

FINAL TaNaKH EVALUATION REPORT: 2007-2008

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INTRODUCTION

During the 2007-2008 school year, Education Matters collected and analyzed data from eight schools that had participated in either Cohort I or II of the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project. The purpose of the study was to provide Charlotte Abramson, Project Director, and the AVI CHI Foundation timely feedback on the progress of the Project so that it could consider whether and how to a) expand the design and implementation of the Project and/or b) develop a similar approach for another area of Jewish Studies.

To achieve this goal, Education Matters' work focused on the following questions.

1. What is the extent and fidelity of implementation at a sample of schools that were involved as Cohort I and Cohort II schools?¹
2. What factors influence the extent and fidelity of implementation?
3. How does the TaNaKH project "fit" with other Jewish Studies programs/curricula in place in the schools, for example, NETA, The Proficiency Approach to Hebrew, Tal Am, and/or Matok?
4. What appears to be the impact of the extent and fidelity of implementation on teachers' knowledge and skill, the Jewish Studies heads' knowledge and skill, and teaching and learning of TaNaKH?

This report provides answers to each of these questions and then, in light of those answers, considers their implications for two additional questions:

5. Taken together, what do the findings at the individual schools lead us to conclude about school-based conditions that are conducive to or impediments to high fidelity/high quality implementation of the Project?
6. Taken together, what do the findings across the schools lead us to conclude about the value and impact of the Project as a whole?

We begin this report with a review of the research methods employed. Then we turn to the findings in light of the evaluation questions. We conclude with a summary of the findings and some thoughts about the implications of them for the further development of the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project.

¹In the funded proposal, extent and fidelity of implementation were posed as two separate questions. For purposes of analysis, it makes sense to group them together.

RESEARCH METHODS

Education Matters employed a combination of a) telephone interviews with the heads of Jewish Studies departments, b) school visits that included interviews with Jewish Studies heads and teachers, c) conversations/e-mail exchanges with TECs who worked with the schools in the sample, and d) in collaboration with the Project Director a review of a sample of units of study produced by teachers at the sample schools.

Interviews with both teachers and Jewish Studies heads focused on the a) development and use of units of study, b) the extent to which teachers have professional development support for using the standards and benchmarks, c) their assessment of the value of the project, d) the role of the TEC if their TEC supported their work during the 2007-2008 school year, d) the role of the Jewish Studies head in supporting implementation of the Project, e) their assessment of the impact of their work on students' engagement with and learning of TaNaKH, and f) the challenges associated with implementing the standards and benchmarks approach to TaNaKH instruction. If a school also used either Matok or NETA we inquired about links between these instructional programs and the standards and benchmarks. During the course of the Project, we discussed issues of implementation with the Project Director and sought her input about progress at each of the schools.

Sample of Schools. In consultation with the Project Director we agreed to include the following schools in the evaluation:²

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| • Krieger Schechter: | Conservative and uses Matok and NETA |
| • Bergen Schechter: | Conservative and uses Matok |
| • Chicagoland Jewish High School: | Conservative |
| • Gann Academy: | Community |
| • Tarbut v'Torah: | Community and uses NETA |
| • Jewish Community Day School: | Community |
| • Rashi: | Reform |
| • Pardes: | Reform |

This sample provided us with a) three Cohort I and five Cohort II schools, b) three Conservative, three Community, and two Reform schools, c) three high schools and five K-8 schools, d) representation from all of the TECs who worked with the project, and e) four schools that used another either Matok or NETA.

Furthermore, this sample of schools included variation in characteristics relevant to implementation of the Project. Specifically, schools varied in the extent of Jewish Studies head and teacher stability, knowledge and skill, factors likely to influence the extent and fidelity of implementation. And, they varied with respect to the amount of time teachers had available for professional development with their colleagues. We knew these factors would influence the

²The data presented in the report does not identify individual schools.

extent and quality of implementation as well as highlight the challenges that schools face when trying to use the standards and benchmarks.

Data Collection Within Schools. We conducted telephone interviews with the Jewish Studies heads in the fall of 2007 to learn about the status of the project at each of the schools, to request units of study, and to inquire about any changes in curriculum and/or Jewish Studies faculty. Then, we arranged to visit each school once during the second half of the school year. We intended to visit, if possible, during a time when we could observe a Jewish Studies faculty meeting or the work of a TEC, but were able to do this in only two schools. If a TEC had done professional development with one of the schools in the sample and we could not observe the sessions, we visited afterwards in order to ask the Jewish Studies heads and the teachers about the focus and value of the TEC's work with them. In total, we conducted 32 school-based interviews all of which were audio-taped, transcribed, and coded for purposes of analysis.

Analytic Criteria for Fidelity of Implementation. Before answering first evaluation question, we needed to develop a definition of *fidelity* with respect to implementation that described what Education Matters and the Project Director meant by this term. Put simply, we needed to decide what must be in place to lead us to conclude that the Project was being implemented with fidelity.

Education Matters and the Project Director discussed the issue and agreed that, under ideal circumstances, fidelity of implementation would mean that all key Project components stressed during the Project's initial professional development sessions and then by the TECs were in place during the 2007-2008 school year when the sample schools were in their second or third year of implementation. These indicators of fidelity of implementation included the following:

- The Head of school provides sufficient time for the Jewish Studies teachers to meet bi-weekly to develop units of instruction that include performance assessments.
- The Jewish Studies heads design and lead the bi-weekly meetings. Teachers' regularly attend the meetings and actively participate in the curriculum development work.
- The Jewish Studies heads and teachers collaboratively select standards that will guide the development of curriculum in light of the schools' goals for students with respect to TaNaKH.
- Teachers and the Jewish Studies heads grow in their use of and comfort with the language of the Project, for example, standards, big ideas, essential questions, unwrapping, and performance assessments.
- Teachers produce units of instruction based on the standards and benchmarks selected by the schools. These units include big ideas, essential questions, evidence of unwrapping to produce "to do" and "to know" categories, lesson plans, assessments, and scoring guides.
- Teachers use these units of instruction in the school's TaNaKH classes.

- Jewish Studies heads use classroom observations and feedback to support teachers in the implementation of their standards-based units of instruction.
- Teachers and the Jewish Studies heads review student work produced by the standards-based units and revise the units and/or teaching strategies as needed in light of the student work.
- The school develops a collaborative, instructionally-focused culture in which teachers support one another in improving their curriculum and instruction. This culture is both a product of the process of using the standards and a condition necessary to sustain its further development and improvement.

Education Matters used these indicators in drawing conclusions about the fidelity of implementation at each of the sample schools. However, we used them knowing that the quality of implementation would vary in light of a number of factors (discussed in the next section of the report) and that the quality would likely improve as the schools advanced their knowledge and skill over time. In addition, we also recognized that, given the normal course of development of knowledge and skill, schools might be stronger with some indicators than with others at the time of our data collection.

For example, if a school already had a collaborative, instructionally-focused culture in place, that school would not have to work hard to develop it as part of the Project. Schools without such a culture to begin with would require time to fully develop it. If, teachers were familiar with the backward design of curriculum, then they might be strong in this area at the outset. If, in contrast, they had not engaged in Looking at Student Work (LASW), their first efforts would not likely be as expert as those we would expect to see later in their involvement with the Project. Nonetheless, if they were using LASW as a strategy for their own learning, if they were seriously implementing a collaborative, instructionally culture, and if they were using the backward curriculum design process, even if as beginners, we considered them implementing these indicators with fidelity.

We turn now to a presentation of our findings in light of the evaluation questions and the criteria associated with fidelity of implementation. The findings, taken together, lead to the conclusion that the Project has had a significant, positive impact in seven of the eight schools in the sample. In making this claim, we do not suggest that all seven of the schools are fully implementing all components of the Project but rather that a) some of them are well on their way to that status, b) all seven are using significant pieces of the Project's components, and c) all seven can point to evidence of the Project's positive impact on teaching and learning.

In presenting the findings we note that we found scant differences in schools' extent of use or fidelity of implementation of the Project as a function of a) denominational affiliation, b) Cohort membership, and/or b) level – K-8 or high school. Other factors such as the quality of leadership of the Jewish Studies head, time for teachers to work together, and the extent of teacher turnover, for example, proved more significant as factors associated with implementation.

THE FINDINGS

Question 1 : What is the extent and fidelity of implementation at a sample of schools that were involved as Cohort I and Cohort II participants?

With respect to the extent and fidelity of implementation, seven of the eight schools were using what they learned from participating in the Project. By making this statement we mean that a) teachers were working collaboratively to develop units of instruction that were tied to the schools' selected standards and benchmarks, b) teachers were using the units when teaching TaNaKH, c) big ideas and essential questions were posted in classrooms and teachers reported using them during instruction to focus students' attention, d) Jewish Studies heads were supporting their teachers' work in multiple ways, and e) teachers and Jewish Studies heads were using the language associated with the Project.

The eighth school was not using the Project because a) the Jewish Studies head and most of the school's Jewish Studies teachers were new to it in the 2007-2008 school year, and b) the relatively new head of school demonstrated scant commitment to the Project. (Appendix A presents our findings regarding fidelity of implementation in summary form.)

Having drawn this conclusion, we note that the extent and fidelity of implementation in the seven schools varied in five ways.

- First, *there was variation around the extent of implementation within schools.* In a few schools only some teachers were using the Project's methods to guide their teaching. Those who were not using them, most of the time, were teachers who a) were new to the schools, and, therefore, b) were not yet familiar with the Project's approach and methods and, c) had not yet developed units of study.

In addition, schools that were new to the project in the 2006-2007 school year, that is, Cohort II schools, had not developed many complete units of instruction by the end of their first year in the Project. This was as expected. As a result, however, these schools did not have units for new teachers to use. New teachers had to learn the basics of the Project as well as how to develop units of instruction. Several of these schools took advantage of the opportunity offered by the Project Director to have a TEC provide professional development to new teachers on-site. This support facilitated the further implementation of the Project.³

In the future, once schools have completed a scope and sequence and the associated set of units, new teachers, although they may need professional development focused on standards-based TaNaKH instruction and curriculum development, will be able to teach

³In addition, a number of schools in the sample took advantage of the opportunity to review and deepen their learning by sending representatives to the Project's fall 2007 professional development for Cohort III schools.

using the standards-based units from the beginning of the school year. We saw this demonstrated by one of the Cohort I schools in the sample.

