



פְּרִיצַת דֶּרֶךְ Pritzat Derech: Hebrew For All

An Introductory Guide to Supporting Hebrew Learners
with Language-Based Learning Disabilities







Table of Contents

Overview of Initiative. 4

Glossary of Terms. 6

Summary of Descriptive Learnings 8

Key FAQs. 10

Next Steps. 16

Working Group 17

Stakeholder Supplements. 18

For School Leaders. 18

For Hebrew Leaders. 20

למנהיגי ומנהיגות העברית 22

For Hebrew Teachers. 24

למורים ומורות לעברית 28

For Reading Specialists & Interventionists 32

For Parents 34

Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All

Pritzat Derech (Hebrew for “breaking through”): Hebrew for All is a North American initiative dedicated to removing barriers to Hebrew literacy for students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities in Jewish day school settings.

Launched in memory of Pamela Kanfer, z”l, and with initial funding from Lippman Kanfer Family Foundation, the effort is led by Hebrew at the Center in partnership with Gateways: Access to Jewish Education, Scott Goldberg Consulting, Prizmah, and The Shefa Center. With members of each organization serving as the initiative Planning Team, this group assembled a wide range of academics, practitioners, field leaders, and stakeholders to help the field to better serve these students as they launched their Hebrew journeys.

Prior to moving into field testing in pilot communities, the initiative completed an extensive discovery phase, sponsored short-term research including a comprehensive literature review, and identified interventions that can help schools, educators, and communities understand and support these learners effectively. Through ongoing research, professional learning, and resource creation, Pritzat Derech aims to foster environments where all students can thrive in their Hebrew learning.

In Mishnah Avot 2:16, Rabbi Tarfon taught “It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it.” True transformative change for the students this initiative aims to serve will require school-wide shifts in instructional methods, curricular choices, staffing and policies, and other systematic approaches that maximize learning for all students. It is the goal of this initiative to begin to help the field consider these deeper questions and approaches. In the interim, this introductory guide is designed to begin that conversation, enabling more stakeholders access to the knowledge and key principles that can start making a difference in the lives of so many. We must do what we can to begin to remove obstacles to learning Hebrew so that this sacred and modern language becomes a part of their rightful inheritance.

Key Goals of the Initiative Include:

- Raising awareness and understanding of dyslexia, language-based learning disabilities, and related challenges.
- Providing schools with tools, systems, and strategies to support these diverse learners in learning Hebrew.
- Addressing the unique complexities of teaching Hebrew as a second or non-native language.
- Building a collaborative network of educators, researchers, and community leaders who have the most up-to-date knowledge and expertise to support this specific population.

Key Deliverables of the Initiative Include:

- Curation of relevant research and knowledge to inform practice in classrooms and schools.
- Training programs and publications for teachers, school specialists and leaders, and community stakeholders to translate the knowledge into useable practice.
- Field pilots that embed a new position of Professional Hebrew Reading Specialist with this knowledge, practice, and training into schools and community.
- Developing a framework to bring this intervention to field-wide scale.

This introductory guide is the first publication being distributed to the field to begin to raise awareness; to build a common language across the field with which to discuss the challenges students, teachers, schools and families face; and to begin to inform practice. Over the next few pages, you will find the following:

1. Glossary of Terms

The glossary of terms provides non-specialists with the key vocabulary necessary to inform discussions about learning, language instruction, and the different dimensions of the challenges students can face when learning to read Hebrew, including those that are different than their reading of English, the first language of most Jewish day school students in North America.

2. Summary of Descriptive Learnings

While the research sponsored by this initiative continues to advance and more is expected to be learned as the project's pilots unfold, this section shares some important first learnings that have emerged from bringing together a group of critical academics, educators, practitioners, and other stakeholders to identify key knowledge, knowledge gaps, and new information emerging from current research.

3. Key FAQs

As this initiative has been introduced to teachers and school administrators, concerned parents, community leaders, and others, a number of common questions have been surfaced that can be answered in a well-researched and thoughtful manner, empowering more policies and practices across the field that are informed by the leading ideas and data-informed research.

4. Stakeholder Supplements

While much of this document is designed to create shared language for all stakeholders, we recognize the need to provide more tailored details and guidance to specific audiences within a school community. These include information for Hebrew teachers, Hebrew leaders (such as department chairs), reading specialists, general school administrators, and parents who help guide the direction and priorities of each school.

Over the course of this initiative, additional publications will be distributed such as a more prescriptive field guide, academic research, OpEds and other writings that help shift the narrative to help make the day school space more inclusive and reflective of Jewish commitments to inclusion and effective Jewish education for all.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Throughout this initiative, we encountered several terms in both the research and in conversations with individuals in the community that carried different meanings depending on the context or person using them. To ensure clarity and consistency, some of those terms are defined below; these definitions also explain how the terms are used in this document.

Abjad vs. Alphabetic Orthographies:

In an abjad orthography, the writing system mostly uses symbols for consonants, and the reader fills in the vowel sounds. In an alphabetic orthography, the writing system includes symbols for both consonants and vowels (see vowelized vs. non-vowelized).

Accuracy: Decoding words without any sound/symbol errors.

Aural Language: Refers to the sounds of spoken language, encompassing the sounds produced by the mouth (oral) and the sounds heard by the ear (aural). Used in linguistics and language teaching to describe the spoken form of language, as opposed to written language.

Comprehension: Ability to understand what is heard or read by using active strategies to make meaning.

Decoding: Associating letters/vowels with their sounds to create syllables and blending syllables together to create words.

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD):

A communication disorder that interferes with learning, understanding, and using language.

Dyslexia: A specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. In English and similar languages, it is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. In Hebrew and similar languages, it is particularly characterized by difficulties with fluency. Dyslexia is often associated with a phonological deficit. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. (International Dyslexia Association)

Encoding: The general process of converting data into a specific format for storage, transmission, or communication, such as turning sounds into written words (spelling).

Fluency: Reading of connecting texts at conversational rate with accuracy and expression (including intonation and rhythm).

Kriah: The Hebrew word for reading, often specifically referring to reading of sacred texts.

Language: Ability to both use and understand spoken words or signs (language typically means words, communication includes signs).

Language-based Learning Disability (LBLD): Refers to difficulties with understanding or using spoken and written language, even with average to above-average intelligence (discussed extensively on pages 8-13).

Language Transfer: When students learning a new language apply the rules and norms of their first language to their second, or vice versa.

Literacy: Ability to use and understand written words in order to communicate.

Morpheme: The smallest unit of meaning.

Morphology: The system of meaningful parts (such as roots/shoresh, prefixes, suffixes), or morphemes, that make up words.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):

A framework designed to meet the needs of all students by ensuring that schools optimize data-informed decision making, progress monitoring, and evidence-based supports and strategies with increasing intensity to sustain student growth, as needed.

Oral Fluency: The ability to read aloud accurately, at an appropriate rate, and with proper expression.

Oral vs. Spoken Language: While the terms “oral language” and “spoken language” are often used interchangeably, “spoken language” more specifically refers to the physical act of producing and perceiving language through sound. “Oral language” encompasses this, but also includes the cognitive and social skills related to using spoken words to communicate, including listening and understanding.

Orthographic Depth: The extent to which there is a unique 1:1 correspondence between the symbols (orthography) and the sounds (phonology) of a language. This is often considered on a continuum from shallow/transparent (each symbol only has one sound associated with it and each sound only has one symbol associated with it) to deep/opaque (symbols and sounds are not uniquely and clearly associated).

Orthographic Mapping: The cognitive process of storing a word permanently in memory for instant retrieval.

Orthography: The written symbols that form the conventional spelling system of a language.

Phoneme: The smallest unit of speech distinguishing one word (or word element) from another.

Phonemic Awareness: The ability to perceive/recognize the smallest units of sound in a word and manipulate each.

Phonics: Understanding that letters represent sounds and identifying the relationship between the shape of a letter and the sound of a letter.

Phonological Awareness: The ability to perceive and work with sounds in spoken language, including word level, syllables, sub-syllabic units, and phonemes.

Reading Proficiency: The combination of both decoding skills and comprehension that enable students to understand and engage with text.

Reading: The process of looking at written symbols and letters and understanding the meaning of them (included as one of four main language skills along with listening, speaking and writing).

Transparent Language: A written language where the relationship between the letters and sounds is straightforward.

Vocabulary: Ability to comprehend words and phrases including literal, figurative, and contextual meanings.

Vowelized vs. Non-vowelized: In vowelized languages, written words include marks or letters that show the vowel sounds (like in English, Spanish, or Hebrew with nikud). In non-vowelized languages, the written form usually leaves out the vowels, and readers have to figure them out from context (like in Arabic or Hebrew without nikud).



