

Prepared for: Hebrew at the Center



# Leading in Hebrew:

## Evaluating a School Change Initiative for Hebrew Language Education

December 2024

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## Background

*Leading in Hebrew* (LIH), an experimental school change initiative of *Hebrew at the Center*, was launched in 2018 and completed in 2023. Over a period of four and a half years, it invested over \$1.2 million in two Jewish day schools and worked with these schools so they could become “demonstration schools”—models of excellence in Hebrew teaching and learning for other day schools and communities to emulate. LIH promotes using the Hebrew Proficiency Approach to enhance the development of a school’s Hebrew curriculum to elevate its students’ acquisition of the Hebrew language and emphasize the significance of Hebrew language learning in the overall day school culture. These sites also served as a testing ground for *Hebrew at the Center*’s Theory of Change (see Appendix D) and approaches to professional learning, student assessment, and cultural change to further refine its strategies for day school interventions that lead to stronger student Hebrew learning outcomes. This project was made possible by generous philanthropic support from The Covenant Foundation, Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Jim Joseph Foundation, Mayberg Foundation, other significant but anonymous foundations, and the donors and leadership of *Hebrew at the Center*.

From the start of the pilot, the Rosov Consulting team was engaged to document what took place, capture successes and challenges, and help identify (in real time) what, if any, modifications were needed for implementation. This report summarizes how the initiative played out at the two participating schools and describes what was accomplished at the schools. It then reflects on the implications of this project for the ongoing work of *Hebrew at the Center* and the Jewish day school field more generally. The report draws on student language proficiency assessment data provided by *Hebrew at the Center* using Avant Assessment STAMP<sup>1</sup> tests for 3rd through 8th grade students measuring proficiency in four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing, and the ELLOPA (Early Language Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment) for students in K through 2nd grade, measuring listening comprehension and speaking. In addition, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected by the Rosov Consulting team over the four years of the initiative. These data include interviews and questionnaires with *Hebrew at the Center* staff, school leadership, and teachers about project implementation and surveys of parents and students regarding their attitudes toward Hebrew at the school.

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<sup>1</sup> Avant Assessment STAMP™ (Standardized Test of Academic Proficiency) is a leading language proficiency assessment, providing the true picture of students’ world language proficiency skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These data provide learners, teachers and schools with accurate data to improve their programs and learning outcomes. Hebrew at the Center partnered with Avant to create the STAMP tool for Modern Hebrew to make this critical tool available to the field of Hebrew language education.

## The Contexts

In 2018–2019, Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School of the Nation’s Capital (Milton) was selected as the first demonstration school for LIH. Two years later, in 2020–2021, Chicago Jewish Day School (CJDS) was selected as the second project site. Both schools were chosen based on a process: application, site visits, interviews with key professional and lay leaders, and selection of the final school for each launch. Criteria for selection included a review of the mapping of current approaches to Hebrew language instruction, the willingness of senior professionals and lay leaders to dedicate both financial and time resources, and an assessment of the readiness of the Hebrew faculty and leadership to undertake transformative change at the classroom and school levels.

Milton is a community day school located in Washington, DC. When it joined LIH, over 390 students were enrolled between pre-K and eighth grade. The school has long been characterized by a strong Zionist culture in which Hebrew plays a central role. All grades receive approximately 45 minutes of Hebrew language instruction daily, taught by a team of 14 educators. Indicative of the school’s seriousness about Hebrew, three years before the LIH initiative, Milton had been one of the first day schools to test students’ Hebrew proficiency using the Avant Assessment STAMP test.

CJDS is also a pre-K through eighth grade community day school. When the school joined LIH, 205 students were enrolled between junior kindergarten and eighth grade. The school maintains a progressive educational philosophy, as seen in its use of a Reggio Emilia–inspired curricular approach in its early childhood section, its commitment to curricular integration, and its adoption of the Responsive Classroom approach. Hebrew has long been a prominent element of the physical environment at the school and in the school’s culture through integration into daily routines and special events. Students receive approximately 45 minutes of Hebrew instruction four days per week taught by 11 teachers (though in 2022–2023, there were just seven teachers on faculty). In the lower grades, Hebrew is embedded into Jewish studies classes, as is the case in most Jewish day schools. CJDS was selected for LIH partly due to its enthusiasm for and potential to grow vis-à-vis Hebrew, which was reflected, for example, in the addition of a cohort of *shinshinim* (young Israeli paraeducators) to its staff around the time of its selection to LIH.

## The LIH Process

### The Plan

As a first step in its participation in LIH, each school worked with the *Hebrew at the Center* team to conduct an in-depth review of its Hebrew teaching and learning to identify gaps and challenges to be addressed. Students' Hebrew proficiency was assessed with standardized tests, either Avant's STAMP test for grades three and above or the ELLOPA test for early childhood or pre-literate students to measure listening and speaking proficiencies), to establish a baseline against which progress could be tracked during the following years. At both schools, these steps informed the development of a comprehensive professional learning and curriculum development plan for school faculty and leadership. Each school's plan included regular meetings with the *Hebrew at the Center* team for Hebrew leadership and other key constituencies at the school, onsite visits, Hebrew teacher webinars, 1:1 Hebrew teacher and leader coaching, a summer institute of each school's leadership, and the creation of events and marketing materials to recognize and celebrate the role of Hebrew at the school. At Milton, *Hebrew at the Center* also helped train two teachers to serve as in-house coaches. All of these activities were animated by a Theory of Change developed by *Hebrew at the Center*, which made explicit how it sought to address with LIH what it identified as a central problem in day school education: "Hebrew is an undervalued in many Jewish day schools by parents, students, and school leadership, and there is little or no accountability for student outcomes."

