



Jewish Educational Wisdom,
Experience & Leadership

Proposal for Blueprint Consultation with Congregation Geshher (a pseudonym)

“Our curriculum gives each child a solid background in Hebrew Reading, Prayer, Jewish History, Jewish Values, Israel, Bible, Holidays and Customs.”

–Congregation website

Proposed Nature of Blueprint Consultation:

To ensure that the religious school of Congregation Geshher enters the 5773 school year with a written “blueprint.” This blueprint would include books and resources for each teacher, as well as guidelines for priority setting and planning. The materials created during this initial consultation would be based on what could be quickly ascertained about what has been covered so far and what could effectively be covered in this school year based on the “facts on the ground.”

Caveat about Nature of Proposed Consultation:

To the extent that the blueprint document would cover the span of one year and that the goals for each class would largely correspond to those articulated in the core books selected, this would not be a curriculum in the full sense of the term. A comprehensive school curriculum would take considerably more time to design and would be more aspirational, with its core documents less driven by “facts on the ground” than in a blueprint. A curriculum would define specific content areas and the specific educational goals to be covered within each content area. Those goals would then be further broken down into specific educational objectives by grade. Finally, in a curriculum, books and resources would be selected in order to serve those goals and objectives, whereas a blueprint for this school year would by necessity be more book-driven.

Step One: Information Gathering

I would immediately prepare a questionnaire designed to elicit as much information as possible from the principal and returning teachers about the content of preceding years.

In addition, to ensure that I receive as many completed surveys as possible in a short time period, the congregation would also strive to provide me with as much additional information about the religious school as possible in a short time frame, including:

- School budget for this year as well as last year
- School handbook

- School forms, such as registration documents
- Sample faculty contract
- Any written information about the Education Committee and any parent involvement in the school
- A breakdown of the schedule of the Sunday and Tuesday sessions
- Class lists from last year or numbers of anticipated children per grade for the coming year
- School and congregational calendar from last year and for this year
- B'nai mitzvah materials
- If at all possible, a list of any resources currently available to the religious school staff
 - Textbooks
 - Professional resources (books of Jewish plays, guides for teaching certain topics)
 - Access to technology (can classes utilize programs on the web?)
 - Access to music (Do students have ongoing access to recordings of all the prayers the children are expected to learn? Do teachers have access to CDs on holiday themes or related to other possible content areas in their classrooms?)

Step Two: Blueprint Building

After familiarizing myself with the school through these documents, I would undoubtedly have follow-up questions for the principal, rabbi and perhaps others.

In the conversation after I have seen all the pertinent documents, we would agree upon a timeline for the production of the actual blueprint. The deadlines would be important given the tight time frame.

My recommendation is that I develop the blueprint in two phases. Phase One would be the design of an initial outline for your consideration. Once we have ascertained that you are comfortable with the direction of the general outline, I would flesh out the blueprint in substantially greater detail. I would also provide a comprehensive Shopping List of books, resources and supplies. This list would include information about the differing levels of importance of the various items on the list.

Follow up options that could be considered at a later date:

- Working with the principal or faculty members to develop a sense of ownership of the parts of the blueprint for which they are responsible
- Offering professional development or ongoing consultations with faculty members or principal
- Leading a school or school curriculum visioning process
- Creating a more comprehensive curriculum for the school for subsequent years

Financial Arrangements:

Proposed Consultation Fee: \$ _____

Projected Expenses: \$ _____

Presumably just postage and similar incidentals

Total Proposed Costs to Gesher: \$ _____



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List of Blueprint Documents

| Name of Document | Number of Pages | Color |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| List of Blueprint Documents (this document) | 1 page | Ivory |
| Benefits of Adopting the Blueprint | 1 page | Ivory |
| List of Core Topics addressed by Blueprint | 1 page | Salmon |
| Session Schedule | 1 page | Ultra Lime |
| Grids of Teachers and Specific Classes | 1 page | Ultra Orange |
| Blueprint for Alef, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, Hey | 7 pages, Back-To-Back & Stapled | Gold |
| Three Year Spiral Curriculum for Pre-Alef (K-1-2) | 3 pages, B-T-B, S | Canary Yellow |
| Schedule of Rabbi's Year in school | 1 page | Ultra Fuchsia |
| Schedule for Each Individual Teacher | 3 pages, B-T-B, S | Ultra Lemon |
| Sample Syllabus for Pre-Alef class | 4 pages, B-T-B, S | Green |
| General Syllabi for Alef, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, Hey classes | | |
| Alef Sunday | 2 pages, B-T-B | Blue |
| Alef Tuesday | 3 pages, Back-To-Back & Stapled | Blue |
| Bet – Gimel Sunday | 3 pages, B-T-B, S | Blue |
| Bet Tuesday | 5 pages, B-T-B, S | Blue |
| Gimel Tuesday | 5 pages, B-T-B, S | Blue |
| Dalet Sunday | 4 pages, B-T-B, S | Blue |
| Dalet Tuesday | 5 pages, B-T-B, S | Blue |
| Hey Sunday | 3 pages, B-T-B, S | Blue |
| Hey Tuesday | 5 pages, B-T-B, S | Blue |
| Resource Order Chart by Company | 10 pages, B-T-B, S | White |



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Benefits of Adopting Blueprint

- Creates a precise course of learning for students enrolled in Gesher's school
- Creates higher level of continuity from week to week and grade to grade
- Creates basis for shared understanding of what Gesher's school teaches
- Shifts teacher's energy from determining WHAT to teach each week to HOW to teach it as creatively and engagingly as possible
- Ensures minimal repetition, for example that students learn new and developmentally-appropriate aspects of each holiday each year
- Ensures each student will receive a solid introduction to 13 core areas of Jewish education and identity.
- Supports a clear and appropriate scope of learning in one day/week b'nai mitzvah preparation program
- Clearly articulates the difference between what students in one day/week vs. two day/week program will learn.
- Facilitates school's ability to give parents precise and specific information about what their children will learn and when.
- Supports the strong commitment to student prayer skills while continuing to expose students to modern, conversational Hebrew and ways that reflect the best practices
- Creates balance between prayer book Hebrew and exposure to modern Hebrew
- Streamlines B'nai Mitzvah Training
- Integrates school and shul programs better and proactively
- Maximizes opportunity for rabbi and students to know and work together
- Realistically identifies usable learning time (*taking into account such things as transition times, vacation days, holiday programs, preparation for individual class services, Kehillah days*) and thereby maximally utilizing all time.
- Recommends textbooks and teacher resources which academic research and "test-driving," real-life experience, show are most effective and engaging in teaching various subject areas.
- Integrates technology, music, art, and games as well as other tools and methods.



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Three Year Spiral for Combined K-1st-2nd Grade Class

| Year One | Year Two | Year Three |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Holidays I | Holidays II | Holidays III |
| Prayers I | Prayer II | Prayers III |
| Torah Stories I | Torah Stories II | Torah Stories III |
| Israel | Israel | Israel |
| Hebrew Through Movement | Hebrew Through Movement | Hebrew Through Movement |
| Mitzvot | Mitzvot | Mitzvot |
| Synagogue | Life Cycle | Tikkun Olam |

Topics by Grade Alef - Hey (3rd - 6th)

| | Sunday Class One | Sunday Class Two | Tuesday Class A | Tuesday Class B | Tuesday Class C |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Alef | Hebrew Decoding & Reading | Values & Ethics | Jewish Identity | Holidays | Israel |
| Bet | Prayers | Texts (Bible History) | Values & Ethics <i>plus</i> Synagogue | God/Spirituality | Jewish Identity |
| Gimel | Prayers | Text (Bible History) | Text (Prophets & Writings) | Values & Ethics | God/Spirituality |
| Dalet | History (American Jewish) | Prayers | Role Models/Values & Ethics | Texts (rabbinic texts) <i>plus</i> Israel | Values & Ethics |
| Hey | Prayers <i>plus</i> Modern Hebrew | History (American Jewish) | Tikkun Olam | Role Models/Values & Ethics | Big Ideas & Hot Topics <i>plus</i> Holocaust |

- Where the word “plus” is included, it means the topic switches at some point during the year. The date when the primary focus of the class content switches is indicated on the syllabi. I generally did this in instances where one topic could reasonably be taught in a shorter period of time and where adequate time was left to cover another topic.
- On this chart, it appears Gimel has two text classes, but that is misleading. In one case, they are using the Explorer’s Bible and in the other they are getting a taste of the characters and stories in the final two sections of the Tanakh. They would feel entirely different.