Drawing from the literature and initiative-sponsored research, field surveys, and collaboration with schools, educators, and families during the discovery and development phases, Pritzat Derech has surfaced several key learnings and insights. Effectively applying these will better support students with dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities (LBD) in Jewish day schools, offering valuable information and guidance on how to best support these learners' early Hebrew literacy efforts and setting them up for success in both Hebrew language acquisition and Jewish studies.

1. Hebrew Reading Presents Unique Challenges

For Jewish day school students, Hebrew is not just a second language; it's a language with unique characteristics. Its orthography relies heavily on vowel markers, its morphology is dense, and its abjad nature (consonant-based writing system) differs from English.

For students with LBD, these differences require explicit instruction in Hebrew orthography, phonemic awareness adapted to Hebrew, and systematic work on decoding and word recognition. Oral language exposure is also crucial, as students need to hear Hebrew through read-alouds, songs, and conversations to develop vocabulary and comprehension, especially since most encounter little Hebrew in their everyday environment.

2. Early Identification and Intervention Matter

Initiative-sponsored research being conducted in collaboration between Dr. Yaacov Petscher and Dr. Scott Goldberg shows that by second grade, typically developing (TD) students read around 20 words correct per minute (WCPM), while high-risk (HR) students read only about 6 WCPM. Although both groups improve over time, HR students' growth is slower (1.2 WCPM/month compared to 1.9 WCPM/month), and the gap widens as learning progresses, making early intervention essential (an article detailing this research and its findings is forthcoming).

Schools should screen for reading difficulties as early as possible (preferably by kindergarten or first grade) to identify students who may need extra support. Targeted interventions at this stage have been shown to close gaps before they widen. In addition, summer programs can help prevent learning loss and maintain progress, particularly for high-risk students.

3. Teacher Training Is Critical

Many teachers have limited preparation for supporting students with diverse learning needs, especially for those with dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities (LBD). While there are some exceptions, most Hebrew teachers working in the field have no specific expertise when it comes to teaching Hebrew reading for students in this population. The Simple View of Reading (SVR) model emphasizes that skilled reading depends on both decoding and oral language comprehension—both of which are more complex when teaching a second language like Hebrew.

Effective, ongoing professional development equips teachers with a strong foundation in structured literacy, the Science of Reading, and the unique and specific demands of Hebrew instruction, such as working with an abjad orthography, decoding with vowel markers (nikud), and navigating morphological complexity. Ongoing coaching and mentoring amplify the effects of training.

4. Strength-based Approaches Work

While it's important to address areas of difficulty, focusing on students' strengths helps build motivation and self-confidence. Students who struggle in one area will have strengths in other areas; educators should work to understand those strengths and build upon them. When schools help them leverage these strengths, students feel valued and experience greater success.

5. Reading Fluency Needs Deliberate Attention

The more transparent the orthography of a language is, the less that accuracy is a unique diagnostic indicator of dyslexia. This is why measuring speed in transparent orthographies is crucial. Because Hebrew with nikud is a fairly transparent orthography, students with dyslexia may achieve syllable or word-level accuracy in reading Hebrew but struggle with speed and fluency, leaving their reading slow and effortful, and limiting their available bandwidth for comprehension. Instructional programs must deliberately target fluency at every stage—from phonological awareness to decoding words, to reading connected text—so students can eventually shift cognitive resources from decoding to comprehension.

6. School-level Frameworks Are Necessary

While some students benefit from general classroom strategies, aimed at student achievement and growth for the full class, others (especially those with LBLD) require tailored interventions. It is advised that schools should embrace flexible approaches, such as small-group instruction, one-on-one support, and explicit instruction in Hebrew's unique orthographic and phonological features.

Beyond equipping teachers and parents with tools and strategies to support LBLD students, schools must have established organizational and structural systems that support instructional intervention to occur in order for true transformative change for students with LBLD to take place. By implementing multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) in a school that includes consistent progress monitoring (including data on decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) schools can match supports and instruction to each student's needs and adjust as needed.

7. Families Are Key Partners and Benefit From Clear Communication

Parents and caregivers are essential allies. Schools' communicating clearly about their Hebrew goals is an important first step in establishing this partnership. When schools communicate openly about a child's learning profile, progress, and challenges in alignment with those goals, families can help reinforce learning at home and advocate for needed supports.

Schools can provide workshops, resources, and tools to help families better understand LBLD, Hebrew learning, and ways to support their children's growth. Examples include sharing recorded Hebrew reading for students to use at home (that parents can use too), integrating key vocabulary into parent communication, and sharing language with parents that can be used at home to support Hebrew enthusiasm. Parents can also be important collaborators in thinking through how to support their children.

? What is the best curriculum/materials to use? How can we vet programs?

There Is No Single “Perfect” Curriculum, But the Strongest Programs Share Key Features:

- They are evidence-based and draw on the Science of Reading.
- They use a structured literacy approach: explicit, systematic, cumulative instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- They incorporate regular assessment and progress monitoring allowing teachers to track growth and adjust instruction.

To Vet Programs:

- Ask for research data, independent evaluations, or field-tested results.
- Look for programs that include training and coaching for teachers.
- Consult experts such as Hebrew at the Center, Scott Goldberg Consulting, The Shefa Center, or Gateways: Access to Jewish Education for recommendations.
- Before full rollout, devise intentional implementation plan, integrating key stakeholders and benchmarks.

? When is the best time to introduce Hebrew to students?

Early introduction is generally beneficial, particularly when paired with explicit instruction tailored to students with LBLD. Aural language exposure (listening, speaking) can and should begin in early childhood (even pre-K).

For Reading:

- Begin phonological awareness and decoding when students have a basic command of Hebrew sounds.
- Start reading instruction when students are developmentally ready—often around K-1.
- Prioritize aural comprehension and vocabulary alongside decoding.

Research, including that done by Leonore Ganschow and Judit Kormos, shows that early exposure builds phonological and morphological awareness, critical for later reading comprehension. Delaying introduction risks missing the most receptive learning window.

Key Insight

Strong foundational skills in L1 (English) support success in L2 (Hebrew), but waiting too long to introduce Hebrew can miss critical developmental windows. Schools should aim for early oral exposure in Hebrew, paired with careful, paced reading instruction as students become ready.



Why is fluency such a big focus, and how do we build it?

Fluency Is Crucial Because:

- Without it, students use most of their mental energy on decoding, leaving little capacity for comprehension. Comprehension helps to promote better decoding. Decoding without comprehension or some word recognition does not provide the learner with the same clues that reading comprehension does.
- Students with LBLD can often decode accurately but remain slow, labored readers, especially in transparent orthographies like Hebrew with nikud.

Building Fluency Requires:

- Direct explicit instruction in phonological, orthographic, and semantic components of words, which develops orthographic mapping of words.
- Repeated modeling and reading of familiar texts and texts with similar vocabulary.
- Explicit practice at the word, phrase, and passage level.
- Oral language, vocabulary, and comprehension abilities to further develop/support fluency.
- Monitoring progress (with standardized assessments including words correct per minute) and celebrating gains.



What professional development do teachers need?

Teachers Need PD That Covers:

- Core principles and practices for teaching Hebrew as a second language (i.e., vocabulary retention and development, integration of the three modes of communication).
- Classroom learning community (creating an inclusive and safe learning environment, policies and procedures, and effective communication protocols and strategies).
- The Science of Reading, especially how it applies to Hebrew.
- Various methods of assessing Hebrew reading for L2 including universal screening tools, mastery assessments, and diagnostic tests all in service of instructional decision-making and progress monitoring.
- Structured literacy methods.
- How to recognize and support LBLD in a second-language context.
- Executive function strategies (like planning, working memory, and attention) that help all students but are essential for LBLD learners.

High Quality Professional Development (HQPD), which includes ongoing coaching, not just one-off workshops, makes the biggest difference. Additionally, leadership plays a key role in successful Hebrew learning programs. Components such as basic literacy instruction for principals, department chairs, and heads of schools are critical to the success of curricular/instructional changes.

? What are the pros/cons of learning Hebrew and English at the same time for students who are struggling to learn to read English, commonly their first language?

PROS

Capitalizes on critical windows of brain plasticity for language learning

Early childhood is a peak period for language acquisition; introducing two languages takes advantage of this brain flexibility.

Builds cultural identity, belonging, and connection to the Jewish community early

Hebrew fosters not only language development but also a sense of rootedness in Jewish heritage, tradition, and values.

Supports accent acquisition and native-like pronunciation

Children exposed to multiple languages early are more likely to develop native or near-native pronunciation in both languages.

Encourages metalinguistic awareness and stronger language structure understanding

Bilingualism helps children better understand how language works in general, which can support literacy and grammar skills over time—even in their dominant language.

Provides more time toward the “10,000 hours” of language practice

Starting earlier gives students more cumulative exposure and practice, helping them move toward language mastery with less pressure.

