Dikduk or Lashon Hatorah. Aligning this subject with the Zekelman Standards will have the dual advantage of providing sufficient time for mastery of the language standards, and making the instruction that takes place in the language class more meaningful and rigorous, by linking it with the context of Chumash/Gemara. Students are often resistant to how Hebrew is traditionally taught in schools, because the various rules seem arbitrary and out of context. Using Hebrew language class as an entry-point to teaching Chumash solves this problem.
2. **English Language:** Students need to be fluent in a native language in order to learn the intricacies of a new language. Hence, many of our language standards begin by delineating their equivalent in the English language, to ensure that students can identify the concept that they are about to work with in Hebrew. Why not involve your English teacher in that process? This is a meaningful way to integrate your Limudei Kodesh and General Studies departments, demonstrating how every area of learning should be used to further Torah study.
3. **Parsha:** An important part of teaching Chumash is content. However, if students spend a good portion of each week for all of their years of schooling studying the weekly Parsha, why can they not be expected to come to Chumash class with a comprehensive and age appropriate level of familiarity with Chumash content? Use the content guidelines provided in the Zekelman Standards for Chumash to make Parsha class a meaningful and rigorous exploration of the Parsha each week, scaffolding a deeper and more comprehensive engagement with the Parsha content in Chumash class.

4. **Yahadus:** Many schools allot time each week for Yahadus class – i.e., for general concepts in Yiddishkeit to be taught. This often leaves teachers wondering what to teach, selecting topics without apparent rhyme or reason and little or no continuum between what is taught from grade to grade. This means that Yahadus can at times be a boring subject for students, with many basic concepts repeated from one year to the next.

A solution: much of the first standard in both Chumash and Gemara can be taught in Yahadus class. These standards, Torah Shebichsav and Torah Sheba'al Peh Essentials, include many concepts that can be referred to as hashkafa or basic tenets of Yiddishkeit. These standards include essential ideas that should not be skimmed over, and delegating them to Yahadus class frees up more of the Chumash/Gemara teacher's time for the rest of the standards, while providing the Yahadus teacher with a rigorous curriculum to work with.

[Don't forget, though, that the hashkafic concepts in Standard 1 should also be woven into every Chumash/Gemara class. These texts should never be taught as dry, academic subjects, but always with the vitality and reverence that the concepts in Standard 1 suggest.]

3. Involve the Parents

When implementing standards based learning, it will be very helpful to have the parents on your team. This will enhance the success of your students, as well as prevent potential pitfalls. Adopting standards based learning will change the kind of teaching and learning that is done in your school and it is important that parents know what is going on.

Standards based learning may alter the syllabus. Whereas previously, parents may have gauged their children's academic success by how much material they covered, they need to know that the curriculum now emphasizes skills over coverage.

When a parent asks, "Why did my third grader only finish Parshas Lech Lecha, when her cousin in a different school completed Vayeira as well?" they can be told that third grade Sarale has mastered the parts of speech, one hundred vocabulary words, several areas of comprehension, and *hashkafos* about Torah study that will last her a lifetime – a more than satisfactory answer.

Better yet: let the parents know beforehand of the new learning goals at your school, pre-empting questions of this nature. At the school' open night or parent meeting at the beginning of the year, or in a letter sent home at the beginning of each instructional period, provide parents with a list of the standards that their children will be mastering in the coming months at school.

Share the new school calendar with parents. It is important for them to know when interim assessments will be given, when they can expect to see assessment results, and when they will be contacted about any measures that need to be taken to help their children succeed.

Enlist parent involvement in action plans. Not all of the re-teaching and reinforcement that needs to take place has to be done in the classroom. Let the parent know which standards need to be strengthened, and send home flashcards, review sheets and exercises.

Parent engagement is one of the critical factors in successful education. Standards based learning changes the relationship between parents and educators, introducing a common language, clear benchmarks, accountability and transparency. Standards make education an objective process, so conversations about student achievement will deal less with abstract variables such as a teacher's personality or child's motivation, and more with actual learning.

Ultimately, every parent wants their child to succeed. Introduce standards based learning to parents at the beginning of the year and as it unfolds in your school. They will be grateful for the window into their child's learning and eager to assist you in promoting the academic success of their precious children.

4. Involve the Students

Everybody relishes a challenge, so long as it is clear and attainable. Standards are a valuable way to engage and motivate your students.

Share your goals for each lesson, day or instructional period with your students. Provide them with a list of the standards, or hang them on the classroom wall, and tick off each standard as it is mastered – with a well-deserved “Mazal Tov.”

Speak to students about their performance or assessment results in terms of the standards. Doing so makes them feel like adults, taking responsibility for specific goals. Thus, a student will no longer see learning as a battle for his self-esteem.

With standards based learning, every student will have the invaluable character-building experience of meeting goals and celebrating achievements. Every student has areas in which they shine, as well as areas in which they face challenges and invest effort in overcoming them. There is no ceiling to what a student can strive for.

5. Differentiated Instruction

Standards based learning allows for teachers to implement differentiated instruction and meet the needs of every individual student in the class. For this reason, every teacher should be given access to the Zekelman Standards in their entirety in addition to their grade-specific standards, allowing them to meet each child at the place where they are at.

The standards are intended as a median benchmark that is appropriate for the majority of your students. The standards are not written for a special needs or gifted student per se, but they can help you address their needs as well.