### Challenges

From the start, LIH faced implementation challenges. Some challenges were predictable, such as staff turnover (including the Head of School at Milton) and resistance to change among some educators. In the second year at CJDS, staffing changes meant that the school lacked an official Hebrew leader and resulted in *Hebrew at the Center* taking on a leadership-coordinating function for Hebrew faculty. Some challenges were less predictable, including the tragic loss of a beloved Hebrew leader at Milton. *Hebrew at the Center* itself also underwent its own leadership transition as part of a strategic planning process; over the four years of LIH, the organization reassessed and reoriented the value proposition it offered to an evolving field. Most unexpected of all, the COVID-19 pandemic brought much of the LIH work to a halt and then necessitated a complete re-orientation of planned activities to address the needs of teachers who had pivoted to online teaching and learning.

Ultimately, LIH's approach in each of the schools was inconsistent in any year of implementation. *Hebrew at the Center* had to repeatedly adjust its offerings and expectations as a result of the impact of the Pandemic on mode of instruction and on the training plan, staff transitions at both the schools and *Hebrew at the Center*, and due to pushback from leaders and teachers in the face of the intensive expectations associated with participating in the initiative. Teacher feedback indicated that they felt overwhelmed by what they viewed as unrealistic expectations of their capacity to design and develop a curriculum and lessons that reflected the Hebrew Proficiency Approach. Although participating schools had agreed to take responsibility for increasing support for their participating teachers, many teachers resented not being compensated for the additional time they were expected to invest in developing new materials and lesson plans for Hebrew, the pace at which they were expected to deliver curriculum change, and what they perceived to be lack of appreciation from LIH consultants of their professionalism and know-how.

## Adjustments

Adjustments were made to the scale and content of professional development offered to schools, the *Hebrew at the Center* personnel and school professional leaders deployed at each school, and the expectation of lay leader involvement.

Amid so much change, the elements of the initiative that remained constant in both schools were:

1. The implementation of Avant STAMP and/or ELLOPA testing for students to track student learning outcomes
2. The development of a scope and sequence (or curriculum map) with teachers
3. One-on-one instructional coaching for teachers and Hebrew leaders
4. Ongoing dialogue between school leadership and initiative leadership

These were the foundational components of the initiative. See Appendix A for a snapshot of LIH activities each year.

It is not possible to know whether some of the implementation challenges at CJDS might have been overcome if the initiative had run for longer or if the pandemic had not been such a significant challenge to the launch and first year and a half of the project at this project site.

## Outcomes

### Hebrew Language Proficiency

STAMP and ELLOPA assessment of student learning outcomes was a key lever in LIH's Theory of Change. The hope was that routine testing would increase student motivation as they became aware of their progress and had clearer learning goals, support backward curriculum design, and a drive toward data-informed instruction. Despite interruptions to the testing cycle caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, proficiency assessment helped sharpen the focus on spoken Hebrew at the school and demonstrated success and improvement even as other elements of the initiative felt frustrating.

#### Milton

In spring 2019, when LIH was launched, Milton utilized the ELLOPA tool to measure listening and speaking proficiencies in kindergarten and first grade; the interviews were conducted in person by ELLOPA-certified staff from *Hebrew at the Center*. The majority of students in both grades were at the Junior Novice Low or Junior Novice Mid levels. At this level, speakers can express basic personal information and needs, primarily through memorized phrases and a limited amount of learned words and structures. The pandemic made testing impossible for the next two years, and it was moved online in the fourth year of the initiative. The findings reflected growth in speaking proficiency in the students in first grade; by 2022, the majority of students were testing at Junior Novice Mid and Junior Novice High.

Milton had been using the STAMP assessment even before LIH, and over the years of the initiative, the school continued to use the assessment to measure student learning. As demonstrated in the graph below, with some grades showing greater improvement than others, overall students demonstrated growth from the Novice High level in their composite scores (averaging speaking, listening, writing, and reading). In the lower grades to approaching Intermediate High in 2022. The average composite increase was 0.4, which means that each cohort improved by a "half-step" over the two years. Moreover, in 2022, Milton's STAMP scores stood out as superior compared to other schools in Avant's national sample, an average from schools that are already sufficiently committed to strong student proficiency that they include the costs of the assessments in their annual budgets. Eighth grade Milton students performed one proficiency level above the average for eighth grade students at other schools, with at least 10 students being tested. While Milton students outperformed students in all four skills, they were significantly stronger in productive skills (speaking and writing) despite the challenges of COVID-19. When looking at each skill, the least progress was made in listening (scores increased by about 0.2, on average), and the most progress was made in speaking (an increase of 0.7) and writing (an increase of 0.5). Internally to Milton, testing results also identified substantial differences between grade levels, with older students performing at higher levels of proficiency. See Appendix B for Avant's graphic representations of these scores.

Additionally, Milton saw an increase in the number of eighth graders participating in the Heseg Ceremony, which recognizes students for extraordinary achievements in Hebrew and for receiving The Global Seal of Biliteracy (GSB). In 2021, the first year of Heseg, 17 Milton students participated in the ceremony. In 2023, the number increased to 29 students.

## CJDS

At CJDS, STAMP assessments took place in 2021, 2022, and 2023; while there are gaps in the data due to incomplete assessments, overall, the data indicate that students generally perform more strongly on reading and listening (receptive language skills) than productive skills such as writing and speaking. For example, in 2023, the seventh-grade cohort approached an Intermediate High level for writing and listening but the Novice High level for speaking. That growth pattern is sometimes slower as students get older and encounter more difficult language skills. This is predictable. Year over year, the students also demonstrated growth in their composite scores

In 2023, the composite scores from fourth to eighth grade for most are significantly higher than in 2021. Generally, scores moved from Novice Low level in the lower grades in 2021 to Intermediate Low in the higher grades in 2023 (with some specific skills even higher, as noted above). The average composite increase was 1.1 (compared to 0.4 at Milton), and those gains were largely consistent across proficiencies (listening, 1.0; writing, 1.1; speaking, 1.1; and reading, 1.5). There is notable growth in most grades in speaking skills between 2022–2023. This was the area that the school requested as the LIH professional development focus area for that year. The data seems to support that with more intense focus on this area of language instruction, student learning outcomes have improved. The scores also generally approach the national average. See Appendix B for Avant’s graphic representations of these scores.

