how we learn is what we learn
Dear Reader,

The articles in this 5780 | 2020 Pedagogy of Partnership Journal originated in a different era. These pieces open up a window into pre-pandemic classroom life shaped by the teaching and learning of PoP practitioners and their students. Since leaving the classroom and moving online, the superb teachers who authored these articles spent months working tirelessly not only to transfer their teaching to online platforms but most importantly to fortify their students’ well-being and hold their students in community. We were able to return to these teachers to write an addendum to their articles explaining how they drew on the PoP principles and practices to create their online classrooms. Through this work, they were able to continue the learning and take care of their students. At the end of each article you will find their COVID-era updates and reflections.

We are grateful to Joanne Davi, Alixandra Greenberger, Jenn Laytin, and Nechama Malkiel for their heroic work as frontline teachers and for taking precious time to contribute to this newsletter. We also thank Rebecca Lurie for her leadership, particularly through these turbulent times, and for contributing her piece from the point of view of a Head of School about the role PoP plays in shaping and animating the very vision of her school.

Allison and Orit

CONTENTS

2 Ticket to Learning: Leveraging PoP Reflections in the Classroom
   Joanne Davi

4 Meeting Our Commitments: PoP at Luria Academy of Brooklyn
   Alixandra Greenberger and Jenn Laytin

6 To Teach and to Learn Jewishly
   Nechama Malkiel

8 Because of Jewish: How PoP Supports Our School to Make Our Case
   Rebecca Lurie
We all know that feeling. The one when you execute a lesson just as you’d hoped; the kids were engaged, the activity pushed them into deep thought, and their conversation was invigorating. Just then, you look at the clock, and realize it’s time to go. No time for an exit ticket or even a closing thought. Sure, you know the students showed deep understanding and honed their skills, but do they know?

Reflection is one of the most important components of learning. Many studies have shown that learning is achieved not just by doing, but by thinking about what we do. Students need to be given opportunities to reflect upon the content they’ve learned and the skills they’ve practiced, as well as ask themselves what they have yet to learn.

As teachers, we all understand the necessity of building reflection into every lesson. However, we often find ourselves in a rush during the last five minutes of class. When I began my two-year fellowship with Pedagogy of Partnership, additional layers of importance were placed on reflection and metacognition. During my first year experimenting with PoP, I transcribed students’ conversations, had them watch videos of their havruta work, and set goals based on this data, but that was all too overwhelming to make a reflection routine. I learned through my PoP Year One experience that, in order to get my students to embrace partnership practices and skills, I needed them to engage in reflection consistently. Entering my second year of PoP teaching, I vowed to find an efficient but meaningful way to make those skills and practices present in my class. In addition to wanting a system for my class, I also wanted something relevant for the other teachers with whom I share a classroom. I experimented, tweaked, conferenced with colleagues, and adjusted. By January I found a sustainable and effective routine that could work for Humanities, Math and Judaic Studies courses.

I created posters of the four PoP concepts I wanted to emphasize throughout the whole year: the partnership triangle, listening, stance, and wondering. To each poster, I added a few sentence prompts in order to guide students’ reflections. At the end of every class I have a built-in option for exit ticket-style reflections. The beauty of this routine lies in the fact that it can be used at the end of any lesson. If a lesson was geared towards practicing a particular partnership skill, I direct students to answer one of the prompts from that specific poster on a post-it. Otherwise, students get to fill out a post-it and choose to place it on any of the four posters as their exit ticket.

After the first week of implementation, I noticed a real impact. Students were filling out the “wondering” prompts throughout the lesson—not just at the end—and students asked to complete multiple prompts for an exit ticket. I also read a moving reflection from a student who struggles to work with her peers. She wrote, “I felt heard by my partner when he shared my ideas to the whole class.” Other responses included deep reflections on havruta learning that I hadn’t even explicitly taught:

“My partner made me feel heard by discussing and talking with me.”

“One takeaway I have from my partners’ ideas is that you can use the same evidence to prove completely different points or ideas.”

Joanne Davi
“I felt heard when my partner enhanced my thinking and deepened my thoughts.”

Of course, not all students wrote reflections on this level. Some stayed on the surface and wrote literal descriptions such as, “My partner told me what the boat meant” or “My partner likes to talk a lot.” These types of reflections are bound to happen and they are the perfect teaching moment. I put all of the reflections onto a slide and brought them back to class the next week. The exit tickets became our “do now” as we all noticed and wondered together about the types of reflections being displayed. One of the students noticed his own reflection lacked specificity and shared that it did not fully capture what he was trying to convey. He also forgot that there are sentence starters on the posters that can help guide the reflection; I used these moments to remind everybody to use the frames.