Promotes cognitive flexibility and executive function

Bilingual children often show enhanced problem-solving skills, memory, and attention control—strengths that can support overall academic performance.

Makes learning joyful and play-based during a natural stage of language absorption

Young children are more open to learning through songs, games, and playful interaction, which is how both English and Hebrew can be taught effectively.

Reduces fear of making mistakes and encourages experimentation

Young learners are less self-conscious and more willing to take language risks, which leads to more practice and faster acquisition.

Creates a multi-channel support system

Dual language learning can be reinforced at school and home through teachers, parents, books, media, and peer interaction, surrounding the child with opportunities to hear and use both languages.

Normalizes bilingualism and multiculturalism

Early exposure to two languages helps children see bilingualism as a normal and enriching part of life, not something unusual or burdensome.

Builds long-term cognitive and health benefit

Bilingualism has been associated with delayed onset of Alzheimer’s symptoms and lifelong cognitive engagement.

Can enhance future academic and career opportunities

Proficiency in Hebrew and English may open doors in Jewish communal life, global business, travel, and beyond.

CONS

Adds cognitive load for students still developing reading skills in English

Juggling two language systems may place additional demands on memory, processing speed, and attention—areas that are often already taxed in students with language-based learning difficulties.

Reduces available instructional time for skill development in other content areas

Time spent on Hebrew instruction can come at the expense of English language development, which may be especially critical for students with Language-Based Learning Disabilities (LBLD) or those significantly behind in English literacy. Other possibilities include taking time at the expense of math, recess, or specials—all of which play a developmental role for student growth.

Can cause confusion between languages in early stages

Students may mix vocabulary or grammar structures from both languages, which can create challenges in developing fluency and clarity, particularly if they are struggling with foundational language rules.

May exacerbate frustration or self-esteem issues

Students who are already finding language difficult might feel overwhelmed or “behind” when confronted with a second language, which can impact their confidence and motivation.

Requires strong coordination between language programs and support services for which many schools are not equipped

Without intentional alignment between Hebrew and English instruction, and appropriate scaffolding or intervention, students may fall through the cracks.

Limited availability of intervention tools in Hebrew

While many resources exist to support English-language learners with learning disabilities, similar tools and interventions for Hebrew may be harder to find or adapt.

Potential misalignment with individualized learning goals or IEPs

Dual-language instruction may not always align with the specific language-acquisition goals or accommodations outlined for students with learning challenges, requiring additional customization.

Difficulty transferring skills across languages if not explicitly supported

Students don’t always automatically apply what they learn in one language to another; transfer of skills (like decoding or comprehension strategies) must be intentionally taught, which takes time and expertise.

? Is there a different timeline for introducing the different Hebrew skills? (i.e. reading vs. writing)

Skill	Recommended Timing
Oral language: listening comprehension (and speaking)	As early as possible: immerse students in Hebrew words, songs, and stories. We suggest differentiating between spoken and oral language. For languages that are spoken (like Modern Hebrew) there may not be a noteworthy difference. However, for written languages that are not spoken (like Classical Hebrew), students still need to hear the language read/said aloud to form the foundation of their reading skills. This does not transform the language into a spoken language but does bring the sounds of the language off the page orally for aural consumption.
Phonological awareness	Pre-K to K: focus on Hebrew's consonant-vowel (CV) units, not just single phonemes. Explicitly teaching and practicing each component (especially the CV unit in Hebrew) lays the groundwork for reading success.
Decoding	As phonological awareness develops, typically during K-1, possibly later for LBLD students.
Encoding (spelling)	Alongside decoding: spelling reinforces reading skills.
Writing (handwriting)	Delay until decoding and spelling are solid; prioritize reading and aural fluency first.
Fluency	This is not only about fluency at the word level or phrase level but also about achieving automaticity in each component reading skills, such as phonological awareness, phonics, oral language, and comprehension.
Reading comprehension	Comprehension is an integral part of fluency and should be developed alongside decoding, starting at the word level. Comprehension (knowing the meaning of the word, the phrase, the sentence and string of sentences) is one of the key factors that impact fluency (decoding automatically with correct intonation).

? How do the vowels factor into Hebrew reading for this population?

Vowels (Nikud) Play a Critical Role, Especially For Students With LBLD:

- Pointed Hebrew (with nikud) has a transparent orthography.
- Unpointed Hebrew relies more heavily on morphology and context, making it more challenging to read fluently.

Students with LBLD often achieve accuracy in pointed Hebrew but struggle with fluency and automaticity. As such, intensive and explicit instruction in the basic early literacy skills, including phonics, fluency, vocabulary, is essential and should continue even after students begin working with unpointed texts. Removing vowels should happen gradually, coupled with enhancing vocabulary and pre-teaching key words.

Practical Tip

Vowelized Hebrew is more accessible for L2 learners; unpointed Hebrew requires much higher oral fluency and morphological knowledge.

? What considerations come into play, if any, when we talk about the different types of Hebrew? (for example, learning Hebrew to decode Tanach vs. learning Hebrew to speak the modern language)

The Goal of Instruction Matters Greatly:

- For reading Biblical/liturgical Hebrew (Tanach, siddur) and modern Hebrew, focus on decoding vowelized texts, understanding key vocabulary, and developing fluency.
- For speaking modern/conversational Hebrew, emphasize and develop oral comprehension, speaking, and high-frequency vocabulary.

Cultural Context Also Matters:

- Hebrew is not just a foreign language; it is a heritage language deeply tied to Jewish identity.
- For many families and schools, mastery of liturgical Hebrew is tied to participation in rituals and communal life. Likewise, for many families and schools, mastery of spoken modern Hebrew is tied to participation in the Jewish community, and connection to the State of Israel and global Jewry.
- Instruction should reflect the community's priorities and be sensitive to the motivational and emotional importance of Hebrew.

The work of Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All represents an exciting and serious initial step toward solving this critical challenge. However, sustained progress will require ongoing research, field-testing, and continued investment.

Key Next Steps Include:

Community-based Pilots

Apply what is being learned to multiple schools in select communities to further refine structures to bring new and curated knowledge into classroom practice, enhance school policies and staffing, and measure impact prior to moving towards scale.

Expand Collaboration

Work with all stakeholders to build and disseminate shared knowledge and resources. This includes publications, community-based professional learning sessions, and ongoing refinements to the approach via discourse between the initiative Working Group and the field.

Development, Assessment, and Evaluation

It is critical that change be grounded in evidence-based practice that helps set standards that can serve schools of different sizes, regions, affiliation, and pedagogic orientations. We will develop and pilot tools, frameworks, and interventions informed by both research and practitioners. Through ongoing assessment and evaluation, we'll identify which approaches can be successfully replicated across the field and use data to design instruction for optimal growth.

Research-based Tools

Translating emerging research into practical, accessible tools and informing ongoing professional learning opportunities will ensure that this initiative continues to make advances as it moves from the initial few years of discovery and pilots into a change in culture throughout the field.

Training and Accreditation

We will work to develop a formal accreditation program and training opportunities for individuals looking to advance their careers as professional Hebrew reading specialists. In addition to creating an academic program that will help train a cadre of these individuals to meet the needs of schools and communities throughout North

America, we look to activate a community of professionals to provide ongoing field-building, networking, and ongoing learning and research.

Resource Development

Vital to this effort is the need to build field-wide platforms to continue the work, and to support schools as they consider ways in which to better serve all students with reading. Creating more inclusive learning spaces for those with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities will require time, finances, and political will. Making these investments means more students will be able to participate successfully in all that Jewish day schools have to offer. It also means that schools can promote their dedication to fully inclusive learning environments as one of their unique value propositions to families.

Designing For Scale

Taken together, these next steps are not endpoints, but essential building blocks toward the initiative's ultimate goal: designing for scale to help all schools and communities better serve these students. Each pilot, collaboration, tool, and professional development opportunity contributes to a body of knowledge that can be codified, shared, and implemented across the full spectrum of Jewish day schools. This final phase—Design for Scale—will allow us to take what has been tested and refined in select communities and expand it field-wide.

By anchoring this work in evidence-based practice, by investing in tools and accreditation, and by developing the resources necessary to sustain inclusive and effective approaches, we can move from innovation in a handful of schools to transformation across North America. Importantly, this phase also ensures that the infrastructure for ongoing learning, professional growth, and field-wide support becomes not just an initiative, but a normative and sustainable part of Jewish education.