Additionally, in 2023, the first year of CJDS student participation, five students were recognized in the annual Heseq Ceremony.

## Parent and Student Attitudes Toward Hebrew

LIH was grounded in a Theory of Change that perceived Hebrew proficiency to be heavily influenced by Hebrew’s place in school culture and attitudes to Hebrew held by students and parents. The theory proposes a virtuous circle: positive attitudes to Hebrew fuel higher levels of communicative functioning which in turn results in students viewing Hebrew more positively, thus driving higher levels of proficiency. Parent and student attitudes toward Hebrew were assessed via surveys at two points during the initiative in the first and final years of the initiative at each school.

### Survey Design and Methodology

Each school fielded surveys to its parents and students with the goal of capturing attitudes to Hebrew among members of their school communities and the outcomes they expect from Hebrew instruction. Surveys were based on a 2016 AVI CHAI Foundation survey, originally developed by Rosov Consulting, that continues to be used to assess attitudes to Hebrew in day schools. To the extent possible, change over time was measured at each school. In the case of the Milton student survey, the same 39 respondents completed the survey in both 2019 and 2022. As a result, change over time could be measured among a specific cohort of students at two points in the initiative. Among the other surveys, there were not enough paired responses, so unpaired year-over-year changes were analyzed across all respondents to compare sentiments, generally. (See Appendix B for more about survey analysis.)

## The Importance of Hebrew

### *Milton*

Both paired and unpaired student data indicated that there was not a significant shift in how important it is to learn Hebrew with about three-in-five student respondents in both years stating that Hebrew was either “important” or “very important.” In 2019, 85% of parent respondents said that their children learning Hebrew was either “important” or “very important.” When asked why learning Hebrew was important, the statement “it would help when visiting Israel” was rated significantly more important in the second survey among paired student responses.

### *CJDS*

At CJDS, the first year’s survey indicated that fewer than one-half of student respondents found learning Hebrew to be either “important” or “very important.” Data also indicated that, among these respondents, older students saw Hebrew as less important than younger students. Because there were very few student responses to the second fielding, reliable comparisons cannot be made. However, survey results offer some hypothetical support for improvement in this area. Among student respondents from the second survey, nearly all of whom were seventh graders, three-quarters said that learning Hebrew was “important” or “very important.” By comparison, only one-third of seventh graders from the first survey said that learning Hebrew was “important” or “very important,” as did about 60% of fifth graders from the first survey (some of whom comprise the second survey’s seventh graders).

Overall, parent responses about the importance of Hebrew remained consistent across the two surveys. In the first year’s survey, nearly all parent respondents (96%) said that learning Hebrew was either “important” or “very important,” while somewhat fewer (86%) respondents said the same in the second year. Among the reasons why parents found learning Hebrew to be important, respondents’ agreement with all reasons either remained consistent or improved modestly. This level of change also raised questions as to how parents are involved and engaged in an ongoing manner regarding school change initiatives to ensure integration between home and school.

## Self-Perceived Hebrew Proficiency

Students were asked to self-report on their Hebrew ability in terms of reading, writing, speaking, and listening—as well as across a list of specific tasks related to these four proficiencies. Across Milton, CJDS, and other Jewish day schools where Rosov Consulting has fielded similar surveys, several trends in this self-reported data have surfaced: (a) students tend to rate their abilities higher than parents do, (b) older students often rate their abilities lower than younger students, and (c) older students tend to shift their comfort toward listening and reading and away from speaking and writing. These trends make it hard to use self-reported skill data to reliably track progress over time and across different age groups, as proficiencies can appear to stagnate or decline. However, students’ self-perception of their learning does seem to mirror the student outcome assessments in their STAMP tests. That is, students generally perceive improvement in their proficiency over time, improvements in the areas that are the particular curricular focus, and a slowing pace of growth as they advance through language levels. The STAMP data from Milton and CJDS support these perceptions.



## Milton

At Milton, paired responses indicate that students felt that their ability to read and understand spoken Hebrew improved between the first survey and the second. Unpaired data also indicate a higher speaking proficiency among the second fielding respondents. This aligns with the STAMP test data from the two schools, which indicate that the most significant improvements in proficiency were in speaking, especially among the higher grades.

Among paired responses, there were four specific functions in relation to which students reported significant improvement between the two surveys: the ability to write sentences in Hebrew, to understand their teachers when they speak Hebrew, to understand familiar prayers, and to speak Hebrew in class. In addition to having the most growth among paired respondents, these were also the four functions that students felt most proficient in overall.

## CJDS

As noted above, there were very few student responses to the second survey, and reliable comparisons cannot be made between years, nor can the data be used to draw conclusions about the broader school population. However, survey results do again offer some hypothetical support for improvement across Hebrew proficiencies. Again, nearly all respondents to the second survey were seventh graders. When compared to just the seventh graders and fifth graders (some of whom comprise the second survey's seventh graders), the self-reported ability of the second fielding's respondents to do any of the listed functions is higher, often markedly, than respondents from the first year's survey. This marked improvement across all proficiency areas is supported by the STAMP test data from the schools. Parents' perceptions of their children's Hebrew proficiency did not change year-over-year, nor did parents' perceptions about the quality of their children's Hebrew education.

## School Culture

In each year of LIH, Rosov Consulting conducted formative interviews with Hebrew teachers and administrators at each school, LIH staff, and coaches to understand the successes and challenges of implementation, and to learn about outcomes teachers and schools experienced.

### Commitment to Hebrew Across the Schools

*Leading in Hebrew's* approach to whole-school change involved integrating and amplifying Hebrew into broader school culture. LIH supported these moves through ongoing coaching with school leadership, engagement of lay leadership, introducing school-wide celebrations of Hebrew achievement, and providing marketing support in the form of newsletters to share with the parent community. Specifically, LIH sought to engage additional key stakeholders within the school communities through the formation of LIH task forces that included non-Hebrew faculty, school administrators, board members, and parents. This vehicle brought more voices and perspectives into the effort, expanded the number of champions for Hebrew, and garnered school-wide support for Hebrew beyond the lifespan of the schools' partnership with *Hebrew at the Center*.