A PoP colleague once told me that we should not let our students’ wonderings sit up on a poster and go undiscovered; we need to build in time for students to follow their curiosities. I believe the same is true for reflection. Many of my students were surprised to see that I read their exit tickets, or that we were going to use the reflections to set goals. I displayed PoP’s partnership practices and directed students to set one personal goal for the next few sessions that they believed would benefit the havruta. The students’ goals showed impressive self-awareness; my talkers set goals around asking their partners to share more, and my speedsters set goals about slowing down and engaging on a deeper level with the text. My favorite reflection however, came from a student who struggles to articulate. His goal is “explaining myself when I don’t think my partner is understanding me.”

So far, this system works. The daily reflections are efficient and can be used to inform future instruction. Bringing student reflections back for further discussion puts a valuable emphasis on metacognition. The last necessary component is consistency. I am confident that by making this closure routine, my students will enter the larger world as deep critical thinkers, problem solvers, and world changers.

**COVID-19 UPDATE:**

My hope for students to become deep, critical-thinking problem solvers and world changers could not have been more timely. Our school closed the building and moved to distance learning in response to the Covid-19 pandemic one month after I wrote the original article. I spent the first two weeks of distance teaching in pure survival mode; continuing my PoP practices seemed more challenging somehow. However, once I settled into the new challenges of zoom rooms and 30 minute classes, I realized that PoP practices are possibly even more relevant than before.

Instead of telling my students that listening and working together are essential for distance learning, I asked them their opinion on the matter. As usual, I was enlightened by their responses. One of my students said it is important to work together efficiently and effectively because, “The rest of the world is trying to do the same thing to solve the pandemic.” Other students added details about true team efforts and shared that working together is the only way to truly get work done. They ended up brainstorming a list of behaviors, strategies, and expectations to make sure peers are listening to each other, including putting zoom on speaker view, giving nonverbal feedback, and eliminating unnecessary tabs to limit distractions. One of my students wrapped up our conversation by reminding all of us that it’s even easier to pretend to listen though the screen, and we all have to be more dedicated and focused in order to “listen with our brains instead of listening with our ears.”

Their answers inspired me to make a distance learning version of my exit ticket procedure. I now have students respond to a daily prompt on Google Sheets at the end of my class. I plan on circling back to discuss the exit tickets, and the success of our breakout room havrutas, on a weekly basis. My initial uncertainty about bringing PoP practices to distance learning has dissipated. I realized that keeping the same routines and expectations for havruta is exactly the consistency that my students need during this time and truly promotes the idea that we really are all in this together.

Joanne Davi is the 5th and 8th grade Humanities Teacher at Oakland Hebrew Day School
Pedagogy of Partnership (PoP) has impacted Luria Academy by giving us the language and tools to engage in the deep critical thinking that is an integral part of our teaching philosophy. Our four guiding commitments at Luria Academy are curiosity, kindness, strength, and contribution, and PoP seamlessly connects to all four of those commitments. We are curious by asking our partners questions about their ideas and wondering about the text; we are kind in how we treat and engage with our partners; we are strong in persisting when a text feels hard, using our partner as a support; we understand that contributing is what holds the partnership together, and we know that we each have something to learn and something to teach. PoP truly aligns with our school’s overarching educational philosophy from start to finish.

We began incorporating PoP in our second and third grade classrooms when teaching Chumash lessons. PoP allowed for phenomenal havruta moments where our students honed their listening and articulating skills and then were able to move to the deeper work of challenging and pushing their partner’s thinking. Although we started using the PoP framework in one subject area, the accessibility of the language allowed it to organically flow into other subject areas. Soon, PoP language prompts such as, “Tell me more about what you mean,” were coming out of the mouths of math teachers without their even realizing they had just entered into PoP territory!

It was only natural for us to begin to incorporate PoP into our Language Arts instruction this year. We use the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop, a curriculum which emphasizes the importance of tapping into partnership learning. What is unique about PoP is that it explicitly teaches students how to take on the stance of partnership learning—the attitudes we must cultivate in order to engage respectfully with our peer partners and the texts we are learning to read and write. These dispositional skills are practices that Teachers College does not emphasize. In Reading Workshop we now use, “I notice,” “I wonder,” “I think,” and “What do you think?” as sentence starters in our read-alouds. Reading partners help one another sound out tricky words, embodying the PoP stance that both partners have something to contribute. We emphasize that our books are the third partner in the partnership triangle (two learners and a text), and that we need to respect the author’s voice by not interrupting read-alouds. In our Writing Workshop, we have used the partnership stance to support writing partners in feeling safe when sharing their writing with one another and giving feedback or advice for revisions. Because of PoP, we now have readers and writers for whom partnership learning is an integral, comfortable way of learning.