- Second, *one school in the sample, to a far greater extent than any other, was implementing the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project with fidelity.* The Jewish Studies head in this school was fully engaged with and committed to the Project. She sought multiple opportunities to increase her own knowledge and skill as well as that of her teachers with professional development provided by the Project.⁴ Teachers were encouraged, indeed required, by the Jewish Studies head, to collaboratively develop and implement multiple units of instruction that included most if not all of the required Project components. Some teachers at this school had begun to share examples of students' work with each other and with parents. And, teachers and the Jewish Studies head used the language of the Project when discussing TaNaKH curriculum and instruction. Leadership by the Jewish Studies head, who gained the support of her teachers, accounted for much of the progress of the Project at this school. Teachers reported that they would not have done the required work without her constant support and supervision.
- Third, and related to the point above, *the quality and extent of support provided by the Jewish Studies heads varied across the schools and influenced the extent and fidelity of implementation.* Some variation was a result of the Jewish Studies head's job description. For example, a Jewish Studies head who was at the school part-time and also taught and functioned as the school's rabbi had less time for the Project than did a full-time Jewish Studies head. But, a Jewish Studies head who was full-time but uncomfortable with observing teachers and providing feedback, even with time available, could not fully support her teachers with Project implementation. Overall, greater knowledge, skill, and attention to the Project from the Jewish Studies head was associated with a greater extent and fidelity of implementation.⁵
- Fourth, *in one school, themes rather than standards were the primary focus of the curriculum.* Teachers collaboratively selected themes for their classes and then identified standards and benchmarks that could be addressed while focusing on the themes.⁶ The school that used this approach did not see a difference in working from theme to standard with respect to meeting the goals of the Project. Teachers and the Jewish Studies head

⁴We refer to all Jewish Studies heads and all teachers as *she* to preserve confidentiality.

⁵One school did not have a Jewish Studies head during the 2007-2008 school year. Teacher leaders, with the support of the head of school, led the collaborative work of developing units of instruction. The school has hired a Jewish Studies head for the 2008-2009 school year.

⁶As one representative teacher explained, "I find it very, very unnatural to look at a standard and say "Hey, let me build a class around the standard."

reported that they were, in fact, implementing all of the standards by taking this approach.

At the present time, we are doing all the standards. The first year, we took three. And then we took another three. And this year, we take all of them, and ask them to go all over and look on the scope and sequence and see which one applies to that lesson, then include it in their lesson plan. JS Head 2

Teachers and the Jewish Studies head reported that they were implementing all of the other components of the Project: they met on a regular basis to develop and review units and lessons; they collaborated with each other outside of regular meeting times; they used the lessons developed; and they used much of the Project's language. Teachers and the Jewish Studies head are correct in this regard. However, their approach did not meet the criteria for fidelity established for the Project with respect to choosing standards and benchmarks with which to focus the curriculum.⁷

Fifth, *teachers in all seven of the schools had developed units of instruction but their completeness and coherence varied.*⁸ Most units reviewed identified the standards and benchmarks that were the focus of the unit and indicated the "to know" and "to do" categories. Most also indicated some examples of assessments, although in more than half the units these were not fully developed. Units tended to lack scoring guides for the assessments and, when they were included they did not always match well the desired outcomes for the unit. Units tended not to have associated written lesson plans.

Across all schools, teachers and Jewish Studies heads reported that they needed more help in learning to develop and use formative assessments and scoring guides. Related to this, teachers in a few of the schools struggled with how to use scoring guides in a context in which students and parents expected traditional grades rather than a rubric score on students' work.

Teachers and Jewish Studies heads at these schools have invested a great deal of time and energy to a) select their standards, b) meet at specified times to learn the strategies associated with the Project, c) design and teach new units of instruction, d) become familiar with the new language associated with the Project, and e) review the lessons learned from each of their efforts. While schools agreed to take on this work during the year in which it was supported by AVI CHAI through funds to the Project for professional development at JTS and TEC on-site support, it is

⁷This school, without question, was improving its TaNaKH program through a focused approach to both curriculum and instruction that included many components of the Project. They were not, however, implementing the Standards and Benchmarks Project with fidelity.

⁸We attempted to collect units from each teacher interviewed for the study. Not all teachers were willing to let us have sample units for purposes of analysis but most were willing to discuss and display them during interviews. We collected 14 units and discussed their coherence and quality with the Project Director. Our conclusions related to the units are based on examination of the collected units and those shared during interviews.

critical to remember that during subsequent years, these schools continued to invest in the Project's work without such support. They invested in it because they saw its value for teaching and learning TaNaKH. Schools that were able invested their own funds to gain further support from the TECs.

These findings lead to the conclusion that the first year of the Project, fundamentally an introductory year, was sufficiently powerful to convince these educators to continue on their own or with minimal additional external support. This finding is good news for the Project's Director and the TECs; it is also good news for the AVI CHAI Foundation.⁹

Question 2: What Factors Influenced the Extent and Fidelity of Implementation?

In light of the findings about the extent and fidelity of implementation of the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project, we turn now to a discussion of the factors associated with these findings. These include a) the role the Jewish Studies head took in leading the Project, b) the contribution of additional professional development support from the TEC, and c) school-based factors other than leadership that had an influence, for example the time available for teaching TaNaKH and teacher stability and/or turnover.

Jewish Studies Head Leadership.

The most significant factor to influence the extent and fidelity of implementation of the Project was the Jewish Studies head's skillful leadership of it. Jewish Studies heads were not equally effective in implementing their role with the Project due to variations in their own knowledge, skill, and leadership style. However, all of them in the seven schools that continued to implement the Project contributed positively to its progress.

Skillful leadership included a) insuring sufficient meeting time with teachers and making good use of that time, b) encouraging teachers in the hard work involved in changing their perspective on teaching TaNaKH and developing their own units of instruction, and c) providing teachers with feedback on the units and on their teaching of them. Other factors, such as teachers' beginning knowledge and skill, certainly mattered, but Jewish Studies head leadership trumped these. Teachers from across the seven sample schools implementing the Project commented on these facets of the Project's leadership.

While all of the Jewish Studies heads in the sample were enthusiastic about the Project, only five of the seven were sufficiently grounded in TaNaKH, in pedagogy, and in curriculum

⁹In making this point, we are not suggesting that one year of formal Project support is sufficient and we will return to this issue at the end of the report.

development to lead their faculties in developing high quality units of instruction.¹⁰ Extent and fidelity of implementation were challenging when a school's Jewish Studies head was not sufficiently knowledgeable and teachers had only minimal content and pedagogical knowledge. Nonetheless, schools in the sample were making progress in implementing the Project despite these obstacles.

What needs to be included in a definition of effective Jewish Studies head leadership? Teachers in schools that had effective Jewish Studies heads identified multiple factors associated with their leadership. Their comments refer to the Jewish Studies heads and a) time to meet and work collaboratively, b) enthusiasm and encouragement, c) classroom observations and feedback, and d) attention to development of units of instruction.¹¹ Teachers comments convey the multiple ways in which their Jewish Studies heads implemented their roles.

[The Jewish Studies head] and I meet as frequently as possible. We just met over vacation. We work other times, too, like all teachers. It's actually easier to get things done that way. She's very helpful, and, brainstorming a unit, that's extremely helpful....And she's been really helpful in trying to steer me the way [the TEC] would steer me, and not going out – not horizontal in teaching, but keeping vertical [to insure depth]. And she's very supportive if I ever have a question or anything. Teacher A

[The Jewish Studies head is] always in the class. And she reads the [performance] assessments. And I'm giving her what they [the students] are producing....And she's doing a great job. And, if she wouldn't have been here with us in the group, nothing would have been done. This I want to tell you. She knows exactly what to bring us. And you know, half of the big ideas are her ideas. I'm not good at it. I'm good at teaching, but I'm confused [about the big ideas]. Teacher B

Because [the Jewish Study head's] so much into it, and she's so enthusiastic about it, she gets us to be enthusiastic about it, too. We know how important it is to her, because she really believes that it improves teaching, which proves to be true, which we didn't see in the beginning. But now, she doesn't have to push so much, to convince. Teacher C

The last two years, we met almost religiously.. And it took a toll on us. We were working very, very, very hard. And [the Jewish Studies head] was pushing us. And I think it was good that she pushed us, because now we have a lot of our units and we have tasks for most of those units. We're revisiting those tasks, and we're amending and changing and so on and so forth. This year, we haven't been meeting as often, because we wanted to put our units into action, and see how they're working. But we have been meeting with our partners. Teacher D

¹⁰One Jewish Studies head was identified as weak in these areas and the head of school intended to develop strong teacher leadership for the Project. One school in the sample did not have a Jewish Studies head.

¹¹The data we present are representative of the schools and teachers in the sample. Every educator who was interviewed, however, may not be represented by a quote.

[The Jewish Studies head] oversees the meeting, makes sure that we just don't keep going on and on about some things....And, you know, her guidance is amazing. I mean I have learned so much. Because I came in not knowing how to do all of this and she has really helped me. There's no way I could have done it without her. Teacher E

We meet every other week. Sometimes we do standards and benchmarks, or someone will present a unit, and we'll discuss it with like a protocol. Or sometimes we just talk about the things that need to get taken care of....I also talk a lot with, just casually, with my department members, to kind of see what everyone is doing. Teacher F

She brings us together because it's this class that has the most different teachers teaching it. It's a class that has, really, no curriculum. So it needs the most work. It's a retention issue year, meaning that eighth grade, you have major concerns for retention [of students into ninth grade]. So you want quality material, especially in the one subject area that probably is the reason why kids come to this school. Plus, all of us who teach this material, to some degree, are novices. Teacher G

[The Jewish Studies head's] focus, besides implementing this idea of having standards and benchmarks across all of the Jewish studies classes, is also a process of backwards design understanding. And so she has spent time trying to get us to understand and to use essential questions and big ideas and "to knows" and "to dos" and then, also, methodology to accomplish the lesson planning. Teacher H

I remember our first meeting, we were so into talking about "Okay, this skill and this skill." And I said "What are you trying to do with them? What's the purpose of Bible? What about their Jewish identity?" And it just was a real great critique. And even though we struggled with unwrapping that standard, I think [the Jewish Studies head] is very committed to it....So in terms of working together as a department, it's been really good. I think that was very deliberate, to allow for collaboration.¹² Teacher L

Teachers also reported that effective Jewish Studies heads became actively engaged in their teaching of TaNaKH as well as in their development of the units and their associated lesson plans.

Very often, when we're preparing tasks, for instance, we'll sit there and we'll go "Okay, so how are we going to teach this?" And she'll say "Okay, let's start teaching it. Teach it to me now. Tell me what you're going to do, how you're going to begin the lesson." We do a lot of that. And we've found that it's extremely, extremely important. Because if I can't do the task, then the kids can't do the task. Teacher D

She's been into the classes at least three or four times for each of us. Sometimes she comes when we invite her. Sometimes she comes just to sit in. So regularly she comes in. She sits. And then she writes up her response. And then you have a half hour meeting afterwards to discuss the different ideas. And she asks you what do you think strengths

¹²This comment is from a teacher whose Jewish Studies head provided meeting time for TaNaKH teachers to work on curriculum development and related Project topics for the first time during the 2007-2008 school year.

were? What do you think the weaknesses were? What would you do to change the lesson? Why would you do it? And then usually, she asks us to go back into the lesson plans and rewrite them to reflect how you would do those changes. I mean, it's sort of a type of quality control to the lessons. And it can be tension-filled, for sure. But you have to do it. Teacher H

But she would come in, and she would take a lot of notes. And then we would meet. And, I mean, I think she's wonderful. And so, I've had some pretty awful supervisors before. And she's fantastic. And her constructive criticism is very positive and very helpful. And she just sees a lot that is needed to see. Teacher E

This involvement with instruction extended to reviewing the units and their associated assessments after they had been taught.