Overwhelmingly, all those interviewed at the end of their work with LIH described Hebrew's centrality to their schools' culture and did so with pride. The Heads of School and leaders at each school explained their community's commitment to the Hebrew language and their work with *Hebrew at the Center* by evoking their school's mission. They felt that LIH allowed their schools to communicate their Jewish and Zionist values and commitment to educational excellence.

### Elevation and Professionalization of Hebrew

Leaders at Milton regarded the LIH initiative as a "feather in their cap." The national and individual recognition for being a model school for the LIH initiative reinforced Hebrew's centrality to Milton's school culture and, subsequently, the importance of ongoing curricular and professional development to support Hebrew using the Proficiency Approach. The interviewees from Milton shared that they received satisfaction from being classified as a model school by *Hebrew at the Center*. A similar sentiment surfaced when teacher leaders reflected on being trained to coach educators in other schools. Teachers recognized that LIH contributed to developing the department's professionalism and the status of Hebrew at the school.

At CJDS, leaders and teachers also indicated that their participation in the LIH initiative positively contributed to their school culture. LIH had elevated Hebrew at a school that was accustomed to receiving grants for initiatives in other curriculum areas, but never before for Hebrew. In another first, teachers reported that this was the first time professional development had helped them think about how to design and use their curriculum to enhance their Hebrew teaching and their students' classroom learning experience. They felt that their non-Hebrew faculty colleagues had taken note of their efforts.

The school-wide focus on Hebrew helped to spark interest and desire among teachers to continue their ongoing professional development in the Hebrew Proficiency Approach and how to apply it when they design their curriculum. In addition to elevating Hebrew as part of the school mission, vision, and culture, all the educational leaders and the majority of classroom teachers at CJDS reported that the LIH initiative changed how they thought about the design and development of their Hebrew language curricula. Their participation in this initiative allowed them to see how they could improve their classroom learning and teaching if they developed their curricula according to the Hebrew Proficiency Approach.

### Summary

Despite a bumpy start and frequent pivots in implementation, both of the schools were able to realize significant accomplishments in their provision of Hebrew language education: they implemented an improved scope and sequence for their Hebrew language curriculum; they brought about improved lesson planning; and they established routine student assessments as indicators of growth to inform their instruction. Their professional cultures changed, too. Hebrew faculty developed a shared professional language, and there was a greater expectation that the Hebrew department was on par with other departments at the school. At Milton, in particular, the school's accomplishments and ongoing commitment to Hebrew was a point of special pride.

## Reflections

These accomplishments were sometimes hard-won; all school-change efforts encounter roadblocks. In this instance, those roadblocks included significant staff turnover, resistance to change, logistical setbacks, and an unprecedented pandemic. How LIH was able, in large part, to overcome these challenges has been instructive.

## Levers of Change

Three facets of *Leading in Hebrew* stand out in terms of enabling the initiative to move forward even when facing substantial headwinds: the flexibility of *Hebrew at the Center's* leadership and its willingness to pivot alongside the schools; LIH's 1:1 coaching model; and the student assessment tools employed by, and subsequently embedded in, schools.

### Flexibility and Relationship Tending

Perhaps the most significant obstacle to LIH's efforts were unexpected changes to the Hebrew leadership/coordinator positions at each school. This role was intended to be a critical component of the change process. To keep the project moving forward, *Hebrew at the Center* staff assumed a number of key responsibilities intended for school leaders on the ground, including leading and coordinating the scope and sequencing process. Their partners in the schools appreciated the readiness of the *Hebrew at the Center* team to take on these roles. The schools also appreciated the readiness of *Hebrew at the Center* staff to be flexible in adapting expectations and limiting the scope of the initiative to its essential components, focusing more heavily on supporting Hebrew department leadership and teachers and being less involved with lay leaders and non-Hebrew faculty than originally intended.

In reflecting on the ups and downs of implementation, *Hebrew at the Center* leadership recognized that their original expectations for LIH had been ambitious; even the tremendous resources offered to the schools were not enough to energize the types of effort LIH expected from schools. Maintaining whole-school buy-in for the Hebrew Proficiency Approach required building (and rebuilding) strong trust and relationships with leaders and teachers. This level of buy-in was achieved when *Hebrew at the Center* supported schools through difficult moments in tangible ways by taking on some of the curriculum work initially conceived as the school's responsibility. In addition, *Hebrew at the Center* staff noted that by choosing to work with those staff members who expressed interest and need rather than mandating participation across the board, they could demonstrate success and build more buy-in among others at the school.

### One-on-One Coaching

The one-on-one coaching provided to both Hebrew leaders and teachers was the most universally appreciated component of the LIH change model. It proved to be a strategic lever for generating more buy-in, and helping to address acute curricular challenges.

#### *Scaffolding the school's curricular roadmap for coordinators*

Leaders and teachers pointed to the one-on-one coaching work as particularly effective in sustaining the momentum of change despite ups and downs. Coaches were helpful in personalizing learning and smoothing out areas of tension. Although at Milton, many teachers reported that they were already familiar with the Proficiency Approach or had studied at Middlebury College, LIH offerings complemented or extended their existing knowledge and practices. One senior leader at Milton spoke positively of the leadership coaching she received that allowed her to modify the scope and sequence of the school's curriculum, especially during the

COVID-19 pandemic and with the unfortunate passing of their previous Hebrew coordinator. She reported that working with this coach “relieved” the intensity and frustration she had previously experienced throughout the LIH initiative. Moreover, the organization of all curricular materials into a single place as part of the mapping effort prior to COVID-19 proved immensely helpful to the faculty when navigating the dual challenges of the pandemic and leadership changes.