PoP has elevated the level of learning in our classrooms. We can only imagine how much more our students are going to grow as they continue to use the PoP framework across subject areas.

COVID-19 UPDATE:
Distance learning is challenging the way that we, as progressive and Montessori educators, teach our students, forcing us to rely on devices instead of in-person
interactions. Fortunately, the tools that our students established in the classroom from the PoP framework have enabled us to rise to the challenge of online learning together. When learning on a platform like Zoom, it’s very easy to fall into the more traditional teaching model of lecturing. However, we have been using the breakout rooms feature on Zoom, wherein students can be grouped together and sent to work privately in a breakout room, so that we can draw the students back into actively engaging with the text in the lesson. Now more than ever, giving our students the chance to work in partnerships is allowing them the human interaction that they crave during these socially distant times.

Alixandra Greenberger is the Instructional Leader for Lower Elementary Literacy and a teacher for 7-9 year olds in general studies at Luria Academy of Brooklyn

Jenn Laytin is the PoP School Leader and Team Leader for 5-7 year olds in general and Judaic studies at Luria Academy of Brooklyn
A picture of my fourth grade class’ havruta practice two years ago: “It is time to translate pasuk alef [verse A]. Listen for your name as I pick equity sticks to assign your partners.”

Before I started my work with the Pedagogy of Partnership, the term havruta indicated that students would work together to translate texts. The possibility for depth of discussion, engagement, and long-term relationship building was missing from “havruta” activities. When I read the book A Philosophy of Havruta: Understanding and Teaching the Art of Text Study in Pairs, I was excited to discover research that teased out the dynamics involved in this traditional mode of learning.

As a result of my work with the Pedagogy of Partnership, student inquiry now drives our class discussions and one-on-one havruta discussions. Students generate factual, interpretive, and personalization questions about the psukim [biblical verses] they study in their havruta pairs. They later submit their best questions of each type to me, and I curate them so that havruta pairs can discuss the questions at “chat stations.” The havruta pairs rotate through several such stations in a class period, encountering sets of the three types of questions. Students bring their text along with them to the stations and refer to the text regularly to back up their interpretations, find answers to factual questions, and compare their own experiences with those of the Avot and Emahot [patriarchs and matriarchs]. Student engagement has skyrocketed as students take ownership of their inquiry and are able to facilitate their own discussions with their havruta partner.

Pedagogy of Partnership has also emphasized the power of teaching heterogeneous groupings of students in Judaic Studies. I have found that the students’ right level of challenge with interpretive work is often quite different from their facility with decoding and translation of psukim [biblical verses]. It is extremely rewarding to see students who struggle with translation tasks take the lead in interpretive tasks, asking text-based questions and sharing interpretations that are based in evidence from the text.

I have been amazed to see students who struggle with translation demonstrate insider knowledge of how Jewish interpretation works. In a discussion of whether Lavan planned to trick Yaakov into marrying Leah from the start, one such student posited that Lavan did in fact make this plan early on. As evidence for her interpretation, she pointed out that Lavan told Yaakov that he would give her to him (Breishit 29:19) rather than stating Rachel’s name outright. She derived that Lavan chose to refer to her rather than state Rachel’s name because in his mind, Lavan was referring to Leah. This student taught our class an exegetical tool that was then harnessed by her classmates in other discussions; in Torah study it is noteworthy if the name of a character is mentioned outright or whether they are referred to by a pronoun.

In another unit, the students noticed that the text mentions that Yaakov took his eleven children across the Yabbok ford (Breishit 32:23). Why eleven, when we had learned that he had twelve children at the time—eleven boys and one girl (Binyamin was not yet born)? In the psukim that follow, Yaakov wrestles...
with an *ish*. One student proposed that the twelfth child may have been the *ish* who wrestled with Yaakov, perhaps because they disagreed with him about his approach to Esav. This student harnessed another exegetical tool that shows mastery of the traditional Jewish interpretations of texts: the answer to your question may be found in the text that surrounds it.