So even the end of last year and the end of this year, we are having conversations-- everyone is using the same language, which in and of itself is, I think, tremendous. We're speaking about assessment. We're speaking about assessment tools. We're speaking about exit goals. We're speaking about unwrapping. We're speaking about "Did I unwrap it correctly? Did I list it in my unwrapping?" I mean, all of these things-- "Did you find it in the standard? You know, it was a great assessment tool. Okay, so now go back to what was. What was your benchmark? What was your standard? Guess what, honey, it's not there." I mean one of the best assessment tools we created in the fourth grade-- and I worked with the faculty on it. Guess what, it wasn't there. The big idea was not in the assessment tool. We totally blew it. But, the fact that we can have that conversation means that we're light years ahead of where we were. JS Head 3

Our department meetings were mostly about teaching, and [the Jewish Studies head] just makes sure of that. We very rarely deal with administrative stuff. We talk about teaching, we plan together, we planned units out together this year, not as many as last year, it was probably not as intensive, but quite a bit. And we also had to spend some time picking apart units that we had planned in previous years for the new faculty, so that they could see how they came to be like this and why we were doing it. So some of the planning went on there and it was both an opportunity to inculcate new teachers into that culture, but also, just as a practical matter, we got to do some planning, and I got to practice this a bit more. Teacher I

Jewish Studies heads in schools that were implementing the Project's components with fidelity also took an active role in teaching new teachers how to use the Project. Needless to say, this was essential if whole departments were to work collaboratively toward the same standards-based goals for students using the same pedagogical approaches. It was also essential because three of the schools in the sample experienced considerable teacher turnover.

We took out the standards and benchmarks book. I gave people copies. We looked at what the standards were and what the goals were, and this is what we want the kids to -- I actually explained the whole -- what our goals are, and the specifics, and I even explained that whole rubric, with essential questions and this and that. And I did all of that, but saying that, it was all so new that it was more like a real overview kind of thing and not anything that really stuck with the new teachers. JS Head 1

When I came, Teacher G and Teacher H and I started in August. We started at the beginning of August. So we had three extra weeks of prep time before school started. And [the Jewish Studies head] worked with us on using the standards and benchmarks and how to create units of study. And, you know, because I didn't learn any of that in my program, which would have been helpful, it was great to have that extra time with [the Jewish Studies head] and to use it with material that I was going to be teaching here. It made it so much easier, because then I could really tie it together. It wasn't so abstract. But we were given units of study, but it didn't have, like, the lesson plans, or the worksheets didn't have any of the standards and benchmarks attached to them. So it was more like [the Jewish Studies head] showed us how to outline a lesson plan, including them, like what it should look like. You know, if we were going to type it out, what it would look like. Teacher E

Jewish Studies heads talked explicitly about the importance of developing teacher collaboration in the service of instructional improvement.

One of the things I worked on was on building community, and I don't mean like, let's all get along, but I gave everybody something to think about, a little figure of speech, the hardest text to teach, something like that, and we all shared and listened to each other, and we talked about, how do we deal with these difficult texts, these texts that are the hardest ones for us to teach. So immediately I really worked on having a culture of collaboration and talking about the kinds of difficult things, and also everybody having to be involved and not having it be something where meetings are when we talk about administrative things. We don't do that at all. So that was one thing I remember doing. And I definitely did something very related to the standards and benchmarks. I remember thinking about the opening question, and those kinds of things, but I totally am blank on what it was. JS Head 1

You know it's a work in progress. As they're teaching, they're learning themselves. When they teach it, they get feedback. We talk about it, "How did it go? What did you work out? What do we need to add?" My major point is that they are taking this seriously. They're not just going and developing a lesson. They're developing all the lessons according to the standards and benchmarks. Some they do it well. Some they don't do as well. And they are experimenting with it. And my hope is for them to learn. And as it goes along, we discuss students' work, and then we learn much more. This is, I would say, a six-seven years process fully to bring them along, because these teachers mostly are trained to think the way it was like "These are my goals. These are my objectives. This is my lesson plan." I think they are on their way. It takes constant supervision, constant observation of the lesson, being there, so they know somebody is watching them, so they don't slip back to their old habits. And constant training, constant workshops. It's not a one-shot deal. Constant meeting and working, checking students' work, talking until it becomes part of the culture of our teaching staff. JS Head 2

And there have been all sorts of difficulties, in terms of trying to get faculty to really work together collaboratively. And, when I was listening to Charlotte, it really seemed like this might be somewhere where we could really change the culture of the school and allow faculty to really kind of start where everyone was in the same place. None of us knew what we were doing. And, if we could put the ego outside the room for a little

while, we would really be able to facilitate change. So that was a huge thing for me. You know, the bait was out there for me. And I was kind of biting very quickly. And the other piece to me was the obvious, which is just the love of Chumash and Tanakh and text, and the idea that we could do that while improving the teaching of Tanakh, and get everybody to look at how to really do a better job at teaching text. The two together were just a tremendous-- just seemed like a real gift in a box. JS Head 3

Finally, on this point about the significance of collaboration, we include one teacher's comment, reiterated by many others, about the value of the collaborative experience in spite of the increased time it might require.

Because when we work as a team, it's actually just an amazing kind of experience. I mean, if somebody were passing by, they'd think we were having an extremely passionate, political discussion when we're talking about what Moshe should have been feeling. And we get in, as a staff, a group of three or four of us, where on a grade unit, might get into some really dynamic conversations about theology and things like that, which is wonderful for us, and I think benefits our students, but slows down the process of coming up with a finished product. Because when we put our creative heads together, it was always best. But everybody had different ideas. And so it does take time, to figure out how to meld those, where to take it. Teacher N

In multiple ways, then highly effective Jewish Studies heads played a significant role in the further development of the Project at their schools. It is appropriate to say that without their leadership, the Project would not have advanced as much as it has in any of these schools.

In beginning this section, we noted that there was variation in the way in which Jewish Studies heads implemented their roles. We turn now to a brief consideration of the Jewish Studies heads' influence on implementation of the Project when their leadership was weaker than what we have described so far.

When the Jewish Studies head was less skillful in leading the Project, more experienced as well as new teachers noted that they did not feel sufficiently supported in the development of a coherent, high quality curriculum based on the standards and benchmarks. New teachers, in particular, were largely left to their own devices or dependent on colleagues who were willing to help them learn to use the standards and benchmarks processes.

The wires were really crossed, in terms of who was in charge of this, who made ultimate decisions, how much of this was really in my control, how much of this was I really charged with directing, how much of this was me doing the work, and [another teacher] editing it or [the Jewish Studies head] editing it....And [the Jewish Studies head] didn't know how to help me learn how to do this. And so, it was really trial by fire. And I think I eventually learned how to do it. But [one of the teachers] had to put in a lot more time than she wanted to. And I had to put in a lot more time. I would create whole units and then be told it wasn't the right direction. And so, it was somewhat set up for failure from the beginning, because there wasn't enough direction at the outset. Teacher J

In our school, in the Judaic studies department, there's a really big problem with supervision. There's a really big problem here, just as an institution, that [the Jewish Studies head] doesn't enjoy supervising people, and that there's dysfunction in the environment here, which is why I think there's a great— I mean there's a huge percentage of turnover here. And so part of the problem is, who is left to supervise? [The Jewish Studies head] doesn't enjoy it and isn't well-trained to do it. Then it becomes a problem. And if the more experienced staff members don't enjoy it and aren't trained to do it and don't continue, then there's nobody here left to learn from. Teacher M

We've all seen the documents where we say what we think we're doing in our classes. Not that I think anybody is making it up. But I haven't seen, and I don't think [the Jewish Studies head has] seen, the examples of how we're doing what we think we're doing. And so, I don't know if we're even— I don't know if we're doing it in the same way. Teacher K

These teachers' voices contrast sharply with those of the teachers who felt supported by an effective Jewish Studies head. The school represented by these teachers made progress with the Project during the last year; they had designated meeting time for the first time since they joined Cohort I and they made use of that time to develop some of their units. In addition, these teachers worked collaboratively, largely on their own time they reported, without the support of their Jewish Studies head. However, they lacked the insights of their Jewish Studies head and the coherence that her role, in theory, could bring to their work.

The heads of schools with whom we spoke acknowledged the importance of the Jewish Studies head role. Those without a Jewish Studies head during the 2007-2008 school year and those who had weak Jewish Studies heads spoke to the fact that implementation of the Project suffered as a result of the lack of effective leadership. These heads had plans to strengthen leadership of the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project during the 2008-2009 school year.¹³

A Second Year of TEC Support

Jewish Studies heads, heads of schools, and teachers valued the professional development provided by the TECs during the first year of their participation in the Project. From their perspective, however, one year of TEC support was not sufficient given the complexity of learning how to use the standards and benchmarks and the new approach to teaching and learning.

Schools that could afford it invited TEC's back for additional on-site professional development during the 2007-2008 school year. Some arranged for phone consultations if they could not afford the costs associated with an on-site visit. Due to a reduction in the number of Cohort III schools, when TEC support became available at no cost to the schools for new teacher support, several schools took advantage of this opportunity. And, as we noted earlier in the report, some schools accepted the Project Director's invitation to attend the fall 2007 professional

¹³We do not use any quotes here to preserve the confidentiality of the schools and the Jewish Studies heads.

development sessions for Cohort III schools. The school without a Jewish Studies head sent two teacher leaders; one school sent its Jewish Studies head and most Jewish Studies teachers.

These data indicate a strong commitment to the Project; they indicate that teachers and Jewish Studies heads felt strongly that one year of TEC support was insufficient to enable them to develop high level competence with the standards and benchmarks. They wanted and needed additional expert professional development support.

It may seem to some that learning to use the TaNaKH Project materials and processes is a matter of learning a new set of technical skills that could be sufficiently mastered in one year with on-site support. But, this is wrong. The Project requires a paradigm shift in thinking about the teaching and learning of TaNaKH for virtually every educator who has been involved in it. It requires a paradigm shift with respect to developing curriculum based on Standards and Benchmarks. The Jewish Day schools participating in the TaNaKH Project were not, for the most part, familiar with the new paradigm prior to becoming part of Cohort I or II.

What does this mean? First and foremost, implementing the TaNaKH Project required a shift in thinking about teaching and learning. It required a shift away from thinking about what *we*, the educators, want to teach to what *they*, the students, need to learn. It is a shift to the development of curriculum and instruction in light of the question: what do we want students to know and be able to do and what sensibilities do we want students to have as a result of teaching TaNaKH in our school? This paradigm shift was not easy for Jewish Studies heads or teachers one-at-a-time; it was not easy to accomplish for entire Jewish Studies departments.¹⁴ However, seven of the eight schools in the sample made enormous strides in the direction of this paradigm shift. They appreciated the support provided by the Project and recognized that they could have used more. Neither Jewish Studies heads nor teachers could master what they needed to know in one year.