Dr. Tali Berkovitch

(Former) Schechter Manhattan, Hebrew Coordinator and (Current) MagenDavid Yeshiva Early Childhood Center, Instructional Leader

Rabbi Avraham Cohn

Hebrew Reading Consultant

Brian Coonley*

Gateways: Access to Jewish Education, Director of Professional Learning and Consultation

Tamar Davis

Gateways: Access to Jewish Education, Chief Executive Officer

Dr. Debra Drang

(Former) Sulam, Director of Special Education and (Current) Prizmah, Director Educational Excellence

Rabbi Andrew Ergas, EdD*

Hebrew at the Center, Chief Executive Officer

Rabbi Shmuel Feld

Jewish Education Innovation Challenge, Founding Director

Dr. Scott Goldberg*

Scott Goldberg Consulting/MaDYK, Author and Principal

Dr. Rosalyn Grad

iTaLAM, North American Liaison

Dr. Esty Gross*

Hebrew at the Center, Chief of Staff and Director of Education

Dr. Ilanit Hoory

The Leffell School, Lower School Principal

Dr. Doran Katz

(Former) Middlebury School of Hebrew, Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy and (Current) Tikvah, Senior Director Jewish Day School Strategies

Bayla Kopel

Scott Goldberg Consulting, Director of Hebrew Reading Programs and Tamim Academy

Sonia Levin

OG for Hebrew, Founder and Developer

Debbie Niderberg

Hidden Sparks, Executive Director

Liat Penso

iTaLAM, Head of Marketing and Business Development

Gary Pretsfelder

The Jewish Education Project, Senior Manager Professional Learning and Growth

Rebecca Ritter*

The Shefa School, Head of Teaching and Learning

Dr. Sarah Rubinson Levy*

Pritzat Derech Project Coordinator, Hebrew at the Center

Nechamy Segal

Hebrew Scouts-Kriah for Everyone, Curriculum Developer

Estie Siega

REACH, Kriah/Reading Specialist

Dr. Rebecca Tolson

Literacy/Dyslexia Consultant and Walsh University, Adjunct Professor

Aliza Weinstock

Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ, Manager Quest of Teaching Excellence

Rabbi Marc Wolf*

Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools, Chief Program and Strategy Officer

Dr. Na'ama Yehuda

Speech Language Pathologist

**Members of the initiative Planning Team*

The Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All initiative was launched in memory of Pamela Kanfer, z"l, a life-long educator dedicated to supporting children with dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities on their Hebrew journey. This project has been made possible through the generous support of the Associated of Baltimore, Covenant Foundation, Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, D.C., Lippman Kanfer Family Foundation, the Mayberg Foundation, and individual donors committed to removing an obstacle to Hebrew reading and Jewish education for too many learners. For more information on how you can support this initiative, please contact Jonathan Nierman, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Hebrew at the Center, support@hebrewatthecenter.org.

FOR SCHOOL LEADERS:

Supporting Hebrew Learning for All Students

> What To Know

Hebrew instruction in Jewish day schools presents unique challenges, particularly for students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities (LBD). While schools increasingly adopt structured literacy approaches in English, Hebrew often lags behind in adopting evidence-based, inclusive practices.

Key Insights From Recent Research and Field Practice:

- **Hebrew's structure poses specific challenges:** It uses an abjad script (mostly consonants), relies heavily on morphology (roots and patterns), and has two primary forms (pointed and unpointed text). These characteristics require explicit instruction for all learners—and even more so for those with learning differences.
- **Fluency matters more than accuracy:** In transparent orthographies like Hebrew with vowels (nikud), students may read accurately but slowly. Slow, effortful reading limits comprehension and reduces motivation.
- **Learning gaps widen over time:** Data shows that students identified as “high risk” read fewer words per minute and progress more slowly than their peers over time unless provided with targeted intervention.

Despite this, Hebrew teachers often lack access to the same tools, training, and interventions that support English language learners. This gap leaves students with LBD at a disadvantage, compromising both their learning and their connection to Jewish identity.

> Why This Matters

You set the tone and priorities for your school. Instructional decisions, professional development, hiring, and resource allocation all flow from leadership. Addressing Hebrew instruction for students with LBD isn't just about academic achievement; it's about access, equity, and fulfilling your school's mission.

Here's Why This Should Be On Your Radar:

- **Equity and inclusion:** Hebrew is core to Jewish identity, and access to that learning must be equitable. Failing to support struggling readers in Hebrew excludes them from full participation in Jewish life and learning.
- **Parent satisfaction and retention:** Parents of students with LBD are savvy and vocal. When they see their children excluded from success in Hebrew (or when support exists only in general studies), they notice. Conversely, when schools demonstrate real understanding and inclusive practice, parents become strong advocates.
- **Instructional consistency:** Structured literacy is not only for English. Applying the Science of Reading to Hebrew creates alignment across departments and supports all learners more effectively.
- **Staff empowerment and retention:** Hebrew teachers who feel equipped to support diverse learners are more confident and less likely to burn out. Without proper training and support, they may feel ineffective or overwhelmed.
- **School reputation and differentiation:** Schools that effectively support all learners in both general and Judaic studies stand out. As learning differences are increasingly recognized and diagnosed, families are actively looking for inclusive environments.

> What You Can Do

As a school leader, you have the authority and responsibility to drive change. Here are concrete steps you can take:

1. Screen Early and Monitor Progress

- Implement universal screening—such as MaDYK—for Hebrew reading by kindergarten or first grade.
- Use tools that assess decoding, fluency, and comprehension, tailored to Hebrew.
- Embed data review cycles into staff meetings and teacher planning.

2. Build Teacher Capacity

- Offer PD in structured literacy with a specific focus on Hebrew.
- Include topics like phonological awareness, decoding, morphology, and fluency.
- Provide ongoing coaching, not just one-off workshops.
- Ensure your instructional leaders and department chairs understand literacy science and can support implementation.

3. Develop Tiered Supports For Hebrew

- Integrate Hebrew into your MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) framework.
- Allocate time in the schedule for small-group or 1:1 Hebrew intervention.
- Coordinate between general and Judaic studies teams to align support plans.

4. Hire and Empower Specialized Roles

- Consider cultivating a Hebrew Reading Specialist or supporting a Community Hebrew Reading Professional.
- Give this person time to coach teachers, support students, and monitor data.
- Prioritize bilingual or dual-trained specialists who understand both language instruction and learning differences.
- Advocate for and create endowed professional learning and/or raise funds specifically earmarked for development in this area.

5. Support Families

- Clarify your school's goals and approach to Hebrew learning and intervention.
- Offer parent education events around Hebrew literacy and LBLD.
- Share tools families can use at home, like read-aloud recordings or vocabulary prompts.

6. Foster a Culture of Inclusion and Collaboration

- Model a strengths-based, collaborative approach to struggling learners.
- Ensure that Hebrew teachers are invited into broader conversations about student learning and support.
- Recognize and elevate the importance of Hebrew literacy alongside English.

> Bottom Line

Inclusion in Hebrew is possible—and essential. The tools, knowledge, and frameworks are being developed. Your leadership can ensure that all students, regardless of learning profile, can access Hebrew and feel a deep sense of belonging in Jewish life and learning.

For additional tools, training opportunities, or to join a network of schools addressing these challenges, contact *Dr. Sarah Robinson Levy*, Director of Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All at:

hebrewforall@hebrewatthecenter.org

FOR HEBREW LEADERS:

Leading Inclusive and Effective Hebrew Programs

> What To Know

As a Hebrew Leader (department chair, coordinator, or instructional lead), you shape the quality and accessibility of Hebrew learning across your school. You make decisions about curriculum, teacher training, assessment, and intervention—and those decisions directly impact whether all students, including those with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities (LBLD), can thrive in Hebrew.

Key Insights From Recent Research and Field Practice:

- **Hebrew poses distinct learning demands:** Its abjad orthography, use of vowel markers (nikud), and dense morphology make reading development different from English—and require explicit, structured instruction.
- **Fluency is the linchpin:** In transparent orthographies like Hebrew with nikud, accuracy can mask deeper difficulties. Students may decode correctly but remain slow and labored readers, limiting comprehension and motivation.
- **Early identification changes trajectories:** Screening by K–1 and regular progress monitoring prevent small gaps from becoming lasting barriers.
- **Teacher capacity is the biggest lever:** Teachers who understand both literacy science and Hebrew-specific pedagogy can meet a wide range of learner needs—and they need your guidance, resources, and ongoing coaching to do so.

> Why This Matters

Your leadership has a multiplier effect: the systems, expectations, and supports you establish ripple across classrooms and cohorts.

Here's Why This Should Be On Your Radar:

- **Equity and access:** Hebrew is core to Jewish identity. Without inclusive practices, students with LBLD are excluded from fully participating in Jewish life.
- **Instructional coherence:** Aligning Hebrew literacy with the same structured, evidence-based principles used in English strengthens outcomes and helps teachers see the connections across their work.
- **Staff retention and morale:** Teachers who feel supported with tools, training, and coaching are more confident and less likely to burn out.
- **School reputation:** A strong, inclusive Hebrew program is a point of pride and a differentiator for your school community.