I have been thrilled to pair students with havruta partners who are working on different leveled text materials. It is a joy to see students who are sometimes frustrated when working through the original Biblical Hebrew paired seamlessly with a havruta who breezes through the text skills work, because both students require the same level of challenge in interpretive tasks.

Pedagogy of Partnership has added a new dimension to our school’s Jewish mission. In addition to students learning traditional texts in Judaic Studies classes, they also develop facility in learning *Jewishly*, becoming acculturated into the traditional havruta mode of Jewish learning. I now have colleagues in other disciplines who are teaching the tools for havruta learning, so that students can learn *Jewishly* in several of their subject areas, beyond Judaic Studies classes. My colleagues and I now use the term havruta more intentionally, and in reference to so much more than translation work. It is my privilege to become not only a teacher of Jewish texts, but a teacher of Jewish learning, facilitating and witnessing my students’ initiation into the traditional and holy mode of havruta.

**COVID-19 UPDATE:**

At the beginning of this stay-at-home period of Covid-19, I made it a point to reach out to my family members and close friends to maintain my well-being. I then realized that the interactions that define my “normal” are not just with my friends and family, but also with my co-workers and neighbors, who are the community that normally surrounds me on a daily basis. In these days of remote learning, maintaining interpersonal relationships with classmates is key to our students’ well-being, just as interacting with co-workers and neighbors is so important for adults. I am taking advantage of the havruta skills we worked on to build my remote learning community. My students discuss Torah in break-out rooms and sing our havruta song from their living rooms. The Torah text is the third partner that binds our class together in these difficult times.

וְאֵלֶּה יִגְּדֵנֵה יְשֵׁנָה
A threefold cord is not readily broken. Kohelet 4:12

Nechama Malkiel is a 3rd and 4th grade Jewish Studies teacher at Milton Gottesman Day School of the Nation’s Capital
The value of Jewish day school is a topic that has been written about hundreds of times as enrollment has been challenged by sky-high tuition, terrific local public schools, and the world becoming more secular. As a head of school during this time in our history, I truly believe the Jewish day school sector is in distress, and it is our responsibility as school leaders to think creatively and proactively to address these challenges. One of the key strategies our school is implementing is to define the uniquely compelling student experience we can offer specifically because we are a Jewish day school. Pedagogy of Partnership, as a Jewish method of teaching and learning, has helped us to advance and implement our strategy.

For decades, our school and many others have used the term “dual curriculum” to represent our approach to academics, suggesting that we spend half of the day on secular studies and half on Judaic studies. But this definition of the program immediately put us on the defensive. How could we possibly cover as much math as a local public school when we spend half of the time on the subject? Yet we knew that our students were graduating prepared to join their high school classmates, most from secular elementary schools, and were placing into the highest levels of classes. Over the past several years, we have been working towards a new vision for our academic program in which we lean into those unique aspects of Jewish day school instead of minimizing them. Our vision is that our pedagogy is based on Jewish thinking and learning, directly building such competencies as embracing complexity, engaging in discourse and developing a point of view. These skills are intentionally developed by studying ancient Jewish text. And because we are a Jewish day school we are better positioned to build these competencies than if we were limited to a secular curriculum.

Once we clearly articulated this vision for our pedagogy, it was obvious to us that collaborating with Pedagogy of Partnership (PoP) was a critical step to achieve our goals. Now, as we sit two years into the program, we are tremendously grateful for the opportunity this fellowship has given us. Through the fellowship, our faculty members have gained meaningful insights in service of improving their practice. These insights enable our teachers to create conditions in their classrooms that foster skills like listening attentively, respecting multiple perspectives and wrestling with complex problems. These skills are deeply developed when studying Jewish texts; are transferable to English, math, science, and social studies classes; and are critical skills for our students to develop as they prepare for a future that is unknown to us.

Our school is only at the beginning stage of embedding PoP practices into our approach to learning and teaching. We plan to weave these practices throughout our curriculum and pedagogy in a completely intentional way. They will enable us to develop a portrait of a graduate who has acquired these transferable skills specifically because they were part of our uniquely compelling educational program. With PoP, I am excited to see how we can help showcase the unique value of Jewish education!
Pedagogy of Partnership is a comprehensive Jewish educational model that supports educators to bring Torah to the next generation. Rooted in Jewish values and practices, PoP enables learners of all ages to develop the habits of wonder, empathy, and responsibility toward others and Torah. PoP conducts professional development workshops, coaching, a fellowship program for a growing network of schools, and provides ready-to-use materials for educators and leaders. In this time of physical distance, the PoP approach restores relationship building to its central place in education and promotes connectivity.