Second, the Project required teachers to develop units of instruction, performance assessments, and lesson plans. Most of the teachers and Jewish Studies heads in our sample had not been involved in this kind of curriculum work prior to the Project. Some had used a published curriculum that they reported did not even require them to develop much in the way of lesson plans. Many reported that they did not assess their students learning of TaNaKH especially in the K-8 schools. At the high school level, there was scant evidence of curriculum development or any kind of curricular coherence 9-12 in two of the three high schools when the Project began. As a result, participating in the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project was exciting, extremely demanding, and new for teachers and Jewish Studies heads.

We have noted in other reports that implementing a new curriculum approach and pedagogy most likely requires three to five years of support at the school level. The Jewish Day Schools

¹⁴It has proven extremely challenging for general studies teachers in public and private secular schools to make the paradigm shift. For most, it has taken three to five years of supported effort even when new, appropriate curriculum materials were provided.

participating in the Project had one year of on-site support and a bit more in their second year and/or third year if they could afford its cost. Therefore, we agree with the Jewish Studies heads and teachers when they ask for additional professional development and explain how what they were able to have in their second or third year was valuable to them and contributed to their progress.

What did the Jewish Studies heads and teachers gain from additional professional development from their TECs? Fundamentally, TECs a) provided them with feedback on the units they had developed and used and on the new ones they were developing, b) reviewed the components of standards-based curriculum design, c) helped teachers and Jewish Studies heads focus their work in light of the standards they had chosen, d) introduced new teachers to the work of the Project, and e) created enthusiasm for the Project among new teachers and reinvigorated those who were already involved. TECs offered these supports whether on-site or via scheduled telephone conversations.

We've been speaking, and conference calling, and she's been helping to keep us on track and accountable and to develop units. She's helped a lot with my units because I've had to develop, for X grade specifically and Y grade, we didn't have anything determined, so it was really starting from scratch....She's also helping me with making sure that the engaging scenarios are truly engaging, and also working on lesson plans. I've been developing a unit on [a particular topic] so I've been working on the unwrapping, the big ideas and the essential questions, the to-knows and to-do's, and just figuring out the text, and kind of dividing it, figuring out themes that go along with it. JS Head 5

[The TEC's help] was specific and very helpful. I mean, it was really specific to the questions we had. Just as an example, we asked about writing/scoring guides. [We asked:] there's a lot of repetition between the performance task and the scoring guide. Is that meant to be? Or how do we differentiate? So she would answer those, kind of, general questions, and then address very specific things within the unit itself. So her response is always really helpful. She's really quick at getting back to us. And it's been a great, great help. So we moved on a little bit. I think she clarified and presented things in a way that helped answer some of the really specific concerns that people had or hadn't quite gotten. Or sometimes just hearing it presented a slightly different way from someone else reinforces some things. Teacher N

And we brought [the TEC] for two days, we paid for [the TEC] and it was wonderful. Two of the best days that the teachers have had with respect to professional development, and tremendous excitement....Now there was really some excitement, I think people felt, as a result of working with [the TEC] a much better understanding of what the expectations were. And so teachers have been working. School Head 2

We went over our big ideas, and we sort of refined them. We looked at what we had done last year. That's one of the things we did, because now we're talking about the burning bush. And we looked at what we did last year. And we went over it, and tried to see if what we did was really— if there was any changes that we wanted to make. There were a few things that we wanted to do. And we talked about how we were going to break up the blocks of material....And we began looking, again, at our big ideas and our essential

questions, and making sure that that's really where we were, that we were all on the same page, in terms of what we wanted to do. Teacher O

I think she came two times this year. This year was different. Last year she was teaching us what to do. And in the beginning, we were all like "What are you talking about?" It was like we had no idea. I have to say that in the beginning, we were all like "Why are we doing this?" We thought "Oh, another waste of time. We have to spend so many hours." I don't think anyone here understood, in the beginning, what's the purpose and why we're doing this. And we saw it as like again, we're out of the class. Again, we have to spend so many hours....It's only when we started, like, putting it in action, putting it into the work, like using the big ideas, now that we understand that when we approach it now, we understand that what we were doing before was okay. But now it's better.

Teacher C

We had brought samples of work for her to look at. And we had brought tasks that we thought were completed. She thought that they needed a little more work. So it was a little hard, in that respect, to get her feedback. Oh, there were two parts to her meeting. But we met privately with her. And that's where she looked at the tasks. And she critiqued. And she gave a little more feedback and recommended that we change a few things. Then, as a whole, we got together, and we looked at kids' work. We looked at the rubrics. Teacher D

So Teacher K came to the [TEC] session with all of her stuff on two or three pages. And what [the TEC] did was she boiled it down to, like, three big ideas. Like this was the best thing that she did. So I probably would have gotten to that with Teacher K alone saying, "Okay, what are we teaching? Like here are all this." But doing it as a department was really, really helpful. So that just saved an enormous amount of time to focus. That was the best thing that came out of that [TEC] visit. Teacher L

I found [the TEC visit], for myself, to be exceedingly helpful. To really understand the nature of assessments. That really made things very clear for me. And I took some of her suggestions of the nature— maybe it's a short thing. Maybe it's a longer thing, things to keep on track for the students, just to see where they are. The kind of breaking down "nice to know," the "need to know" and the "to do." That was a very helpful rubric to use, which I will be able to incorporate more consciously. For me, it was a great day. It was exceedingly helpful. Teacher M

I thought it went really well. I thought [the TEC] was really good at focusing us, and she was really clear, and she encouraged a good dynamic. Some issues, some kinds of things came out, which is what happens when you do these things, and it was – I think people really learned. Teacher I

I think it was a very successful day. A lot of the new faculty, which is who it was for, were totally exhausted and overwhelmed. They'll say that now, a month or two later. And felt a little frustrated, I think, that we didn't actually come out with a product they could use. [Recently,] we went back and looked back at what we did and started filling it in and fleshing it out, and it's clear to me how very valuable it was and how much everybody has sort of grown as a result. Everybody, first of all, remembered what we did,

understood what we did, was using that terminology, people were correcting each other – people were much more able to understand when something they said that they thought was important didn't at all fit in with what we were doing. JS Head 1

Well we looked at different units of study that some of us had presented, and went through them, and evaluated them, and assessed them, and analyzed them, you know, how to make it better, and what to change. And we did text study with her. But I think that I learned more with skill sets, with looking at the program. Because I think she just really showed it step-by-step....I loved learning with her, because it was nice to get a different perspective. You know what [the Jewish Studies head's] perspective is going to be most of the time on what we're teaching. But to get someone else to come in who doesn't know us, and to say "Here's what you can do with this lesson," that's really helpful, just to get like fresh eyes on it. I enjoyed having her come. I'm sorry she didn't come this semester. Because with what we're doing now, it would be really helpful.
Teacher E

Why was the additional TEC support important to the Project's further implementation? One head of school noted that while her Jewish Studies head was gaining knowledge and skill from the Project, she was not yet skillful enough to assess teachers' or her own progress in implementing the Project. Therefore, this Head of school needed an external set of eyes and ears to provide guidance for further development.

I would have loved follow-up, that JTS could have supported the coach coming. I understand not four times, but if she could have come once in the fall and once in the spring to help measure the progress, because I have to be honest with you, [as head of school] I can't go into the class and measure the progress, this is not my area of expertise. So I would have loved it if [the TEC] would have been funded to come back, say in late October, early November, observe each of my teachers, given feedback to them and to me, and then come back again in say March or April of this year, to see what improvements had been made from the fall until now, I think that would have been – would be extremely valuable. You know, the [phone] coaching's great. We're paying for that. I have no problem with that, but I think the on-site's very important. School Head 1

While it might seem that someone at the school should be able to “measure the progress” of the Project, the reality at this school and at some others is that the Jewish Studies head might not yet be able to take on this responsibility. That being the case, it may be worthwhile for the AVI CHAI Foundation to consider whether it would be a useful investment in funds to contribute as this head suggests to the school's further implementation of the Project.

Jewish Studies heads and teachers also spoke about the importance of the TEC to their ongoing work. They identified the impact of external coaching on keeping the “momentum” going and increasing their knowledge and skill.

I think that there's always the need to remind oneself to keep the momentum going, you know, to keep everything moving. You don't want to relax for a second. And then, now that we've reached some kind of level ground, you start looking at all the new things come up that you haven't tackled....You know, the first year, a lot more of it was simply

maintaining sanity. You know, you just need to have someone that you can just talk things through with. But now, it's reaching the next level, as you need to have someone else who has far greater experience, and who can, you know... JS Head 3

Some formal component that extends a number of years is important. It helps – the key thing, of course, is having somebody like [the Jewish Studies head] who really, really wants it to succeed and has continuity in that leadership role. If you have that, then that's the thing that's most likely to make this stick over the long term. I would say second to that would be continuity of faculty, and the third thing would be having some kind of continuum of outside help for as many years as we can, just to constantly give it a little shove. Teacher I

I do have to say that having a continual – there's no comparison between having a one day thing [like we had this year] and having something that continues, even if it's really only four times in the year. And that weekly thing, the phone calls [in the first year], it's a difference between night and day. And I think that was as valuable a part as anything else...I think if the project could have a second year, it would be fabulous, and part of it could be for new people and part of it, even if it became biweekly support – I think that's really, I can't say enough about how incredibly valuable it was. JS Head 1

Having observed the development of the TECs over two years and their contribution to the schools, we remain convinced that their work is essential to the further development of high quality teaching and learning of TaNaKH at the schools. Indeed, we think they need to be supported for more than one year of professional development at the schools. In a memo to the Foundation in January 2005, we identified what we saw as the necessary next step for the Project at that time.

...phase two of the project needs to focus on developing teachers' and other educators' capacity to teach to the standards in ways that represent the philosophy of teaching and learning embedded in the reform. It can do this by focusing on developing school-based capacity for implementing all aspects of standards-based TaNaKH education. For the most part, there is little focused, sustained professional development currently available that is designed to deepen teachers' knowledge and skill with respect to teaching and learning TaNaKH. This is the reality in a context in which it remains difficult for the schools to recruit and retain knowledgeable teachers and even heads of their Judaic departments. While the TaNaKH standards and benchmarks document, in and of itself, can make a contribution to the focus and coherence of instruction in TaNaKH, a second phase of the project that focuses on professional development designed to improve teachers' knowledge and skill can lead to improved teaching and, thereby, student learning. Toward this end, the next phase of the project needs to focus on professional development for teachers and the heads of Judaic departments. It needs to develop the infrastructure of skillful, well-trained instructional coaches who can work with teachers and other school-based educators to teach them to use the standards in ways that enable students to achieve at high levels. (Complete memo attached as Appendix B.)

