

PoP School Leader Executive Summary

Pedagogy of Partnership (PoP) is a comprehensive Jewish educational model for teaching and learning that fosters wonder, empathy, and responsibility toward fellow learners and Torah. PoP's method reinvigorates the practice of havruta—learning in pairs—for today's learners. The professional development provided by PoP includes resources and coaching for educators and leaders to help learners develop skills necessary for respectful, productive, and collaborative learning.

Rosov Consulting has been working with PoP since 2018 to understand the impacts of the program on students, teachers, leaders, and schools. This evaluation focused on PoP school leaders: administrators or teacher leaders who serve as liaisons between PoP and their school. School leaders help individual teachers and their schools meet their goals for PoP implementation. Many received PoP coaching tailored to school leadership and are involved in a community of practice PoP facilitates for school leaders. The 16 people we interviewed were chosen because they could provide a unique and more holistic view of the impact of PoP in their schools.

In this report, we discuss the major themes that emerged from these interviews, specifically, how valuable the PoP model is for educators and their students¹. Leaders reflected that PoP supports them in articulating and enacting the Jewish schools they envision by providing a shared framework for teaching and learning.

High-quality professional development that motivates teachers to continue honing their craft

A valuable professional development experience

As noted in prior evaluation reports, the professional development offered by PoP is viewed as high quality. PoP staff are charismatic, model the ideals they teach, and form genuine and ongoing relationships with participants. Coaches, in particular, are valued thought partners who support educators by actively listening to their concerns and pushing mentees out of their comfort zones. In addition to providing staff support, PoP deploys appropriate strategies for engaging adults in learning. The ongoing training provides multiple and varied opportunities to learn about and practice the PoP model. The teacher-centered resources and their adaptability to teachers' contexts and comfort levels helps a wide-range of educators to successfully embed PoP into their teaching.

¹ More in-depth learning about the impact of students can be found in Rosov Consulting's report from November 2022. In summary, PoP supports student connect with content on a deeper level, learn to effectively talk and listen with one another, connect with peers and value peers' contributions, express their voice and questions, and take responsibility for their own learning.

School leaders report that teachers value and seek opportunities to gain new pedagogical practices and grow their skills

The PoP experience provided an example for how engaging in professional development can positively impact teachers and students. Teachers and school leaders noticed how learning about and practicing new PoP methods results in improvements for students. This motivated educators to continue to reflect on and refine their pedagogy. Through PoP, they were invited to think critically about how and what they are teaching, and what they want students to learn. Participants built the muscles for reflection and continuous improvement, which opened the door to considering other new and innovative pedagogical practices.

Building the Jewish schools leaders envision

Articulating and bringing to life school values

PoP is viewed as more than a set of practices for individual educators to employ in their work but as providing and modeling a set of principles that bring to life whole-school values. School leaders see how valuable it is to work with an organization that helps them articulate and advance their core principles.

Text study at the core of learning

In schools that especially value text study and the relationships formed through text study, work with PoP is seen both as a tool for helping to deepen teachers' professional skills and as a vehicle for advancing a broader vision of Jewish education. PoP provides a pedagogical approach for teachers who want to ensure their students are able to engage deeply with text. Interviewees express a deep sense of alignment between what they seek to accomplish and what PoP offers.

Supporting teachers to become leaders in their schools

Another facet of PoP's broader contribution is helping participants grow as peer leaders. In some schools, teachers become PoP liaisons and are coached in instructional leadership skills to be able to support others who are implementing PoP in their classrooms. The school administrators we interviewed also provided examples of ways teachers made contributions beyond the specifics of what they learned through PoP. Interviewees recognize that participants gained skills that can be applied in multiple school contexts, and they acquired confidence in their capacity to enrich their fellow professionals and not just their students.

A shared framework for teaching and learning

A framework for teaching in Jewish studies departments

The PoP model helps Jewish studies departments clarify their vision and deploy a common pedagogical approach. Teachers who implement PoP routinely use similar language and teaching strategies that become a throughline in students' experiences. Implementing common strategies also opens the door for teachers to collaborate and share resources. Once a cohort of teachers become facile in using PoP, leaders often turn their attention to formalizing PoP practices in their curriculum. This may take the form of clearly articulating what students should learn each year and assessing student progress within the curricula.

Shared language and practices applicable across content areas and grades

To return to an earlier theme, it is evident that PoP's contribution to schools goes beyond the Judaic studies classroom. The educational language participants learn to facilitate paired learning and the practices they develop to study text are valuable across disciplines and grade levels. Since teachers are communicating in the same educational language, they can teach students a set of shared concepts and terms despite their distinct and often different responsibilities. There is also evidence of how this shared language facilitates collaboration among teachers who may not have been likely to interact.

Impact on other school contexts

A further dimension of PoP's whole-school impact is its contribution to non-classroom settings whether in the context of professional development or faculty meetings. The themes of shared language and of applying shared tools surface here too, expressing the potential of these assets to support collaboration and partnership. Some schools are also engaging parents in PoP learning, most often during Open House or milestone events.

Life skills applicable beyond the school setting

Finally, just as the educators are applying these resources, concepts, and skills beyond their classrooms, interviewees observed how PoP has helped students learn life skills that are applicable beyond the classroom. By learning how to study in havruta, students are practicing active listening and clear communication, employing evidence to support their claims, and reflecting on their learning.

Challenges: Personal capacity and staff turnover

Interviewees brought up two primary challenges that hinder their ability to implement PoP to the fullest. First is finding the time to support colleagues who are implementing PoP. In some cases, this is because PoP school leaders have large teaching loads themselves, and in other cases, they are busy with administrative responsibilities. The other challenge facing schools that implement PoP is staff turnover. When staff turn over, they bring PoP with them to their new school. However, teacher turnover puts a strain on schools when they onboard new staff to the PoP model.

Conclusion

In prior evaluation reports, we documented the meaningful impacts of PoP on student learning and teacher effectiveness. By learning how to study in havruta, students practice life skills like active listening and clear communication, employing evidence to support their claims, and reflecting on their learning. Beyond the classroom, PoP is widely used in professional learning opportunities, faculty meetings for staff, as well as during events for parents. PoP helps school leaders build the Jewish schools they envision. The shared educational language staff have acquired has fostered collaboration among teachers in Jewish studies and other departments and helps students see the interconnectedness of different disciplines. The PoP model helps departments clarify their vision and deploy a consistent pedagogical approach. Another facet of PoP's broader contribution is helping teachers build the muscles for reflection and continuous improvement, which opens the door to considering other new and innovative pedagogical

practices. As teachers iterate and reflect on new practices, they grow as peer leaders and gain confidence in their capacity to enrich their fellow professionals as well as their students.