### *Lightening the curricular load for classroom teachers and filling learning gaps*

At CJDS, coaches and teachers reported focusing exclusively on developing curricular units and providing resources during lesson planning. Coaches, in this capacity, served as curriculum development experts. Teachers and coaches described how they wrote entire curriculum units together when they met virtually or through frequent email communication. Coaches also reported using their one-on-one time to provide personalized teaching in applying the principles of the Hebrew Proficiency Approach. Interviewees believed that the coaches lifted some of the load involved with writing a curriculum utilizing the Hebrew Proficiency Approach from scratch for the first time and provided them with individualized learning about this educational framework so they could successfully use it in their classrooms.

### *Preserving buy-in when there was philosophical misalignment*

As noted above, CJDS upholds a progressive educational philosophy exemplified by their use of a Reggio Emilia–inspired curricular approach in their early childhood program and commitment to curricular integration. Several participants from CJDS were ambivalent about the Hebrew Proficiency Approach from a philosophical standpoint, reflecting a philosophical misalignment between their educational outlooks. One manifestation of this philosophical tension was a conflict over the use of authentic Israeli cultural resources to teach Hebrew to a group of children who engage with Hebrew as diaspora Jews. To take an example, teachers questioned the use of materials that talk about winter rains when teaching students who grow up in a snowy winter in Chicago. For progressive educators, authentic learning means that students learn by drawing connections and meanings from concepts and ideas that are applicable to their daily experiences.

*Hebrew at the Center* coaches helped address this ambivalence. Each coach defined part of their role as “modifying” the Hebrew Proficiency Approach to fit how teachers develop curricula according to their school’s educational approach. The coaches with early childhood expertise framed these modifications through a philosophical lens. For CJDS teachers, this nuanced understanding was critical to ensuring cultural buy-in to the Hebrew Proficiency Approach.

## Testing—Making Learning Achievements Visible

*Hebrew at the Center* leadership believed that annual, regularized language assessment would help make students’ learning visible and would, in turn, help professionalize teachers’ practice. Unfortunately, due to various unforeseen circumstances, not least of which was the COVID-19 pandemic, testing did not occur as often as hoped. As a result, neither school put in place a regimen of data-driven instruction where teachers’ practice was informed by detailed information about their students’ strengths and weaknesses. Assessment didn’t take place intensively enough, and when it was conducted, student scores were not shared with teachers in a timely fashion, at least as reported by the teachers. At Milton, when a STAMP assessment was conducted across the whole school in the third year of LIH, it proved immensely affirmative. Promisingly, assessment data showed great improvements in students’ proficiency in both speech and writing, helpfully reflecting the school’s decision in the previous year to focus on productive language. Data of this kind

motivated frontline teachers and school leaders to persevere with the changes they had made. They could now see the positive outcomes of their investments.

## Implications for *Hebrew at the Center* and the Field

### Transformative Change Requires Leadership Commitments

While LIH approached school change from multiple angles, it became clear early on that without strong professional leadership at the department level driving LIH efforts on the ground at each school, the work would not gain traction. At both schools, the LIH team from *Hebrew at the Center* ultimately needed to step into that role (for different reasons in each case). While to some extent LIH support ensured that there was continued momentum with initiative commitments at each school, the team at *Hebrew at the Center* learned that absent this function at the school, change efforts were relatively superficial.

### Whole-School Change vs. Custom Support

*Leading in Hebrew* was a bold experiment that sought to approach school change from multiple directions simultaneously—at the level of instruction through 1:1 teacher coaching and webinars and training in Hebrew proficiency; at the level of the department through leadership coaching and the development of scope and sequence for the Hebrew curriculum and the use of language assessments; at the level of school leadership through ongoing meetings with Heads of School and non-Hebrew studies faculty and summer institutes; and at the level of school culture through the engagement of parent committees and marketing departments. It is possible that the amount of investment and the pace of change LIH asked of the schools (even associated with significant financial support) was too much to absorb. Even though LIH was a multi-year project with some runway to achieve its bold aims, schools were unable to follow through with all of the expectations that came with the investment—including significant time for teachers and leaders to develop their curricula, participate in professional development, adopt student testing, participate in coaching, and meeting with *Hebrew at the Center* staff—especially in the challenging context of COVID-19 for schools.

Indeed, even as LIH unfolded and encountered challenges, and *Hebrew at the Center* responded as flexibly as possible to keep momentum going, *Hebrew at the Center* as an organization was in the midst of its own leadership changes and adaptations. The organization has grown and evolved significantly since LIH was envisioned and utilizes many of the lessons learned that emerged from LIH as it serves an ever-growing segment of the Jewish day school community. In particular, it has organized its offerings using a more modular approach, allowing schools to choose from a menu of offerings in a way that matches their needs and aligns with the school's own vision for Hebrew rather than providing a more prescriptive set of activities and training. The organization has also made significant investments in infrastructure to support marketing, communications, and advocacy work to ensure that messaging about the importance of Hebrew goes beyond the Hebrew department of a Jewish day school and is seen as both an all-school and community priority. This has been reinforced with more community-wide initiatives such as the twelve-school, three-city, two-country Cascadia initiative in the Pacific Northwest and the student assessment project of grade five and seven students in all Toronto Jewish day schools. By embedding the work across the community and the involvement of community funders in both the planning and the financial support of these initiatives, Hebrew language learning begins to take on a more prominent place within the communal agenda.