The Foundation used Education Matters' feedback as well as the Project Director's knowledge and decided to fund development of the TEC role. It was a good decision. The Project designed

professional development for the TECs as well as a strategy for their on-site supervision during their first year of work. They had the opportunity to participate in additional professional development and, during their second year implementing their roles demonstrated increased knowledge and skill.¹⁵ Jewish Studies heads and teachers valued their expertise and agreed that they could not have implemented the Project without them.

The data presented in this report so far lead to the conclusion that these seven schools a) continue to implement the Project, and b) continue to want on-site and phone contact with one of the Project's TECs. We agree with their conclusion that to appropriately increase their knowledge and skill with the Project and enhance implementation, they would benefit from more than one year of support from their TECs. All of them made good use of the TEC support they were able to garner during the 2007-2008 school year.

Given that most of the schools do not have the financial resources to hire the TECs on their own, it is up to AVI CHAI to determine whether an investment in a second year of TEC support for schools that are genuinely implementing the project is a worthwhile investment.

School-Based Factors Associated With Implementation

In addition to the Jewish Studies heads' leadership of the Project and TEC support, a number of other school-based factors influenced the extent and fidelity of implementation. These included a) limited time, b) teacher turnover, and c) scheduling classes at the high schools in light of a diverse and changing student body.¹⁶

A) Time. As reported by the teachers and Jewish Studies head, time was a factor related to fidelity of implementation in three different ways: time to learn how to develop units – first-year professional development; time to actually develop the units; and time available to teach TaNaKH. All three facets of time were in short supply in the schools regardless of how well and extensively they were implementing the Project.

Time to Learn. Teachers who had participated in Cohort I or II professional development had been released from teaching in order to spend time with their schools' TECs on four occasions during the first year of their involvement with the Project. The Project required schools to provide teachers with coverage for this time as a condition of participation. In addition, schools were required to hold bi-weekly meetings of the Jewish Studies head and the Jewish Studies teachers so they could continue learning how to use the processes promoted by the Project. Schools varied in the extent to which they were able to provide teachers with this time. Some of the challenges were associated with the inability of the schools to find qualified

¹⁵For a review of the findings related to the TECs, see Final 2005-2006 Evaluation Report: TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project, July 2006, Education Matters.®

¹⁶Jewish Studies heads and teachers spoke about these three factors in almost identical terms and they do not require much interpretation. Therefore, we present them without accompanying quotes.

substitute teachers for the days when the TEC was on site. Other challenges arose in schools that had part-time teachers who were not on campus each day or who worked only half of the day. Teachers with such schedules were not always able to leave another job, for example, to participate in TEC-provided full-day professional development. On the whole, however, schools were able to provide teachers with coverage during some part of the TECs' Year I visits.

Schools also varied in the extent to which they could hold regularly scheduled Jewish Studies faculty meetings that focused on TaNaKH. If a school were organized so that the same teachers taught general and Jewish Studies, there was never a time when all teachers could meet on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule. In such schools, the Jewish Studies head might meet on a regular basis with grade-level teachers, for example, or teachers who taught sections of the same course and who had common planning times. Skillful Jewish Studies heads, sometimes with the support and advice of their TECs, were able to develop alternative meeting strategies in order to support teachers' learning.

Finally, even in schools that had time for collaborative meetings, teachers reported that they found additional benefits in also working with colleagues in alternate time arrangements. We see this as evidence of both the need for time for teachers to work together and as a positive outcome of the Project. Teachers who had formal meeting time, in other words, also found it beneficial to meet additional times with their colleagues.

Time to Develop Units of Instruction. In six of the seven schools that continued their work with the Project, teachers reported devoting a great deal of their own time to the development of units of instruction.¹⁷ Some worked after school; some stayed at school longer than their part-time appointment required; some used summer days to develop curriculum units. Finding time for this work was challenging. Finding time to develop units with colleagues, the arrangement all of the teachers desired, further challenged teachers. Without question, teachers devoted their own time, mostly without pay, to develop their units. In only a few schools were funds available to pay teachers for their time. As a result of the challenges posed by the time available, some schools developed fewer units than did others. However, all of the schools developed multiple units during the 2007-2008 school year and realized that, in the future, as their curriculum became more fully-developed, they would not have to spend so much time developing new units.

We found an important interactions between the role the Jewish Studies head played in supporting the Project and teachers' willingness to devote their own time to curriculum development. With strongly, clearly committed Jewish Studies heads, teachers might be unhappy about the time they were devoting to the Project, but they understood it was a temporary occurrence. In a school with a Jewish Studies head who was not seen as supportive,

¹⁷In the seventh schools, teachers' professional development focused on Hebrew during the 2007-2008 school year and their work in TaNaKH focused on revising, with their colleagues and the Jewish Studies heads, units developed during the previous school year.

teachers spent time developing units, but expressed considerable resentment about donating so much time to this work.

Time to Teach TaNaKH. The schools in this sample varied greatly in the amount of time available for teaching TaNaKH. Schools allocated between two to three short periods each week to four or five weekly, full-length classes to TaNaKH. Variation occurred in high schools as well as in K-8 schools and across denominations.¹⁸ Teachers and Jewish Studies heads pointed out that it was difficult for them to develop an effective instructional program with significant learning goals for students with scant time available for their subject. Nonetheless, our data lead us to conclude that regardless of the amount of time available, teachers and Jewish Studies heads used the Project to improve their use of that time.

And, it is encouraging to note that two of the schools in our sample that had such limited time for TaNaKH have increased the amount of time devoted to the subject in the last two years. The increased time coupled with teachers' work developing standards-based units have improved the schools' teaching of TaNaKH even if their program did not yet include the amount of time they would like to dedicate to this area of Jewish Studies.

B) Teacher Turnover. Significant teacher and Jewish Studies head turnover, understandably, negatively influenced the extent and fidelity of implementation. This is because teachers new to the school are likely to have no knowledge of the basic tenets of the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project and need to learn them. The school that experienced a change in Jewish Studies head (the third change since the school became involved in the Project) and all but one teacher was unable to sustain the work of the Project despite the positive reaction to it in prior years. The absence of a Jewish Studies head in the context of a stable cadre of teachers in another school was not devastating to the Project's continuation but limited the work that could be done during the 2007-2008 school year.

Three schools in the sample experienced a change in half of their teachers. Teachers who remained were committed to the standards and benchmarks Project; those who were new needed time to develop their understanding of the Project and then develop their own units of study. Thus, the extent of implementation was limited by the time needed for the new teachers to participate in professional development and complete the required curriculum development. Extent of implementation was also limited or enhanced by the role the Jewish Studies head played in supporting new teachers' in their development with the Project, a topic we discussed earlier in the section that focused on the role of the Jewish Studies head's role in supporting implementation.

From what we have seen, a school that has developed a collaborative, instructionally-focused culture, at least within the Jewish Studies program, and has a Jewish Studies head who effectively leads the Project, has more capacity to bring new teachers into the Project. This, of

¹⁸The Schechter schools in the sample tended to have sufficient time devoted to TaNaKH according to teachers and Jewish Studies heads.

course, is not surprising. Schools with high teacher turnover demonstrated different approaches to supporting new teachers. One, a school that already had a collaborative culture, assigned experienced Jewish Studies teachers to mentor the newcomers. And, as described earlier, its Jewish Studies head explicitly introduced teachers to the Standards and Benchmarks documents and to the processes used to develop units of study. This school also took advantage of the opportunity to have a TEC come to spend a day with new teachers. Demonstrating the collaborative, instructionally-focused culture in the school, experienced teachers elected to participate in that day of professional development.

In another school, the Jewish Studies head met with the new teachers over a multi-week period prior to the start of the school year. During this time, she introduced teachers to the Standards and Benchmarks process and got them started on developing units of instruction. Once the school year began, new and experienced teachers met together with the Jewish Studies head to continue their learning and further development. This school was able to support having its TEC return once during the school year.

In contrast, in the third school that had many new teachers during the 2007-2008 school year, new teachers reported feeling less supported and barely knowledgeable about what they were doing with respect to curriculum and instruction. They, and their more experienced colleagues attributed this situation to weak Jewish Studies head leadership for the Project. Once again this school will experience turnover in at least half of its teachers for the 2008-2009 school year.

Some teacher turnover is inevitable. Families move, some teachers find they do not like or are ill-suited to the work, enrollment ebbs and flows leading the school to let teachers go or hire more of them. The Project also increases its share of new teachers when additional grades are added to it. For example, a K-12 school might begin the Project at the high school level and gradually add middle school and then elementary teachers. A K-8 school might begin with the elementary grades and then add the middle school teachers. These are normal events that require attention to developing the knowledge and skill of new sets of teachers. They place demands on the Jewish Studies heads who might benefit from access to the TECs to support such positive program growth. With a strong Jewish Studies head, these changes and additions to the Project can add to its extent and fidelity of implementation. Without a strong Jewish Studies head, however, they present significant challenges to the further use of Project to improve teaching and learning of TaNaKH.

C) Scheduling Classes at the High School Level. High Schools can face challenges in developing a coherent, standards-based scope and sequence for their students in light of the idiosyncratic outcomes of a) creating students' course schedules, b) school policies related to mid-year and mid-high school admissions, and c) students' knowledge and skill of Jewish Studies and/or Hebrew when entering ninth grade. We note them briefly in this report because they influence the extent and fidelity of implementation at the schools.

a) Jewish High schools are small and, as a result, may not have multiple sections of a range of courses. For example, there might be one chemistry AP, one beginning Hebrew, and

one Algebra II Honors class. Students schedules are arranged around the courses they *must* have for graduation and those identified as critical to acceptance to high quality colleges. Most of the time, TaNaKH and other Jewish Studies courses are not the courses around which a student's schedule is built. As a result, implementation of a well-designed, TaNaKH scope and sequence may be thwarted by the need to place students in classes. Teacher V speaks to the challenges posed by this reality.

It's a very big scheduling problem. I think what we would all like to see is a very clear scope and sequence. We would like to be able to say "Okay, in eighth grade they're going to be doing this. And in ninth grade and tenth grade" – and so on, and build skills, so that when we come to eleventh grade, I have a good idea about what they know how to do, and what they know. Because of scheduling issues, that is not happening....So if I have a tenth grader who's in a twelfth grade class, or I have an eleventh grader who's in a ninth grade class, I don't know where the kid has been. I may have a kid in eleventh grade who did a really good Midrash unit in ninth grade and knows all about Midrash. And I may have a kid who has absolutely no idea. Teacher V

b) At two of the three high schools in our sample, we were told that admissions policies created challenges for teachers of TaNaKH.¹⁹ One challenge results from decisions to admit students who have no prior day school experience and who, indeed, may seek admissions to the schools because they are small and supportive rather than because they are Jewish. Schools are inclined to accept these students in order to increase enrollment and tuition payments. While understandable, this policy results in students who are not, as the schools call them, "mission appropriate."

But there's a growing number of kids that are transferring here because they're looking for community. And their public high schools are just too big. Which, for some of them, that means that they weren't doing well academically. And for others, it doesn't mean that. It just means that maybe socially, it wasn't good, or emotionally it wasn't good. So it's pretty mixed. Teacher K

Schools find it challenging to create and staff TaNaKH (and other Jewish Studies courses) that are appropriate for such students.

