

Blog Post: How DeLet Uses Standards in Teacher Preparation

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Standards are a key component of any teacher development program, but here at DeLeT, where we prepare teachers for Jewish day schools, they are far more than just a set of benchmarks: They provide us with a road map to assess each developing teacher's progress along a number of continua. Standards are useful at any stage in a teacher's career development, but here I demonstrate with a real-world example how we use them in practice with teachers at the pre-service level: DeLeT graduate students who are earning the MAT degree to prepare for careers in Jewish day schools. Our full set of standards and an overview of the DeLeT curriculum are available on our website.

DeLeT has seven standards, each with several elements. Progress in developing each element is measured along a continuum of stages, from "pre-professional," to "approaching," then "enacting," and finally to "excelling." Let's look at one element of our second standard.

Standard 2: Builds a classroom learning community rooted in Jewish experiences and values

Element A: Infuses Jewish experience and values into the learning environment

1. Pre-professional: Lacks interest or knowledge to plan classroom Jewish experiences and integrate Jewish values
2. Approaching: Treats Jewish text studies and engagement in Jewish activities and rituals as isolated parts of the school day; occasionally connects personal and social responsibility to Jewish values
3. Enacting: Builds Jewish texts, rituals and experiences into classroom life; uses Jewish texts and rituals to shape classroom culture; articulates connection between personal and social responsibilities and Jewish values
4. Excelling: Seamlessly integrates Jewish texts, rituals, and experiences into daily classroom life; spontaneously takes advantage of opportunities to promote Jewish experiences; uses Jewish values to guide own behavior and to construct student understanding of responsibilities

Delet student interns are with us for one very intensive year. Four times during that year interns meet individually with their mentor teachers (who supervise their classroom internships) and their field instructors (the link between DeLeT and the school where the student interns) for assessment conferences. The continuum is the anchor for those assessment conferences. In late October, the middle of their first semester, we look closely at two standards, including the one above: *Builds a classroom community rooted in Jewish experiences and values*. At the first assessment conference, one of the questions we're asking is how the student builds and maintains this learning community.

In practice, it might look something like this: An intern we'll call Tammy, a mentor we'll call Susanna and I as the field instructor meet to talk about strengths and areas to focus on for growth. Tammy has looked at this row of the continuum and thinks she's between "preprofessional" and "approaching." She feels she needs more content knowledge to do it well. Tammy helps with leading *tefila*, for example, but does not make connections to Jewish ideas when students are working on other subjects.

Together, we make a plan to move her practice to the next stage, rooted in the real issues she faces in her classroom. Tammy has noticed, for example, that when her second graders work in groups, they don't always listen to each other's ideas. But she knows that everyone has something to contribute. She decides to take the text from Pirkei Avot: "Who is wise? The one who learns from every person," and have her students study the text and what it could mean for them in the classroom. Following that, she will post the text in the class and she will look for opportunities to refer students to it. If she sees a group in which students are not listening to each other's ideas, she will remind them to learn from each other, "so that we can all become wiser."

In the context of the assessment, the continuum gives Tammy, Susanna and me a clear framework for pinpointing Tammy's stage of development for each specific standard and for making a plan for her growth. Our standards are rooted in DeLeT's teaching philosophy and guide us in our work with student interns throughout the year.