## Appendix A: Snapshot of LIH Activities by Academic Year

Spring 2019	
CJDS	Milton
	Onsite launch visit including introductory workshops and observations
	60 min online workshop/s in March and April
	Group teacher interviews with Frayda
	60 min online workshop/s (Pre-K-1/2-7)
	3-day onsite visit
	2 hours of coaching/teacher (Aliza, Gila, Etti, Laura; by Esti or Hamutal by June 30)
Fall 2019-Spring 2020	
CJDS	Milton
	Total of 9 webinars: 5 for early childhood teachers and 4 for teachers grades 2-8 3 of the webinars were reconfigured to address the COVID-19 situation
	3 scheduled onsite visits—the third was converted into a virtual visit including classroom observations and meetings with leadership
	18 hours of coaching with Hebrew leaders
	Review and enhancement of curricular units (grades 2-8) by <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> staff
	26 hours of coaching for EC teachers
	15 hours of coaching for teachers grades 2-8
	<i>Hebrew at the Center</i> and Milton Leadership meetings: 1. Beginning, middle and end of year meetings 2. 2 meetings to realign due to COVID-19 3. 2 HOS transition meetings—new <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> CEO and new HOS at Milton
Fall 2020-Spring 2021	
CJDS	Milton
40 Coaching Hours	Onboarding and support for 2 new teachers including participating in 3-day New Hebrew Teacher Boot Camp, 6 hours of coaching with Director of Embedded Expertise, and 3 hours of additional one on one coaching with <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> coaches
8 Workshops on 2nd Language acquisition	Vered Goldstein and Gili Bitton participated in <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> /Hebrew College's online course: Learning Hebrew from Anywhere (Fall 2020)  An online course, consisting of eight 75-minute synchronous webinars. Providing cutting-edge pedagogic and assessment tools, <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> works to educate school leadership, develop Hebrew language leadership and empower teachers with the tools and expertise to maximize each student's success.
42 Hebrew Leadership Meetings	Individual coaching support for a third year Milton Hebrew teacher who is teaching PK for the first time (at the request of Vered)  2 hours of coaching with Ariela in the first semester 2 hours of coaching with Ariela in the second semester