In addition, in another effort to increase enrollment, some schools admit students at almost any point during their high school years. This policy, as Teacher V notes, plays havoc with the implementation of a coherent, standards-based set of TaNaKH courses.

We accept kids at all points during their career. So it's not unusual for me to have an eleventh grader, right, who has no Jewish background at all, who doesn't know *alef bet*. And it's possible that that kid could end up in an honors class. I have that situation now. I

¹⁹The policies we will note create challenges for other departments, as well. Our focus in this report, however, is on their impact to implementation of the Standards and Benchmarks Project.

have a kid who's in honors class who can barely read Hebrew, and has no Torah background at all. And it creates all sorts of havoc. And I don't have any good answers to it, to be honest with you. Teacher V

Another challenge posed by these admissions policies relates to students' knowledge of Hebrew. Students without any day school background and those transferring into the school mid-year may be unable to participate in a TaNaKH course that assumes students know some amount of Hebrew. Schools struggle to develop and/or adapt courses to meet these students' needs. At times, the changes they make compromise the standards and benchmarks approach.

c) Finally, we were told that some students begin ninth grade, with little knowledge of TaNaKH or Hebrew despite the fact that they attended day school for most of grades K-8. This, too, poses challenges for teachers who are attempting to create a finite number of courses and sections of TaNaKH with which they can meet all students' learning needs.

Taken together, these school-based factors about students and their assignment to classes influence the extent to which the Project can be implemented with fidelity. They are worth recognizing because they pose challenges to the overall impact of the Project and, most importantly, to the schools' ability to provide the standards-based curriculum they are working to develop. They are not, however, factors that can be changed or improved by the Project.

Question 3: How Does the TaNaKH Project "Fit" with NETA and/or Matok. The data we collected do not provide a comprehensive answer to this question but suggest that there is no significant clash between the TaNaKH Project, NETA, and Matok. Further, NETA and Matok are used differently and to a different extent in the schools and, as a result, it is not possible to readily assess their interaction with each other and/or with the TaNaKH Project as a result of an inquiry that focused on the standards and benchmarks Project. But, put simply, we learned the following:

- NETA does not conflict with TaNaKH teaching in any way but it may or may not enhance students' ability to use Hebrew when studying TaNaKH. One school in the sample finds NETA a valuable curriculum and reports that students learn a great deal from it and can use Hebrew, much of the time, in their TaNaKH classes. This school reports that it has been able to adapt implementation of the curriculum so that it meets their students' needs. NETA's leadership, teachers report, is not holding them to the pacing schedule normally required of schools. Teachers also reported that they liked the structure of the program and the fact that they were not required to do any curriculum development work in order to implement it.

In the NETA program, it's something that teach all of us. And each one of us that enters the class, we just say what item we are teaching, where we are, which page, each one of us know what to do. And we do it the same way. This [TaNaKH] program, you need to prepare everything from the beginning. In NETA, we get everything in our hands. Here, we need to do from the beginning. This is a big difference. Teacher S

Nonetheless, teachers in this school are supporters of the TaNaKH Project even as they note that it requires them to do more curriculum development.

- The other school using NETA reports that neither students nor teachers like the program and that it's materials and pacing guides constrain them from meeting their students needs as Hebrew learners. The program neither contributes to nor thwarts implementation of the standards and benchmarks Project.
- Matok is used differently in schools in our sample and its use influences its relationship with the Project. Teachers in one school that has, on paper, used Matok for several years reported that they do not really use the curriculum although they find pieces of it valuable from time to time. The following teacher quote is typical of what we heard at the school.

We like the standards more than MaToK. We haven't done MaToK for a very long time. I saw the curriculum, and it was really tedious. I could not understand it. I mean I could, but it was the same and the same. So basically, what we took, we took some ideas from it. And we still incorporate it. But I think [the standards and benchmarks] is much broader. Teacher U

The other school in the sample still uses Matok but now considers it to be a resource for the standards and benchmarks work. We offer the voices of two teachers and a Jewish Studies head who spoke to this point.

In terms of standards and benchmarks, I look over the material in MaToK when we do our unwrapping of the material. I want to sort of see what coincides with what we pull out of the text when it's in MaToK. And it hasn't been an issue. I mean the issue for both standards and benchmarks and MaToK has always been the battle against time. But I haven't found that they fight one another. Teacher O

So we try to use MaToK, because we have the workbooks here. We try to line it up with what they're doing in MaToK. I think where MaToK falls short, which was surprising, is with the text skills. The skills that we've been picking to kind of narrow in on aren't always there in MaToK. So we have to make our own worksheets for that. But MaToK often has very good formative assessments. And we use those a lot. And sometimes, we'll build them into the summative assessments, by adding a rubric to them. Also, the teacher's guide for MaToK is very helpful. It goes through the background for the teacher. It gives you Midrashim, and it gives you interpretations, traditional interpretations, modern interpretations. It saves you a lot of work, in terms of research and stuff. And, to some extent, it breaks the unit up into parts. We don't follow every single part, but we do try to tie in, sort of structure in, something like that. Teacher P

Standards and benchmarks does not provide you with a curriculum. And it doesn't even direct you in the direction of any material. And the alignment, to me, was very, very clear.[Standards and benchmarks] would allow us, with any curriculum that we had chosen, to really prove that what we had was good; allow us to make intelligent decisions about if and when we were choosing to not teach a piece of the curriculum, how and why did we make that choice. So it was never a concern. And it has proven not to be at all. It is helping us make better decisions about which pieces of text we can and cannot give up. JS Head 3

The data suggest that there is no problem of “fit” among the programs. However, if the AVI CHAI Foundation seeks further detail on these issues, it will require a more focused inquiry into the question.

Question 4: What appears to be the impact of the extent and fidelity of implementation on teachers' knowledge and skill, the Jewish Studies heads' knowledge and skill, and teaching and learning of TaNaKH. Across the seven schools, regardless of any challenges with time or understanding or with the Jewish Studies head's role, teachers reported that the Project was having a significant impact on their knowledge and skill as teachers and on their students' learning. Jewish Studies heads agreed with their teachers.²⁰

With respect to becoming more skillful, teachers reported that the Project's curriculum development process required them to be more structured and focused in their teaching. They considered this to be a benefit of the Project.

It's really made me more structured, when I go into class I'm all set. I feel really good about myself and the kids know we're going to talk about the to-do's and to-knows, and I talk about the objective, and it's just, I think, a sense of structure with them. It gives me time to be funny at times, humorous, and to show my passion for this, and for them to develop a passion. Teacher A

I found that what's been very helpful to me are the big ideas, in terms of focusing my questions just in terms of the technique of starting to say what you're going to say, etcetera, using the big ideas, and making sure that we've been talking about these things all along. That has made the kids more successful in answering the questions about the text, dealing with these kinds of issues that I want them to see....And it's just focused us more in our class discussions. And all along, it's sort of like these little signposts up there, that kids really look at, and then look for in the text. So I think that's been very helpful. Teacher O

It was helpful in the sense that it makes me organized. It's a lot of work to do. But, in the sense that I kind of see the big picture, it is helpful. I think it's helpful for the students,

²⁰Although we have no direct observational data to support teachers' and Jewish Studies heads' conclusions about the impact of the Project, the detail with which they describe its impact leads us to trust that their comments reflect actual changes.

too, to see more of a big picture, which I'm trying, more and more, to incorporate in my class.... Teacher F

The first time we were introduced to this, I think I felt like I was drowning, literally drowning. I had just been introduced into the third grade, into the MaToK curriculum. So I was getting myself familiarized with MaToK. And then, all of a sudden, the Standards and Benchmarks, I was drowning. But I kept on being reassured by [the Jewish Studies head] that "It'll come, it'll come. Just take a deep breath and it'll come." I'm a very, very organized person. And slowly, slowly, I started to see that this is actually a tool that's going to help me be more organized with my lessons. It helps me to focus on what I really, really need to teach. It helps me to be more centered. It's a planning tool. It's a tool for me, definitely, definitely a tool for me. Just writing out my lesson plans is so much easier today, because all I have to do is look at my unwrapping, and I see the "to do" and the "to know." And then my lesson plans are right there in front of me. I'm more organized. I'm less stressed. I have a better understanding of what it is I'm teaching, and what it is I need to teach. The whole idea and the whole notion of "We don't really need to teach this. This does not speak to the big ideas, the essential questions. So we're going to take this out." Or, I'll just do it in the mini lesson, but I'm not going to assess it. There's a whole different outlook on teaching and the way I teach. And it has definitely affected all other areas, as well. Teacher D

I think the fact that it's structured, so that it really forces us, as teachers, to identify, for ourselves, what we want the kids to know, and to have them acquire it, and to work on it in a daily way, by saying "Look, here's the big idea. What are we talking about? And let's see how it works itself into the text." Teacher Q

Well, one thing is clarity. I think that lesson [about clarity] is carried over into just about everything in my classes. I'm just much more explicit about what I'm doing, even if it's not connected to the benchmarks or standards and the Tanakh, even if it's just a matter of how I want them to approach learning, and if it's a big issue, or even small things, what I want them – what I expect them to be doing in class. I think that was – seeing the effect of making the goals explicit convinced me that I should make a conscious effort to do that in every aspect of the class. Teacher I

Well, it helps, you know, just focus on what we want. Because at the end, what we assess is going back to the "to know and to do." Do they know? You know, they have to prove to us. So it helps us, while teaching, to focus on those things that we know that we will kind of assess later on. I mean, everything is important. But some things are kind of, we see it as more important, because we can use it again. It's like a tool to use again later on. Things are recurring, and things are coming back. So the next time it will come back, if we focused on it really well, then with no difficulty, they can come back to it. If it's grammar or language or ideas. Teacher C

Teachers reported that students responded positively to the focus and structure of the lessons. This was a surprise to some of the teachers who expected their high school students to prefer a "looser" approach to the curriculum and instruction.