> Leadership Tips

- Model data-informed decision-making in your own work.
- Recognize and celebrate teacher successes in implementing inclusive practices.
- Advocate for resources—from curriculum to staffing—that strengthen Hebrew literacy for all learners.
- Keep equity at the center: ask regularly, “How will this decision affect our most vulnerable learners?”

> What You Can Do

As a school leader, you have the authority and responsibility to drive change. Here are concrete steps you can take:

1. Establish a Clear Instructional Vision For Hebrew Literacy

- In schools where Judaic studies is involved in early Hebrew literacy, engage in dialogue between the Hebrew and Judaic departments around this topic.
- Define what “success” in Hebrew looks like at each grade level, in both decoding and comprehension.
- Articulate non-negotiables for instruction (i.e., systematic phonics, explicit morphology teaching, intentional fluency practice).
- Ensure goals reflect both the school’s mission and the realities of how students learn Hebrew as an L2.

2. Implement Early and Ongoing Assessment

- Use universal screeners like MaDYK in K–1, plus regular progress monitoring for decoding, fluency, and comprehension.
- Train teachers to interpret data and adjust instruction.
- Build regular data review into department meetings.

3. Invest in Teacher Professional Learning

- Provide PD in structured literacy, adapted for Hebrew’s unique features.
- Include practical strategies: phonological awareness in consonant-vowel (CV) units, systematic morphology instruction, repeated reading routines, and gradual vowel removal paired with oral language support.
- Arrange for ongoing coaching—not just one-off workshops—to help teachers implement what they learn.

4. Create a Tiered Support System For Hebrew

- Align Hebrew reading intervention with your school’s MTSS framework.
- Schedule dedicated time for small-group or 1:1 Hebrew instruction for struggling readers.
- Consider a Hebrew Reading Specialist or Community Hebrew Reading Professional to work across classrooms.

5. Foster Collaboration and Alignment

- Coordinate with general studies leaders to align literacy strategies across languages.
- Encourage co-planning between Hebrew teachers and reading specialists.
- To support a unified approach, share resources, assessments, and student data across departments

6. Engage Families in the Process

- Communicate the school’s goals and methods for Hebrew literacy.
- Provide all families with concrete ways to support fluency and vocabulary at home, even if they don’t speak Hebrew.
- Host workshops on how Hebrew learning differs from English and how parents can help.

> Bottom Line

As a Hebrew leader, you are the bridge between research and classroom reality.

With a clear vision, strong systems, and teacher support, you can make Hebrew accessible, engaging, and meaningful for every student—ensuring they not only learn the language, but feel they belong in its story.

For additional tools, training opportunities, or to join a network of schools addressing these challenges, contact *Dr. Sarah Robinson Levy*, Director of Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All at:

hebrewforall@hebrewatthecenter.org

למנהיגי ומנהיגות העברית

הובלת תוכניות עברית מכילות ויעילות

מה כדאי לדעת

כמנהיגה של הוראת העברית (ראשת חוג, רכזת, או מנחה פדגוגית), אתה מעצבת את האיות והגישות של לימוד העברית בבית הספר שלך. ההחלטות שלך לגבי תוכניות לימודים, הכשרת מורים, הערכה והתערבות משפיעות באופן ישיר על היכולת של כל התלמידים, וזו, כולל אלו עם דיסלקציה ולקויות למידה אחרות מבוססות שפה (LBD), לשגשג בלימודי עברית.

תובנות מרכזיות ממחקרים עדכניים ומהשטח:

- **לעברית יש דרישות למידה ייחודיות:** האורתוגרפיה (צורת הכתיבה) האבג'דית, השימוש בסימני הניקוד והמורפולוגיה "הצפופה", הפכים את פיתוח הקריאה לשונה מאנגלית ודורשים הוראה מפורשת ומובנית.
- **שטף הקריאה הוא מפתח:** באורתוגרפיה שקופות כמו עברית עם ניקוד, דיוק יכול להסוות קשיים עמוקים יותר. תלמידים עשויים לפענח נכון אבל להישאר קוראים איטיים ומתקשים, מה שמגביל את ההבנה והמוטיבציה שלהם.
- **זיהוי מוקדם משנה ביצועי קריאה עתידיים:** איתור בכיתות גן-א' וניטור קבוע של התקדמות מונעים מפערים קטנים להפוך לחסמים קבועים.
- **יכולת המורים היא המנוף הגדול ביותר:** מורים שמבינים גם את מדעי האוריינות וגם את הפדגוגיה הספציפית לעברית יכולים לתת מענה למגוון רחב של צרכים. לשם כך הם זקוקים להכוונה, למשאבים ולהנחייה עקבית.

מדוע זה חשוב

למנהיגות שלך יש אפקט מכפיל: המערכות, הציפיות והתמיכה שאתה יוצרת מתפשטות ומשפיעות על כל הכיתות והשכבות.

הנה מה שצריך להיות על הרדאר שלך:

- **שוויון ונגישות:** עברית היא ליבת הזהות היהודית. ללא פרקטיקות מכילות, תלמידים עם לקויות למידה מבוססות שפה מודרים מהשתתפות מלאה בחיי הקהילה היהודית.
- **הלימה פדגוגית:** ביסוס הוראת האוריינות העברית עם אותם עקרונות מובנים ומבוססי ראיות המשמשים להוראת ראשית הקריאה באנגלית מחזק את התוצאות ועוזר למורים לראות את הקשרים בין תחומי העבודה השונים שלהם.
- **שימור מורים ומורל הצוות:** מורים שמרגישים נתמכים על ידי כלים, הכשרה וליווי בטוחים יותר בעבודתם ונוטים פחות לשחיקה.
- **מוניטין בית הספר:** תוכנית עברית מגובשת ומכילה היא מקור לגאווה ויתרון תחרותי עבור הקהילה הבית ספרית שלך.

טיפים למנהיגות

- היו מודל לקבלת החלטות מבוססת נתונים בעבודתכם.
- הכירו והוקירו הצלחות של מורים ביישום פרקטיקות מכילות.
- פעלו לגיוס משאבים—החל מתוכניות לימודים ועד לצוותים חינוכיים—שיחזקו את האוריינות העברית עבור כל הלומדים.
- הציבו את השוויון במרכז: שאלו באופן קבוע, "כיצד ההחלטה הזו תשפיע על התלמידים הפגיעים ביותר בבית ספרנו?"

מה אתם יכולים לעשות

1. קביעת חזון פדגוגי ברור לאוריינות עברית

- בבתי ספר שבהם מורי היהדות מעורבים בהנחלת ראשית האוריינות בעברית, יש לקיים דיאלוג בנושא זה בין המחלקות לעברית וללימודי יהדות.
- הגדירו מהי "הצלחה" בעברית בכל שכבת גיל, הן בפענוח והן בהבנה.
- הגדירו את העקרונות שאינם ניתנים למשא ומתן בהוראה (למשל: לימוד פונטיקה שיטתי, הוראה מפורשת של מורפולוגיה, תרגול מכוון של שטף).
- וודאו שהמטרות משקפות גם את החזון הבית ספרי וגם את המציאות שבה תלמידים לומדים עברית כשפה שנייה (L2).

2. הטמעת הערכה מוקדמת ומתמשכת

- השתמשו בכלי הערכה אוניברסליים כמו **MaDYK** בכיתות גן-א', בנוסף לניטור התקדמות קבוע של פענוח, שטף והבנה.
- הכשירו מורים לפרש נתונים ולהתאים את ההוראה בהתאם.
- הפכו את סקירת הנתונים לחלק בלתי נפרד משיבות המחלקה.

3. השקעה בפיתוח מקצועי של מורים

- ספקו פיתוח מקצועי באוריינות מובנית (structured literacy), המותאם למאפיינים הייחודיים של השפה העברית.
- כללו אסטרטגיות מעשיות: מודעות פונולוגית ביחידות הברה-תנועה (CV), הוראה שיטתית של מורפולוגיה, שגרות קריאה חוזרת והסרת ניקוד הדרגתית בשילוב תמיכה בשפה הדבורה.
- ארגנו ליווי מתמשך – לא רק סדנאות חד-פעמיות – כדי לעזור למורים ליישם את מה שלמדו.

4. יצירת מערכת תמיכה מרובדת בעברית

- התאימו את התערבות הקריאה בעברית למסגרת **MTSS** של בית הספר (מערכת תמיכה מרובדת).
- קבעו זמן ייעודי להוראה בקבוצות קטנות או אחד על אחד בעברית עבור קוראים מתקשים.
- שקלו להעסיק "מומחה קהילתי לקריאה בעברית" או "מומחה קריאה בעברית" שיעבוד בכיתות שונות.