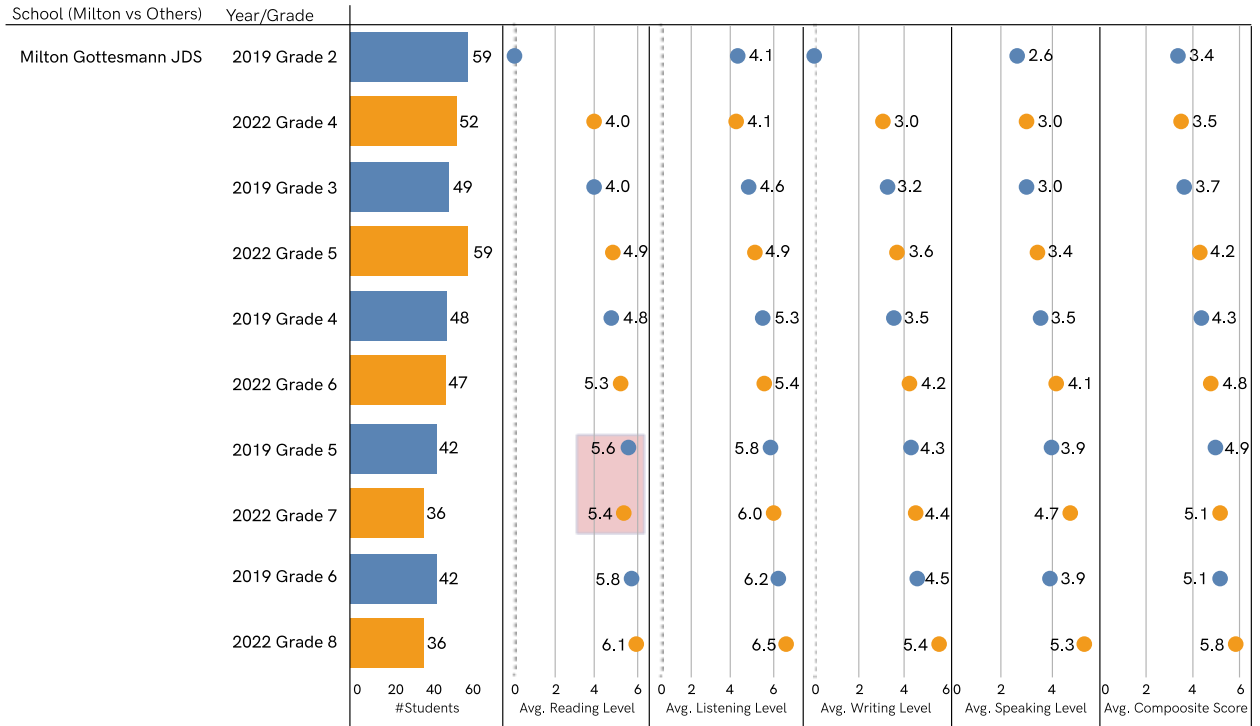


Fall 2020–Spring 2021	
CJDS	Milton
Meetings with Assistant HOS and Reggio Coaches to discuss Hebrew in the early childhood program	Deborah participated in a meeting facilitated by Wendy Rosov with the leaders of <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> and Chicago Jewish Day School to further refine the LIH Theory of Change
9 school Jewish and Hebrew leaders from CJDS and Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School of the Nation's Capital participated in the <i>Leading in Hebrew</i> (LIH) Summer Institute.	9 school Jewish and Hebrew leaders from CJDS and Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School of the Nation's Capital participated in the <i>Leading in Hebrew</i> (LIH) Summer Institute.
Meetings with Hebrew faculty to get to know them and the Hebrew program at CJDS	Monthly meetings with Shoshana (Tal)—through the end of October (Grades 2–8)
191 students participating in Hebrew proficiency assessment	11 students achieved Global Seal of Bilingualism
	Monthly meetings with Vered (Tal) (EC)
	Milton Gottesman students participated in the CRED Hebrew Roundtable, the <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> Chanukkah 2020 video, and will be recognized for their achievements at this year's Heseq event
Fall 2021–Spring 2022	
CJDS	Milton
2 Onsite visits	
<i>Hebrew at the Center</i> CEO visited school to meet with Head of School and Director of Judaic Studies	4 Meetings with <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> Director and Coach to strengthen Hebrew language teaching
Head of School and Director of Judaic Studies will present on panel at Hitkadmut: Annual Hebrew Educators Conference	Head of School and Director of Judaic Studies will present on panel at Hitkadmut: Annual Hebrew Educators Conference
Quarterly update on <i>Leading in Hebrew</i> progress and Hebrew for the school community to expand support, build champions, and generate high expectations for student outcomes, attitudes, and behaviors	Avirah project to engage students, staff, and parents in decisions around Hebrew atmosphere at school.
Monthly School/Hebrew Leadership meetings and coaching sessions focused on the overall initiative and the school-wide Hebrew curricular mapping	Onboarding and support for 2 new Hebrew teachers Participation in the 3-day <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> New Hebrew Teacher Boot Camp 6 hours of coaching for both teachers together with the Director of Embedded Expertise 3 additional one-on-one coaching hours for each of the new teachers with <i>Hebrew at the Center</i> coaches
2 Webinars for Hebrew Staff JK–8	8 Coaching meetings with Grade 2–8 Hebrew leader
3 Webinars for Hebrew Staff grades 3–8	4 webinar series for Grade 2–8 Hebrew Teachers
3 Webinars for Hebrew Staff Grades JK–2	
Completion of baseline parent, student and teacher surveys on attitudes and behaviors towards Hebrew	Completion of baseline parent, student and teacher surveys on attitudes and behaviors towards Hebrew
69 Hebrew Teacher coaching sessions	2nd Annual HESEG ceremony recognizing student achievement in Hebrew
	21 Milton Students received Global Seal of Bilingualism
ELLOPA Assessment for a sampling of students in Grades JK–1	ELLOPA Assessment for a sampling of students in Grades JK–1
Avant Assessment for students in Grades 2–8	Avant Assessment for students in Grades 2–8
5 students achieved intermediate-mid level and higher proficiency in Hebrew language acquisition on Avant assessment	Head of School and Director of Judaic Studies present on panel at Hitkadmut: Annual Hebrew Educators Conference

# Appendix B: Avant STAMP Score Graphs

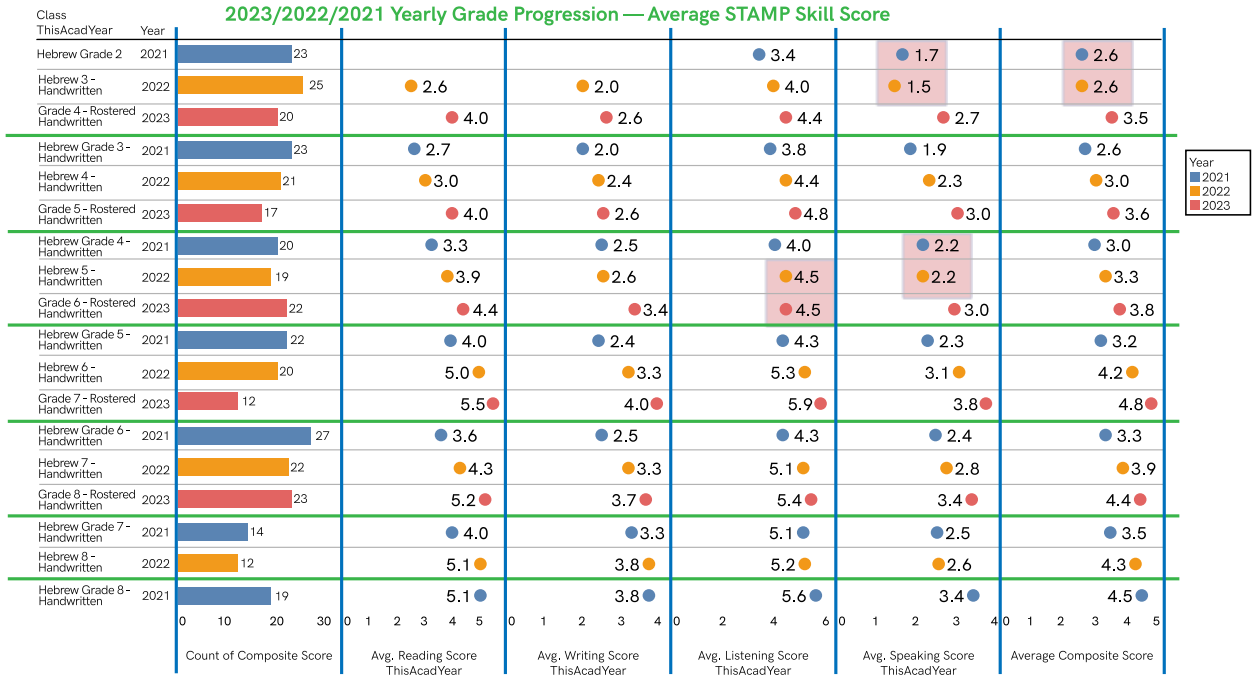
## Milton

Not based on same students , necessarily



## CJDS

### 2023/2022/2021 Yearly Grade Progression — Average STAMP Skill Score





# Appendix C: Survey of Students and Parents—Methodological Background

The surveys of students and parents were conducted using a census-based sampling design; that is, we attempted, with the assistance of the schools, to distribute the survey to everyone eligible to take it. However, for each survey, those who responded may be meaningfully different from those who did not in terms of their demographics, identities, and viewpoints, which can lead to what is called nonresponse bias. Because we had no external data about the populations who were sent the survey, we cannot examine the extent to which nonresponse bias exists nor make any statistical adjustments for it. We also cannot calculate response rates, because schools did not provide their contact lists.

Details about each survey sample—when surveys were fielded, numbers of respondents, and grades of student respondents—are included in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Survey Responses**

	Date	Parent Responses	Student Responses	Student Grades
<b>Milton</b>	Spring 2019	128	153	4th–7th
	Spring 2022	34	193	4th–8th
<b>CJDS</b>	Spring 2021	52	53	5th–8th
	Spring 2023	64	14	6th–7th

## Data Analysis

When comparing unpaired year-over-year data, some adjustments were made to help improve the samples’ comparability. While these adjustments do improve the samples’ year-over-year comparability, they do not overcome the possible nonresponse bias in the datasets. As a result, the extent to which findings are generalizable and representative of the entire population of each school is not known.