Every single unit has the same format, which is helpful for the kids. Each unit has a title page, it has a glossary of Hebrew words that they, by the middle of the year, they knew to go to on their own. So it was really nice that they learn that skill. There are goals, “At the end of this unit, you will be able to”– And before we go into the unit, we read it together. So they know what’s going to happen. And then I would say 95% of the time, the assessment is right there, on the first page, like on page three. So they know it’s coming. And there’s about 20 units. And every unit looks the same. And that’s helpful for the students, especially these students with organizational issues. Teacher T

It was the explicitness of it: why are we doing this, why is this important, why do we all need to be looking at that text? All of that was laid out in front of them so that it made sense to them and they actually did it. I just think that from the very biggest issues to the small ones, this idea of explicitness that is inherent in standards and benchmarks has been really, really useful. They really liked it. Teacher I

Big ideas are on the board throughout the year. The kids are almost impatient when we had the big idea on the board for a long time. “Tell me, when are we going to change the big idea?” They love the whole concept of the big idea. I think it gives them insight into what we’re actually going to be talking about. And the big ideas are very out there, you know. One of our big ideas was the way God feels about mankind changes throughout the Torah. God can feel. The kids notice those kind of things. And they’re like “Wow. Soon we’re going to be talking about some good stuff.” Teacher D

There were times when I was wondering, “What is this whole thing about?” But, as I was able to sort of test things out in the classroom, things started to make sense. And the kids– It might have taken a few months for us to really see, but the whole organization with the big ideas and everything, kids were bringing things up and making those connections. And now that it’s the second year I’m in sixth grade, now, I’m getting kids that learned this way in the fifth grade. And like it’s almost easier. I have a list, now, of the skills they learned in fifth grade. And I know what they’re supposed to come in with in sixth grade. And I have some idea where they should be at the end of sixth grade. And we do use big ideas in sixth grade, too. They knew it from before, so we’re trying to make it uniform. And it’s nice to have the sort of statements in the front of the room, so they always know what’s going on. Teacher P

I’ve learned that lesson plans are so important, and to give more credit to the students for what they can learn, and I’m the one that can be in charge of that, by what I’m teaching. In particular the subject that I’m teaching, the Tanakh, it’s not just reading a bible story, there’s showing – I’ve learned that teaching mitzvahs and ways to live, there’s a way to do that and that’s through the Tanakh and the Torah. I think that’s the basis of Judaism, that’s why it’s so important to start there. And it’s just a bonus that there’s a particular structure to it all that I can use. Teacher A

The level of thinking– this has been a very positive point. The kids have expressed, and the teachers, we hear it. I have seen it myself, in my own classroom, how kids are able to think at a deeper level, the main ideas. This big idea stays with them. They reinforce it. I think they are able to recall it in other ways at other times. That’s a really major, major

improvement, I think, for this program. But there's some focus to Tanakh teaching, very specific goals that one wants to reach with the kids. Teacher Q

It's hard to tell you, because it's so in the first steps. But we think, as a group, that they might come out of the school with a bigger picture and remember more than, you know, details that we used to teach before. And okay, they'll remember it for this week and the next week. And I'm sure some people will remember more. But, you know, all of us know, that if you don't use something all the time, they become less and less sharpened in your mind. But, if you talk about an idea, and it's being talked from so many different directions, I think-- and they could come up with what they know, then it's much more-- they own it more. Because they think about it in other ways in their life, they might even use the ideas in other ways. Teacher U

A small number of teachers were also able to articulate the shift from *teaching* to *learning* as they talked about the impact of the Project on their instructional practices and orientation.

But, with the results [on the assessments], we can really test ourselves if we taught the right thing, if we taught we we're supposed to do, if they got the message out of it, if they know what we wanted them to know, right. So it's a great tool. I mean, it's difficult to write it up and to think of everything. But once it's done, and then from now on, we can use it again, it's a great tool, really, to see if they got the message, if they know everything that they should be knowing from that point. Teacher C

I think the main thing about the ideas about this, don't just test the kids. Don't just test them and, if they get it wrong they get it wrong, or if they get it right they get it right. Make sure that they do understand it, so that there's an idea of understanding there with each child, whether you do this in groups, however you do this, just make sure they understand what you're doing before you go on. That's a nice idea, I think. And that we need to look for the teacher to know where the child is. Teacher A

I mean I felt that, you know, as a fairly successful Chumash teacher, I love literature. And I've done a lot of work studying on my own, just in terms of studying the text. I used a lot of the old I mean, old, old Melton materials. But this focused me more on student outcomes. I found that to be helpful. Teacher O

Jewish Studies heads, all of whom recognized that they and their teachers still had a long way to go to fully implement the Project, also reported on the positive impact they saw by the end of the 2007-2008 school year.

I think the teachers really understand much of the rationale [for the Project]. We're all talking the same language, we're all sharing the same lessons, particularly now with the new teachers. I would be shocked if it wasn't much more transparent. In certain of our classes, it's definitely transparent. I can say that for my X class, they've been through the whole thing, [the process]. I think it's more transparent, although I think that there are certain kids who would still say, "Why are we learning this?" But that's very different from, "What are our goals and what are we going about accomplishing?" JS Head 1

I think that there is so much more clarity on the part of the teacher, that the kids are getting clearer, better-defined information. I think that the kids feel more empowered. I think that they have even subconsciously or consciously appreciate the teachers telling them what they're going to be learning. They appreciate having big ideas there, so they can keep going back to them. They're great reference points for them. That's why I said usually even subconsciously— the kids are in an environment where there's less going off the topic. We're staying on topic. The teachers are planning better. That's an area where we still need to do a lot of work. They are not planning sufficiently. But they are planning better than they were. So we're seeing the kids really learning what we set out for them to learn. And in our assessments right now, we're seeing real progress. I can't tell you that five years ago, we wouldn't have seen success, well we weren't. But now, we're so clear about what we're setting out to teach. And we're looking at the kids' output, and we're seeing it. And I think the other thing that's very, very important is that a teacher can say, also, "These kids have not mastered." So now, the question becomes, have they not mastered? And is there stuff here that they're just not going to master? Is the Hebrew too much for them? How do we prepare for them, for the next year? What do we do for those kids?" But we are definitely, I think, the kids— I mean obviously, the goal is for them to be the ones who are gaining. Hopefully we're not putting the teachers through this for naught. JS Head 3

And, the Jewish Studies head of one school, who would echo the comments of her colleagues quoted above, also noted that her school had created a full scope and sequence for the TaNaKH curriculum, one that took its place on the school's curriculum map.

So, in terms of Tanakh, I would say we're stable. We're as stable as the school has ever been. And I continue to see us growing in depth, rather than saying "Okay, we did that last year. Let's change it to something else." And, I'm very proud of the fact that Tanakh made it onto our curriculum map, and is there, and sits in every classroom. Every teacher knows what they teach from year to year. And it doesn't have to get fiddled around. That said, I also don't want it to get stale and boring. And so, that's the challenge, to keep it alive. JS Head 4

This is a significant accomplishment; one that the Project would like to see, ultimately in all of the schools.

Summary: Impact of the Project. The TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project is an ambitious enterprise that requires a great deal of the Project Director, the TECs, the Jewish Studies heads, and the teachers. The Project engages Jewish Studies heads and teachers in changing fundamentally what they teach and how they teach TaNaKH. By requiring them to go through the process of developing curriculum units that include assessments and lesson plans, it highlights what they know and can do and what they need to learn. Over the years of Project implementation, it has been clear that TaNaKH teachers and their Jewish Studies heads, for the most part, had little experience with developing curriculum, designing lesson plans, and developing formative and summative performance assessments and rubrics. It is always challenging for professionals to confront their own lack of knowledge. This was as true for the

TaNaKH Project's participants as it would be for any set of teachers confronted with the limits of their knowledge and skill.

To their credit, the teachers and Jewish Studies heads in the schools in this sample accepted the challenge of participating in the Project and learned a great deal. They are in the process of translating what they learned into their classroom practice with the goal of continuing to improve themselves so that their students' learning of TaNaKH improves.

Without question, their successes and the impact of the Project on them is the result of their own desire to improve teaching and learning, of very hard work, and of the Project's capacity to help them toward this goal. Given the short life of the Project to date, these are significant and meaningful accomplishments.

CONCLUSIONS

Question 5 and 6: Taken together, what do the findings at the individual schools lead us to conclude about school-based conditions that are conducive to or impediments to high fidelity/high quality implementation of the Project? What do they lead us to conclude about the value and impact of the Project as a whole? The findings about school-based conditions that are conducive to fidelity and high quality implementation of the Project are clear: a skilled, knowledgeable, committed Jewish Studies head is the most essential school-based factor linked to high fidelity implementation of the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks Project in the schools studied. The knowledge and skill of such Jewish Studies heads are detailed in the section of the report beginning on page eight.

To reiterate, however, skillful leadership included a) insuring sufficient meeting time with teachers and making good use of that time, b) encouraging teachers in the hard work involved in changing their perspective on teaching TaNaKH and developing their own standards-based units of instruction, c) providing teachers with feedback on the units and on their teaching of them, and d) understanding the value of a collaborative, instructionally-focused culture and supporting its development for the TaNaKH Project and for all areas of Jewish Studies. Skillful Jewish Studies heads must also be eager to learn and use what the Project has to offer and they must be provided by their schools with sufficient time to devote to the Project. Previous sections of the report have identified other school-based factors that influence implementation but none, in our view, is more significant than the knowledge, skill, and capacity of the Jewish Studies head.

We have not said much directly about the quality of teachers needed to implement the Project with fidelity, but needless to say, teachers are essential to its outcome. The teachers interviewed for this study have demonstrated their commitment to the Project and their increasing knowledge and skill in what they have said in their response to our questions. Given that in most schools we interviewed all of the TaNaKH teachers, the responses presented in this report are not biased toward only the most effective teachers. They represent all of the teachers in these schools.

During the first year or two of the Project's implementation, it seemed as though teachers with deep knowledge of TaNaKH were essential to fidelity of implementation of the Project. Certainly, knowledgeable teachers contribute greatly to the success of the Project. But we have learned that high quality Jewish Studies heads can support their teachers in learning TaNaKH along with learning to teach with standards and benchmarks. Learning TaNaKH can become an integral part of implementing the Project. School-based learning can be supplemented with local area university-based learning as well as study opportunities in Israel.²¹

This kind of targeted learning of TaNaKH may not be the ideal preparation for Jewish Studies teachers, but we consider it a valid, valuable, and effective approach to a) using the standards and benchmarks, b) improving the teaching of TaNaKH in a good number of day schools that do not have teachers with deep TaNaKH knowledge, and c) supporting the range of schools that sincerely want to improve the teaching and learning of TaNaKH.

Finally, we have learned that it is not always possible to determine which schools, which Jewish Studies heads, and which teachers will definitely succeed in implementing the Project with fidelity and to good effect. It is possible for the Project Director to select schools for participation based on criteria that *ought* to lead to successful implementation and it is possible for her to select schools knowing they might not be quite ready. But we have learned in the last few years that schools that appear to be good candidates for the Project may experience school-based changes – the loss of a Jewish Studies head, a change in the Head of school – that alter conditions sufficiently to challenge the Project's implementation. And, we have seen schools that faltered in their first year of implementation regroup and develop extensive implementation with high fidelity in their second and third years. This suggests keeping two points in mind.

First, there is no perfect way to select schools that will insure their success with the Project. The Project Director can do her best, but there will always be some degree of uncertainty in the school selection process. This is to be expected; it is not a flaw in the Project or the Project Director. Furthermore, even schools that experience some significant negative change, may continue to implement the Project. We noted the presence of one school in our sample this year where teacher leaders were carrying the Project forward. It was a given that strong leadership from a Jewish Studies head would likely have led to greater progress. But it is important to note that the school made progress as a result of the support of the Head of school and the commitment of its teachers.