5. טיפוח שיתוף פעולה והלימה

- תאמו עם מובילי הלימודים הכללים בבית הספר, כדי ליישר קו בין אסטרטגיות אוריינות בשתי השפות.
- עודדו תכנון משותף בין מורים לעברית למומחי קריאה.
- כדי לתמוך בגישה אחידה, שתפו משאבים, הערכות ונתוני תלמידים בין המחלקות השונות.

6. שיתוף המשפחות בתהליך

- העבירו למשפחות את מטרות בית הספר והשיטות ללימוד אוריינות עברית.
- ספקו לכל המשפחות דרכים מעשיות לתמוך בשטף ובאוצר המילים בבית, גם אם אינן דוברות עברית.
- קיימו סדנאות בנושאים כמו ההבדלים בין למידת עברית לאנגלית וכיצד הורים יכולים לעזור.

בשורה התחתונה

כמנהיגי עברית, אתם מהווים גשר בין המחקר למציאות בכיתה. בעזרת חזון ברור, תוכנית ברורה ותמיכה במורים, תוכלו להפוך את העברית לגישה, ומשמעותית עבור כל תלמיד – ולהבטיח שהם לא רק ילמדו את השפה, אלא ירגישו שהם חלק מסיפורה.

לכלים נוספים, הזדמנויות הכשרה, או כדי להצטרף לרשת בתי ספר המתמודדים עם אתגרים אלו, צרו קשר עם: **ד"ר שרה רובינסון לוי**

מנהלת, "פריצת דרך: עברית לכולם"

hebrewforall@hebrewatthecenter.org

FOR HEBREW TEACHERS:

Empowering Every Student in Hebrew Learning

What To Know

As a Hebrew teacher, you are on the front lines of helping students connect with their language, their culture, and their Jewish identity. But for many students—especially those with dyslexia or language-based learning disabilities (LBD)—traditional methods of teaching Hebrew reading aren't enough.

Hebrew Instruction Presents Unique Challenges That Affect All Learners, and Especially Those With LBD:

- Hebrew is typically students' second or third language, but it's not learned in the same immersive way as English.
- The language's abjad orthography (consonant-based writing system) and reliance on vowel markers (nikud) create a reading system that differs fundamentally from English. Hebrew with nikud also requires additional visual processing to absorb both the letter and the vowel.
- Most Hebrew texts used in schools are vowelized, but students transition to unpointed text as they advance, requiring strong morphological and contextual knowledge.
- Hebrew's dense morphology—roots, patterns, prefixes, and suffixes—adds an extra layer of complexity.
- Oral language exposure to Hebrew is often minimal compared to English, making vocabulary development and reading comprehension more difficult.
- Students with LBD often display accurate decoding in Hebrew but struggle with fluency and automaticity, limiting their comprehension and motivation.

Many students with LBD are able to decode Hebrew with nikud accurately, but they read slowly, with limited fluency. This lack of fluency hinders comprehension and makes reading laborious and demotivating.

Early identification is key: Students who start behind in Hebrew fluency typically fall further behind unless they receive targeted support. Research shows that by second grade, "high-risk" students read only six words correct per minute (WCPM) in Hebrew, compared to 20 WCPM for typically developing peers.

> What You Can Do

1. Deepen Your Understanding of Hebrew Reading Development

- Learn the Simple View of Reading: decoding x oral language comprehension = reading comprehension.
- Understand how Hebrew's structure—abjad orthography, use of nikud, and rich morphology—shapes how students learn to read.
- Recognize that oral language exposure (songs, read-alouds, spoken interaction) is essential to vocabulary and comprehension. Encoding and decoding are consistently shown to have a strong reciprocal relationship, pointing to the importance of teaching encoding (spelling) from the time at which students begin to learn to decode (write).

2. Strengthen Foundational Literacy Practices In Hebrew

- Provide explicit, systematic instruction in phonological awareness (especially consonant-vowel [CV] units in Hebrew), decoding, and fluency.
- Build towards morphological awareness: Hebrew roots and patterns are powerful tools for comprehension and word recognition, but they are most effective once students have acquired a foundational vocabulary. For beginning learners, focus first on decoding and building a bank of familiar words. As students progress, explicitly teach how roots and patterns form new words and how prefixes/suffixes change meaning. This helps students make connections between familiar and unfamiliar words and strengthens their reading comprehension.
- Use vowelized texts to support early readers. Remove vowels gradually and intentionally, while increasing oral exposure and vocabulary.

3. Target Fluency At Every Level

- Fluency isn't just reading quickly; it's about automaticity that frees up the brain for comprehension.
- Use repeated reading, choral reading, and phrase-cued texts to build fluency.
- Monitor fluency using words correct per minute (WCPM) and celebrate progress.
- Focus on oral fluency (reading aloud with expression) and comprehension.

4. Collaborate and Coordinate

- Talk with general studies colleagues and learning specialists about shared students.
- Coordinate on strategies, vocabulary, and even progress monitoring.
- Participate in professional development with colleagues across departments.
- Integrate Hebrew reading into MTSS frameworks, collaborating with colleagues to help define tiers of support: universal instruction, small-group intervention, and intensive individual support.

5. Use Tools and Resources Intentionally

- Select or request decodable texts with high-frequency Hebrew words.
- Incorporate visuals, auditory modeling, and multi-sensory approaches.
- Consider tools from initiatives like MaDYK for screening and data collection.

6. Engage Families As Partners

- Provide recorded read-alouds or word lists for students to practice at home.
- Help parents understand how Hebrew reading is different from English.
- Share vocabulary from class and encourage use of Hebrew words at home.

> Why This Matters

- **You are critical to making Hebrew accessible:** Most students will not receive separate reading instruction in Hebrew. You are the Hebrew reading teacher, even if that's not your title. You are the one who introduces decoding strategies, builds fluency, and supports comprehension.
- **Students with LBLD can succeed—if instruction is structured:** Research-backed strategies like structured literacy and explicit instruction can help struggling learners thrive in Hebrew. But these methods must be adapted to the specifics of Hebrew—its phonology, orthography, and morphology.
- **Fluency is a major barrier and a major opportunity:** Fluency is not just speed. It's accuracy, rate, and expression. Without fluency, comprehension suffers. By focusing on fluency, we give students the bandwidth to focus on meaning and connection.
- **You don't have to do it alone:** Collaboration with general studies teachers, reading specialists, and school leaders can help you integrate best practices and feel more confident in your instruction. Accessing training, coaching, and aligned tools can significantly improve your practice.

> Teaching Tips

- **Reinforce patterns:** Hebrew has predictable patterns; teach students to recognize them across words.
- **Differentiate your groups:** Use small group time to work more closely with students who need decoding or fluency support.
- **Include aural exposure daily:** Read aloud, play songs, or share Hebrew audio materials—even if students aren't yet fluent readers.
- **Teach morphology every day (in later stages of learning):** Practice roots (shorashim), prefixes, and suffixes using word sorts, games, and sentence construction.

> Bottom Line

You can make a lasting impact. Students remember how they felt in Hebrew class—whether they felt included, successful, and seen. With the right knowledge and support, you can be the teacher who helps all students break through.

For additional tools, training opportunities, or to join a network of schools addressing these challenges, contact *Dr. Sarah Rubinson Levy*, Director of Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All at:

hebrewforall@hebrewatthecenter.org



למורים ומורות לעברית: להעצים כל תלמיד ותלמידה בלימוד עברית

מה כדאי לדעת

כמורים לעברית, אתם נמצאים בחזית העשייה, ועוזרים לתלמידים להתחבר לשפה, לתרבות ולזהות היהודית שלהם. אך עבור תלמידים רבים—במיוחד אלה עם דיסלקציה או לקויות למידה מבוססות שפה (LBLD)—שיטות הוראת הקריאה המסורתיות אינן מספקות.

הוראת עברית מציבה אתגרים ייחודיים המשפיעים על כל הלומדים, ובעיקר על אלה עם לקויות למידה מבוססות שפה:

- **עברית היא בדרך כלל שפה שנייה או שלישית עבור התלמידים**, והיא אינה נלמדת באותה צורה של הטמעה (immer-sion) כמו אנגלית.
- **האורתוגרפיה האבג'דית של השפה** (מערכת כתיבה מבוססת עיצורים) וההסתמכות על סימני ניקוד יוצרות מערכת קריאה השונה באופן מהותי מאנגלית. עברית עם ניקוד דורשת גם עיבוד חזותי נוסף כדי לקלוט גם את האות וגם את סימן התנועה.
- **רוב הטקסטים בעברית המשמשים בבתי ספר מנוקדים**, אך עם התקדמותם, תלמידים עוברים לטקסט **לא מנוקד**, מה שמחייב ידע מורפולוגי והקשרי חזק.
- **המורפולוגיה "הצפופה" של העברית**—שורשים, משקלים, תחילויות וסופיות—מוסיפה רמת מורכבות נוספת.
- **החשיפה לשפה העברית המדוברת היא לעיתים קרובות מינימלית** בהשוואה לאנגלית, מה שמקשה על פיתוח אוצר המילים והבנת הנקרא.
- **תלמידים עם לקויות למידה מבוססות שפה מפגינים לעיתים קרובות פענוח מדויק בעברית, אך מתקשים בשטף ובאוטומטיות**, דבר המגביל את הבנתם ואת המוטיבציה שלהם.
- **תלמידים רבים עם לקויות למידה מבוססות שפה, מסוגלים לפענח עברית עם ניקוד בדיוק רב, אך הם קוראים לאט ובשטף מוגבל**. חוסר שטף זה מעכב את ההבנה והופך את הקריאה למאומצת ומדכאת מוטיבציה.
- **זיהוי מוקדם הוא המפתח**: תלמידים המתחילים לצבור פער בשטף הקריאה בעברית, נוטים להישאר מאחור, אלא אם כן הם מקבלים תמיכה ממוקדת. מחקרים מראים כי בכיתה ב', תלמידים הנמצאים ב"קבוצת סיכון גבוהה" קוראים רק 6 מילים נכונות לדקה בעברית, בהשוואה ל-20 מילים נכונות לדקה בקרב בני גילם המתפתחים באופן תקין.