Special Needs: Schools have reported that standards based learning has helped tremendously in identifying learning disabilities and special needs in their students. Whereas in the past, a student with a failing test mark could have been given all kinds of vague and unhelpful labels, assessment analysis can now show that a student mastered one hundred percent of the comprehension standards – but has not yet learned how to read, and should perhaps be evaluated for dyslexia or other processing disorders.

It is critical to remember that once an irregularity is identified in student performance, the student should be referred for evaluation by a professional and appropriate intervention.

Often, the standards can be part of the remediation and intervention process as well. Provide the teacher or resource room director with the standards that are determined to be appropriate for the student's individual level, allowing them to facilitate mastery, fill in gaps in the learning and customize instructional activities to the student's needs.

Gifted Students: Some students will be able to master their grade level standards well before the end of the year, or even in a lower grade. The Zekelman Standards allow you to simply direct an individual student upwards in the scope for each particular standard, to the next level of rigor.

6. Pre-Assessment

Pre-assessments are a tool for teachers to gauge the level of their class or individual students prior to teaching, ensuring that their choice of which standards or level of rigor to address in the classroom is on target. This can simply be an interim assessment, or the previous year's summative assessment, administered before the start of the year. Alternatively, teachers can give a brief, in class, pre-assessment before teaching an individual standard – it can be as informal as a review sheet or oral discussion – to make sure that students are ready for the level you are teaching them at or that they have not already surpassed it.

This tool is helpful in differentiating instruction for individual students [see 5 above], as well as determining the level of instruction for the whole class. After all, just because a group of students is officially in grade 5 doesn't mean that they are on a 5th grade level according to the Zekelman Standards. For instance, they may have never learned the Chumash language skills that the standards delineated for grade 1. Or they may have had superior instruction in Rashi skills and are ready to move up to the other Meforshim that the standards defer to grades 7 and 8.

You may find that a class is on different grade levels for different standards, or groups of standards, or that they are all at one grade level either above or beneath what we considered typical. Don't forget that the standards have been sequenced

according to the intellectual maturity expected at each grade, so if you are teaching 2nd grade standards to a class of 4th graders, you may be able to bring them up to par in just a few months.

7. Educational Styles (Montessori and other methods)

The Menachem Education Foundation is not biased toward any particular method of education. Standards based learning can be incorporated into Montessori, Waldorf, or traditional classrooms.

In fact, a pre-existing educational framework that differs from traditional schooling is not only not a hindrance to standards based learning, it may be ideally suited for this method. Montessori schooling at its best, for instance, employs a mastery-based curriculum wherein teachers help students select individualized learning goals and then track mastery. The Zekelman Standards provide rigorous, broken down goals for just such a process.

8. Let the Walls Speak

Teachers know better than anyone else that the classroom walls are the other teacher. Enlist their help in standards based learning, so that even when your students' eyes and minds are wandering, they will still learn.

Create attractive signs and posters with the standards for each grade, or highlighting standards that the class is working on. Hang up *Essential Questions* and *Key Knowledge* on the walls, so that they will always be part of the learning environment.

The school's walls are also an important ingredient in creating a school's culture, whether for the teachers, students, or parents. Showcase instructional calendars and DDI goals. Hang up student work and celebrate achievements!

9. Report Cards

Once your curriculum is standards based, why not have standards based report cards, as well? The Chumash/Gemara section of a student's report card can be further subdivided into the various areas of the standards, with separate grades for each. This provides a much more accurate reflection of a student's performance, indicating whether a student has mastered language skills but is struggling with comprehension, or the other way around.

APPENDIX A: READINESS RUBRIC

On a scale of 1 – 4, rate your school's current state of readiness for each of the 5 readiness criteria:

1 – Does not exist in my school.

2 – Exists in a minimal fashion.

3 – Is part of my school culture.

4 – My school is exemplary in this area.

Readiness Criteria	Rate from 1-4	Next Steps
1. Administrative Functionality		
2. Instructional Leadership		
3. School Culture of Ongoing Staff Learning and Collaboration		
4. School Culture of Change and Improvement		
5. Instructional Rounds		

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE DEPLOYMENT CALENDAR

What	When (fill in dates)	Notes	✓
1) Select your focus!	<i>Before you begin</i>		
2) Create Your School Calendar	<i>Before you begin</i>		
3) Professional Development: Introducing the Content – Zekelman Standards	<i>Spring or summer</i>		
4) Professional Development: Introducing the Method – Data Driven Instruction	<i>Spring or summer</i>		
5) Curriculum Mapping	<i>Spring or summer</i>		
6) Create Interim Assessment #1	<i>Spring or summer</i>		
7) Administer Interim Assessment #1	<i>6-8 weeks into school year</i>		
8) Chart and Review Assessment Results	<i>1-2 days after assessment</i>		
9) Analysis Meetings	<i>2-3 days after assessment</i>		
10) Action Plans	<i>During and after analysis</i>		
11) Follow Up	<i>1-2 weeks later</i>		
12) Repeat steps 6-11	<i>Remainder of school year</i>		
13) Professional Development	<i>After interim assessments</i>		
14) Summative Assessment	<i>2 weeks before end of year</i>		
15) Get Ready for Next Year!	<i>Before you begin again!</i>		

YOUR NOTES



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