Second, it is not possible to know, in the first year of implementation, whether a school will succeed with the Project over the longer haul. One year provides insufficient elapsed time to make this judgment. Given that we know it will take some schools more than one year to become sufficiently knowledgeable to use the Project's processes, and given that we know curriculum innovation takes three to five years, the data collected from the schools adds

²¹Schools in our sample that have been able to implement these learning opportunities are only those that have the financial resources to support them. Most schools cannot provide such learning opportunities because they lack the financial resources.

evidence to the argument that the Project should be funded with two years of support for the schools. We are saying this not simply because the schools want a second year of formal support but because this is what it will take to create the greatest impact with Project the AVI CHAI Foundation is already supporting to good effect.

APPENDIX A: Indicators of Fidelity of Implementation by School

Indicators of Fidelity of Implementation by School

School and Level	A K-8	B K-8	C K-8	D K-8	E 6-12	F 9-12	G 9-12	H K-8
JS Meetings Held Regularly	*	*	*	+ and * ²²	+and *	+and *	+ and *	-
JS Head Leads Meetings	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-
JS Head Observes Teaching	+	#	-	+	#	+	-	-
All Use Project Language	+	+	+	+	#	+	+	-
Standards Selected	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
Units Developed Based on Standards	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
Units Used ²³	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Student Work Reviewed	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	-
Collaborative Culture in Place	+	+	#	+	#	+	#	-

Key to Symbols

+ = Yes

* = Alternative in place that achieves Project goal²⁴

= Achievement of criteria is developing; evidence available

- = No

²²Schools with + and * use more than one method of meeting to develop their units.

²³One school is developing units based on themes but with some consideration of the Standards. This school is using the units it has developed.

²⁴Schools that have strategies for meeting collaboratively that are productive but are not bi-weekly, for example, are in this category.

APPENDIX B: Next Phase of the Standards and Benchmarks Project
Memo Dated January 16, 2005

To: Leah Meir and Yossi Prager
cc: Sarah Kass
From: Barbara Neufeld
Re: Next Phase of the Standards and Benchmarks Project.
Date: January 16, 2005

At your request, I am writing to summarize my thoughts about the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks project and offer my considered opinion about why it would be worthwhile for you and your colleagues to consider expanding and deepening the scope of the work you began with this project's first phase. In developing this summary, I am relying on my study of the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks project during the last year as well as on my involvement with the evaluation of standards-based reform in numerous cities across the United States during the last ten years. Although there are, of course, significant differences between public schools and Jewish day schools, on the issue of standards and how they might improve teaching, learning, and student achievement, the similarities outweigh the differences and are of the greatest consequence. Indeed, Jewish day schools may be the richest terrain in which to plant this reform.

As we discussed in our telephone conversation, the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks document has the potential to begin the process of improving the teaching and learning of TaNaKH. Achieving the goal, however, requires much more of an investment and intervention on the part of the Foundation and of the schools than the original funded proposal seems to have assumed. Without question, the project has accomplished a great deal in its first eighteen months. It is no small feat to have developed a set of standards and benchmarks for TaNaKH that have met with the approval, by and large, of the Associations, the writers, the steering committee, and the schools. By way of contrast, there are no standards in the public schools for teaching American History because of longstanding, unresolved battles over what to include and how to interpret what might be included. One could imagine this having happened with respect to the standards and benchmarks for TaNaKH, but it did not. In addition, ten schools stepped forward to pilot test using the document because they recognize its potential as do the additional schools that want the opportunity to participate in the project.

At this point, as a result of the process of developing and pilot testing the standards, we all know much more about what it will take to fully implement the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks. Indeed, the pilot phase of the project has done what a good pilot test should do: it has informed all of us about the value of the document and the next steps that need to be taken to move from the document to high quality teaching and learning. With these considerable first-phase accomplishments in mind, let me review my reasons for suggesting that it would be beneficial to continue the work that you and your colleagues have started.

First, standards and the benchmarks, in general, are written to provide explicit statements about what is to be taught and learned. As such, they can a) guide a school in setting priorities with respect to hiring teachers who have the knowledge and skill needed to teach to the standards, b) provide guidance for the design of teacher professional development programs, c) inform the selection of curriculum materials, d) provide an enduring framework for students that can withstand teacher turnover, e) support the design of assessments that effectively measure achievement of the standards, and f) hold teachers as well as administrators accountable for teaching that enables students to meet the standards. This is important because I am told that in most Jewish day schools there is no coherent set of goals that guides TaNaKH instruction or the assessment of what is learned class-by-class, let alone school-wide. There seems to be little articulation of what a day school graduate should know and be able to do with respect to knowledge

of TaNaKH. As a result, the clearly articulated TaNaKH standards and benchmarks can be valuable to the Jewish day schools.

Second, schools that adopt standards are implicitly adopting a particular philosophy of teaching and learning. That philosophy with respect to learning stresses that what students need to achieve is not rote knowledge of content, although there is core knowledge that must be mastered, but rather deep understanding that students demonstrate in their ability to a) make connections between new and prior knowledge, b) problem solve with respect to challenges posed by the material, and c) make connections between the materials and their own lives. This stance on learning seems particularly compelling when considered in the context of teaching and learning TaNaKH in Jewish day schools.

Third, phase two of the project needs to focus on developing teachers' and other educators' capacity to teach to the standards in ways that represent the philosophy of teaching and learning embedded in the reform. It can do this by focusing on developing school-based capacity for implementing all aspects of standards-based TaNaKH education. For the most part, there is little focused, sustained professional development currently available that is designed to deepen teachers' knowledge and skill with respect to teaching and learning TaNaKH. This is the reality in a context in which it remains difficult for the schools to recruit and retain knowledgeable teachers and even heads of their Judaic departments. While the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks document, in and of itself, can make a contribution to the focus and coherence of instruction in TaNaKH, a second phase of the project that focuses on professional development designed to improve teachers' knowledge and skill can lead to improved teaching and, thereby, student learning. Toward this end, the next phase of the project needs to focus on professional development for teachers and the heads of Judaic departments. It needs to develop the infrastructure of skillful, well-trained instructional coaches who can work with teachers and other school-based educators to teach them to use the standards in ways that enable students to achieve at high levels.

The original project seems to have assumed that providing schools with high quality standards would transform teaching and learning. This was an overly optimistic assessment of what it takes to truly improve teaching and learning in any content area. It was an error that continues to be made in the public school arena. Standards and benchmarks are not sufficient because they do not, by themselves, fully inform the work of teachers and other educators. They are not a curriculum and they are not teacher education. They are a set of valued goals and a direction. As such, they need to be accompanied by formal, sustained, predominantly school-based professional development that continues over several years and results in teachers who are able to use the standards to achieve the goals. If teachers learn how to transform the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks into high quality teaching and learning, they will have developed the capacity to bring their new knowledge to other content standards, as well. In other words, it is likely that teaching TaNaKH in a standards-based system will encourage teachers to re-think other aspects of their practice.

Can this project be effective, you asked me? Certainly, educational reform does not have a glowing history in the public sector. Projects are funded for short periods of time, complexities are underestimated or ignored, and, for most of its history, school reform has not truly focused on the improvement of teaching and learning. The advent of standards-based reform was, in most respects, the first genuine effort to improve teaching and learning for all students. But, as happened at AVI CHAI, those who deeply believed in the power of this approach to teaching and learning underestimated what implementation would require. Given the American penchant for quick fixes, standards-based reform was degraded quickly into systems of accountability rather than systems of improved teaching and learning.

Jewish day schools need not follow this familiar trajectory. That is why they are a rich terrain for this reform. There is no one breathing down the necks of the schools and asking them to be accountable for students' knowledge and skill with TaNaKH. In the case of a reform that requires time but has great potential, this is good news. These schools, in theory, should have the requisite time in which to develop the new knowledge and skill required for the proposed work. The Foundation should be able to grant them the time and support they need to garner that knowledge and skill.

Those interested in improving Jewish day schools complain that they do not have good enough Judaic teachers and that parents do not care enough about the Jewish component of their children's education to motivate their students to learn. They say such conditions make it impossible to improve teaching and learning. Without question, it is often difficult to recruit and retain enough highly qualified teachers. Schools hire the best teachers they can find, but they frequently lament the absence of others who might have been more skillful. For their part, teachers complain that their students do not care and that they come to their classes unprepared to learn. Students may complain that their teachers bore them with unexciting classes. Is it prudent to invest in the next phase of standards-based reform of TaNaKH if these are the conditions?

My answer is that if these conditions stand in the way of your considering the next phase of the TaNaKH standards project, they likely stand in the way of your support for any educational programs. These are the conditions in which many public and Jewish day schools find themselves. The question is how to support instructional interventions that can improve teaching and learning for the adults as well as for the students given this context. Professional development for the adult educators, for teachers, Judaic studies directors, and coaches, is the next step in changing the culture of teaching and learning for students and, thereby, students' achievement of the standards. Better teaching can even lead to greater student interest in the subject matter! Attempting to improve instruction in the first set of pilot schools and then using what is learned from the effort to design the project for a second set of schools seems like a thoughtful, prudent way to move forward with this important work.

There is evidence from the field of mathematics teaching and learning that such an approach can be effective. The mathematics standards were developed approximately fifteen years ago by the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics. These standards and benchmarks were later accompanied by a set of teaching standards for mathematics. Very quickly, it became clear that the mathematics standards demanded that teachers know more mathematics than they usually knew. (This will likely be the case with respect to teachers' knowledge or TaNaKH.) In addition, it also became clear that teachers who were excited by the standards and wanted to implement them needed to learn new teaching strategies as well as more mathematics. And, they needed the standards transformed into curricular materials that reflected the standards and the teaching strategies. Over the years, the field of mathematics instruction, which includes universities as well as private curriculum developers and the associations of teachers, have developed considerable knowledge about how the standards can be transformed into better teaching and learning. Curricular materials that match the standards have been developed and are in use as is professional development designed to increase teachers' content knowledge as they learn to teach the curriculum. The story is not yet one of definitive success, but it is one of progress. And, it is a story that can inform the next phase of the TaNaKH Standards and Benchmarks project.

I have been involved in school reform work in the public sector for all of my career and I hold no illusions about the challenge this project faces. But, I think it would be wasteful for the Foundation to cease its support of the project now, just when the initial phase is completed, when ten schools have begun to grapple with the standards, but before the reform is deepened and well-established in any of

them, and before they have had the opportunity to learn what they can truly do to improve teaching and learning in their schools. It would be akin to announcing failure before giving the effort a realistic trial. It would be to stop the work the pilot schools are doing before they have a chance to deepen it and learn how much of a difference it can make for students' learning.

From my perspective, it would be a worthwhile investment for AVI CHAI to take on the challenge of using standards to improve teaching and learning of TaNaKH. You may not succeed. The enterprise will require considerable contributions in the form of commitment, hard work and stamina from the participating schools. Not all of them may be willing or able to meet the requirements of the work. However, if you proceed and are successful, the impact on the teaching of TaNaKH will be profound as will be the implications for addressing other areas of Jewish study in the day schools.