למה זה חשוב <

1. אתם חיוניים להנגשת העברית

רוב התלמידים לא יקבלו הוראה שמתמקדת רק בפיתוח יכולת הקריאה בעברית. אתם המורים להוראת הקריאה בעברית, גם אם זה לא התואר הרשמי שלכם. אתם אלה שמציגים אסטרטגיות פענוח, בונים שטף ותומכים בהבנה.

2. תלמידים עם לקויות למידה מבוססות שפה יכולים להצליח—אם ההוראה מובנית

אסטרטגיות מבוססות מחקר כמו אוריינות מובנית (structured literacy) והוראה מפורשת יכולות לעזור ללומדים מתקשים לשגשג בעברית. אך שיטות אלה חייבות להיות מותאמות באופן ספציפי לעברית—לפונולוגיה, לאורתוגרפיה ולמורפולוגיה שלה.

3. שטף הוא מחסום משמעותי והזדמנות גדולה

שטף אינו רק מהירות. הוא כולל דיוק, קצב והנגנה (הבעה) ברמת המילה, המשפט והטקסט. ללא שטף, הבנת הנקרא נפגעת. על ידי חיזוק השטף, הקורא יהיה מסוגל להפנות משאבים קוגניטיביים להפקת משמעות מהכתוב.

4. אתם לא לבד

שיתוף פעולה עם המורים ללימודים כלליים, מומחי קריאה ומנהיגי בתי הספר יכול לעזור לכם לשלב את הפרקטיקות הטובות ביותר ולהרגיש בטוחים יותר בהוראה שלכם. שימוש בהכשרות, ליווי וכלים מותאמים יכול לשפר משמעותית את עבודתכם.

טיפים להוראה <

- **חזקו דפוסים מורפו-אורתוגרפיים:** לעברית יש תבניות צפויות (שורשים, משקלים וכו'); למדו את התלמידים לזהות אותם במילים שונות.
- **התאימו את הקבוצות:** השתמשו בזמן של עבודה בקבוצות קטנות כדי לעבוד באופן פרטני עם תלמידים הזקוקים לתמיכה בפענוח או בשטף.
- **שלב חשיפה שמיעתית מדי יום:** הקריאו בקול רם, השמיעו שירים או חומרי שמע בעברית—גם אם התלמידים אינם קוראים עדיין בשטף.
- **למדו מורפולוגיה מדי יום (בשלבי למידה מתקדמים):** תרגלו שורשים, תחליות וסופיות באמצעות מיון מילים, משחקים ובניית משפטים.

מה אפשר לעשות

בשורה התחתונה

אתם יכולים ליצור השפעה מתמשכת. תלמידים זוכרים כיצד הרגישו בשיעור עברית – האם הרגישו שהם כלולים, מוצלחים ונראים. עם הידע והתמיכה הנכונים, אתם יכולים להיות המורים שיעזרו לכל התלמידים לפרוץ דרך.

1. העמיקו את הבנתכם לגבי התפתחות הקריאה בעברית

- למדו את מודל הקריאה הפשוט (The Simple View of Reading): $\text{פענוח} \times \text{הבנה}$ שפתית = הבנת הנקרא.
- הבינו כיצד המבנה הייחודי של השפה העברית – אורתוגרפיה אבג'דית, שימוש בניקוד ומורפולוגיה מורכבת – משפיע על אופן לימוד הקריאה של התלמידים.
- הכירו בכך שחשיפה לשפה מדוברת (שירים, קריאה בקול רם, אינטראקציה מילולית) חיונית לפיתוח אוצר מילים והבנה. הוכח באופן עקבי כי קיים קשר הדדי חזק בין קידוד (כתיבה/איות) לפענוח (קריאה), מה שמדגיש את חשיבות הוראת הקידוד כבר מהשלב שבו תלמידים מתחילים ללמוד לפענח.

2. חזקו פרקטיקות אוריינות יסודיות בעברית

- ספקו הוראה מפורשת ושיטתית של מודעות פונולוגית (במיוחד ליחידות הברה-תנועה בעברית), פענוח ושטף. בנו בהדרגה את המודעות המורפולוגית: שורשים ומשקלים בעברית הם כלים עוצמתיים להבנה וזיהוי מילים, אך הם הכי יעילים רק לאחר שהתלמידים רכשו אוצר מילים בסיסי. עבור לומדים מתחילים, התמקדו תחילה בפענוח ובניית מאגר מילים מוכרות. ככל שהתלמידים מתקדמים, למדו באופן מפורש כיצד שורשים ומשקלים יוצרים מילים חדשות וכיצד תחיליות/סופיות משנות משמעות. זה עוזר לתלמידים ליצור קשרים בין מילים מוכרות ללא מוכרות ומחזק את הבנת הנקרא.
- השתמשו בטקסטים מנוקדים כדי לתמוך בקוראים צעירים. הסירו את הניקוד באופן הדרגתי ומכוון, במקביל להגברת החשיפה לשפה הדבורה (פיתוח מיומנות הבנת הנשמע) ואוצר המילים.

3. התמקדו בשטף בכל רמה

- שטף אינו רק קריאה מהירה; מדובר בשליפה אוטומטיות מרמת האות וזיהוי המילה ועד לרמת הטקסט, שמפנה משאבים קוגניטיביים להתמקד בהבנה.
- השתמשו בשיטות כמו קריאת הד (repeated reading), קריאת מקהלה (choral reading), וטקסטים עם סימון קטעי קריאה (phrase-cued texts) כדי לבנות שטף.
- נטרו את השטף באמצעות מדידת מספר המילים הנכונות לדקה והוקירו את ההתקדמות.
- התמקדו בקריאה שוטפת עם הנגנה/אינטונציה נכונה (קריאה בקול רם עם הבעה) ובהבנה.

4. שתפו פעולה ותאמו

- שוחחו עם עמיתים ללימודים כלליים ומומחי למידה לגבי תלמידים משותפים.
- תאמו אסטרטגיות, אוצר מילים ואף ניטור התקדמות.
- השתתפו בפיתוח מקצועי עם עמיתים ממחלקות שונות.
- שלבו את הוראת הקריאה בעברית במסגרת MTSS (מערכות תמיכה מרובדות), ושיתפו פעולה עם עמיתים כדי להגדיר את רמות התמיכה: הוראה אוניברסלית, התערבות בקבוצות קטנות, ותמיכה פרטנית אינטנסיבית.

5. השתמשו בכלים ומשאבים באופן מכוון

- בחרו או בקשו טקסטים "מבוקרים" (decodable texts) עם מילים נפוצות בעברית או מילים בעלות תבנית חוזרת.
- שלבו אמצעים חזותיים, הדגמות קוליות וגישות רב-חושיות.
- שקלו להשתמש בכלים מיוזמות כמו MaDYK לאבחון ואיסוף נתונים.

6. שתפו את המשפחות

- ספקו הקלטות של קריאה קולית או רשימות מילים כדי שתלמידים יוכלו לתרגל בבית.
- עזרו להורים להבין את ההבדל בין קריאה בעברית לאנגלית.
- שתפו במילים שנלמדו בכיתה ועודדו שימוש במילים עבריות בבית.



לכלים נוספים, הזדמנויות הכשרה, או כדי להצטרף
לרשת בתי ספר המתמודדים עם אתגרים אלו, צרו
קשר עם: **ד"ר שרה רובינסון לוי**

מנהלת, "פריצת דרך: עברית לכולם"

hebrewforall@hebrewatthecenter.org

FOR READING SPECIALISTS & INTERVENTIONISTS:

Optimizing Hebrew Support

> What To Know

As a reading specialist or interventionist, you are already familiar with supporting students with dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities (LBD) in English. But many students need the same level of support in Hebrew and often aren't getting it.