### Milton

At Milton, the 2019 survey was fielded to fourth through seventh grade students, while the 2022 survey was fielded to fourth through eighth grade students. As a result, when comparing unpaired student responses between the two surveys, eighth graders were excluded. Following this change, the remaining grade level distributions of the two surveys were extremely similar. In addition, compared to students who do not have parents who speak Hebrew at home, students with at least one Hebrew-speaking parent were significantly more likely to have better self-reported Hebrew proficiency, to anticipate better outcomes, and to agree more strongly with statements about why Hebrew is important. Conversely, these students found the importance of learning Hebrew at school to be less important than their peers. Students with Hebrew-speaking parents were overrepresented in the 2019 survey; to normalize for this effect, students with parents who speak Hebrew at home were excluded from unpaired year-over-year comparisons.

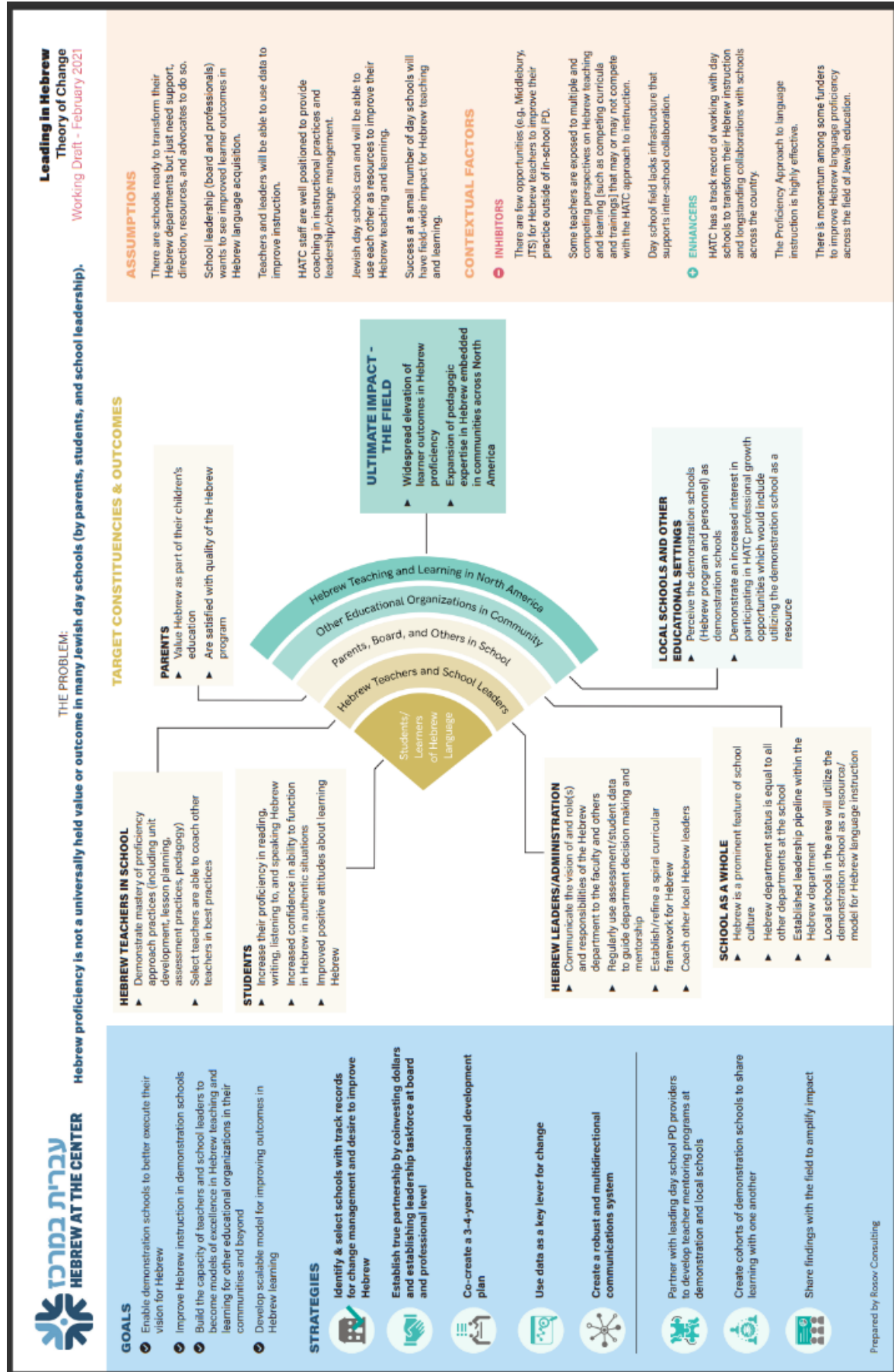
Too few Milton parents completed the survey in both years for the responses to be paired. However, responding parents’ year-over-year opinions were compared, generally. Before making year-over-year comparisons, parent responses were normalized to account for differences in the grade-level distribution of their children and the proportion of families that speak Hebrew at home. However, owing to significantly fewer parent responses in 2022, no meaningful year-over-year differences were found, so data from those comparisons is not reported.

## CJDS

At CJDS, the number of student responses to the 2023 survey was very low, and, therefore, no year-over-year comparisons were made.

Too few CJDS parents completed the survey in both years for the responses to be paired. However, responding parents' year-over-year opinions were compared, generally. As with Milton, data from CJDS demonstrated that child's grade level and whether or not Hebrew was spoken in the home strongly affected respondents' attitudes about Hebrew education. However, it was also found that the CJDS parent respondents were similar enough across these variables that the datasets did not need to be adjusted before comparing them.

# Appendix D: LIH Theory of Change





**Questions?**

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