Hebrew Presents Different Challenges Than English:

- Its **abjad orthography** (consonant-based script) makes vowel decoding a unique challenge.
- Most Hebrew texts used in schools are **vowelized**, but students transition to **unpointed** text as they advance, requiring strong morphological and contextual knowledge.
- **Oral exposure** to Hebrew is minimal outside of school, unlike English.
- Students with LBD often display **accurate decoding in Hebrew** but struggle with **fluency and automaticity**, limiting their comprehension and motivation.
- In Hebrew, dyslexia is particularly characterized by difficulties with fluency, even if accuracy in decoding may be achieved due to Hebrew's relatively transparent orthography (with nikud). This impacts comprehension significantly.

Recent research shows that students identified as high-risk readers in Hebrew read about six WCPM (words correct per minute) by Grade 2, compared to 20 WCPM for their typically developing peers. These gaps widen over time unless identified and addressed early.

Students learning Hebrew as a second language may apply rules and norms from English, their first language, which can impact their Hebrew acquisition.

> Why This Matters

- **You are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap:** Students with LBD often receive support for English reading, but not for Hebrew. Your expertise in structured literacy, progress monitoring, and intervention design is directly applicable and needed in Hebrew settings.
- **Alignment matters:** Students learn best when strategies are aligned across languages. Many structured literacy principles apply across English and Hebrew but need to be adapted to Hebrew's structure.
- **Fluency is the major barrier:** Because Hebrew with vowels is relatively transparent (clear sound-symbol correspondence), accuracy alone isn't a reliable diagnostic marker. Fluency—speed, expression, and ease—becomes the best indicator of Hebrew reading difficulty.
- **Intervention in Hebrew is possible:** You don't need to be fluent in Hebrew to support students or coach teachers. You need knowledge of reading development, willingness to learn language-specific features, and collaboration with Hebrew educators.

> What You Can Do

1. Collaborate With Hebrew Teachers

- Share your expertise in phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, and comprehension.
- Observe Hebrew reading instruction and identify parallels to general reading support.
- Help teachers adapt structured literacy routines to Hebrew.
- Provide coaching or co-teaching support in small groups when possible.

2. Build and Align Screening and Progress Monitoring

- Use tools like MaDYK or adapted fluency assessments to collect WCPM data in Hebrew.
- Track progress over time to identify students who need more intensive support.
- Use parallel data in English and Hebrew to inform intervention design.

3. Develop and Implement MTSS For Hebrew

- Support your school in integrating Hebrew reading into MTSS frameworks.
- Help define tiers of support: universal instruction, small-group intervention, and intensive individual support.
- Work with leadership to schedule intervention time for Hebrew, especially in early grades.

4. Train and Empower Staff

- Offer PD for Hebrew teachers on the Science of Reading, dyslexia, and structured literacy.
- Help teachers understand that even vowelized Hebrew can be difficult without automaticity and vocabulary.
- Promote strategies like phoneme-grapheme mapping, morphology instruction, and repeated reading in Hebrew.

5. Customize Interventions For LBLD Students In Hebrew

- Teach morphological awareness alongside decoding.
- Reinforce word recognition strategies with flashcards, games, and targeted vocabulary practice.
- Use recorded texts or teacher-modeled read-alouds to build fluency.

6. Support Families

- Communicate clearly about how Hebrew reading development works.
- Provide tools families can use at home: recordings, flashcards, or vocabulary games.
- Help families advocate for appropriate supports in both English and Hebrew.

> Practical Strategies

- **Use decodable, vowelized texts** at students' instructional level.
- **Embed oral language** activities (i.e., echo reading, songs, sentence completion) to build vocabulary and fluency.
- **Monitor WCPM regularly** to measure fluency growth.
- **Teach morphology:** Explicitly connect root words to meaning and usage.
- **Support generalization:** Help students apply decoding and comprehension strategies across both languages.

> Bottom Line

You are a catalyst for inclusion. Your work supporting literacy doesn't stop with English. When you extend your expertise to Hebrew instruction—through collaboration, coaching, and cross-language strategy—you expand access, belonging, and success for all learners.

For additional tools, training opportunities, or to join a network of schools addressing these challenges, contact *Dr. Sarah Rubinson Levy*, Director of Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All at:

hebrewforall@hebrewatthecenter.org

FOR PARENTS:

Supporting Your Child's Hebrew Journey

> What To Know

If your child is struggling with Hebrew reading, you are not alone! Many students—especially those with dyslexia or other language-based learning disabilities (LBD)—find Hebrew particularly challenging. Even children who do well in English may experience difficulty in Hebrew.

Here's Why:

- Hebrew is a **second (or third) language** for most children and often isn't spoken at home.
- Its writing system is different; Hebrew is **consonant-based** (called abjad), and many texts **omit vowels** as students get older.
- Your child may **read accurately** but still **struggle with fluency** (reading quickly and smoothly), which makes it hard to understand what they read.
- Many schools are just beginning to adapt reading support to Hebrew in the same way they have for English.

You might hear terms like “structured literacy,” “phonological awareness,” or “decoding”—these refer to how children learn to connect letters with sounds, sound out words, and build comprehension. These processes work differently in Hebrew than in English, and children need instruction that addresses those differences.

> Why This Matters

- **Hebrew is a core part of Jewish life and learning:** From prayer to Torah to Israeli and Jewish culture, Hebrew helps connect your child to Jewish identity, tradition, and community. When children struggle with Hebrew, they may feel left out or disconnected.
- **Early challenges can grow over time:** Research shows that children who struggle with Hebrew fluency in early grades fall further behind as they get older unless they receive targeted support. These struggles can affect confidence and motivation—not just in Hebrew, but in school overall.
- **Parents are powerful partners:** You don't need to speak Hebrew to help your child. By understanding how Hebrew learning works and advocating for your child's needs, you can play a key role in supporting their success.

> Common Questions

Is learning two languages too hard for my child? It depends. Learning both English and Hebrew can be a benefit, and students with LBD often need instruction that is carefully paced and explicitly taught. Starting with **aural Hebrew (hearing and speaking)** and moving gradually into reading is often most effective.

Why does my child do fine in English but struggle in Hebrew? Hebrew and English use different writing systems and phonological structures. A student may do well in English but still find Hebrew decoding or fluency very difficult. That doesn't mean they're not trying or capable; it means the instruction needs to be different.

What if I don't know Hebrew myself? You can still support your child! Listen to recordings together, help with vocabulary flashcards, ask the school for practice tools, and, most importantly, encourage your child and celebrate effort.

> What You Can Do

1. Ask Questions About Hebrew Instruction

- What are the school's goals for Hebrew?
- How does the school teach Hebrew reading?
- What happens when a child struggles in Hebrew?
- Are teachers trained in the Science of Reading or structured literacy for Hebrew?
- Are there specialists who support reading in Hebrew, not just in English?

2. Understand What Your Child Is Experiencing

- If your child reads slowly, struggles to remember vowel sounds, or avoids reading aloud, they may need extra support.
- Your child might read Hebrew words correctly but still not understand them because reading is slow or vocabulary is limited.
- These are common signs of language-based learning challenges, and early intervention can help.

3. Partner With Your Child's Teachers

- Request updates on your child's Hebrew progress.
- Ask whether assessments are used to track growth (such as words correct per minute).
- Share what you're seeing at home including frustration, avoidance, or questions about Hebrew.
- Encourage the school to coordinate supports between English and Hebrew instruction.

4. Support Hebrew Learning At Home

- **Listen to Hebrew together:** songs, stories, or recordings of classroom texts.
- **Practice key vocabulary:** Ask teachers what words are being learned in class and use them in conversation.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Encourage effort and progress, not just perfection.
- **Normalize the challenge:** Let your child know that reading Hebrew is hard, and that it's okay to need help.

5. Advocate For Inclusion and Access

- Ensure your child receives appropriate support in both English and Hebrew.
- If your child has an IEP or learning plan, ask that Hebrew instruction be addressed specifically.
- Encourage your school to invest in teacher training and reading resources for Hebrew, just as they do in general studies.

> Bottom Line

Every child deserves to feel successful in Hebrew. You can help your child build confidence, competence, and connection. And you can help your school grow in how it supports diverse learners in Jewish education.

For additional tools, training opportunities, or to join a network of schools addressing these challenges, contact *Dr. Sarah Robinson Levy*, Director of Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All at:

hebrewforall@hebrewatthecenter.org

For more information:

Visit hebrewatthecenter.org/pritzat-derech

or contact **Dr. Sarah Rubinson Levy**,

Director of Pritzat Derech: Hebrew for All,

at hebrewforall@hebrewatthecenter.org.



עברית במרכז
HEBREW AT THE CENTER

