

#OnwardHebrew: In the words of education directors

BONUS: Complementary resources are offered in green font after select comments.

How do teachers make a difference towards #OnwardHebrew success?

- **“Having the right teacher makes a difference.”**
 - “The teachers are really good at getting the children excited.”
 - “We have an awesome third grade teacher who really starts the kids off well. I can’t imagine shifting decoding to a later grade so we will always be ‘On-the-Way’ and not ‘All In.’ We’re okay with that.” [NOTE: #OnwardHebrew is okay with that, too!]
 - “We have an 6th grade coordinator who brought an amazing structure for the program and it has been transformative for the children. Why? There is serious tracking. In addition, learners give themselves confidence scores (hey, they can get embarrassed when leading or reading in front of others). The B’Mitzvah tutors say that these kids are more confident than they have ever seen and we (the director and assistant director) feel they are more confident and competent than our children in a different learning structure. This teacher has made a huge difference!”
 - “We have a sixth grade teacher who offers (on her own time) to meet one-on-one with children during the week for a 10-minute check-in. They take her up on it and it has made a difference.”
- **“Finding Hebrew teachers is even harder now.”**
 - “Finding any teacher is difficult, even in a place that used to easily hire (like with college students in the area).”
 - “Getting new teachers is our biggest problem.”
 - “We need teachers who buy into Hebrew as a central part of Jewish identity. Decoding is not the end point, but a number of teachers see it that way.”



- **Not all Hebrew teachers are willing to easily make the shift to #OnwardHebrew's Sound-to-Print approach.**

- “Long-time teachers can be skeptical ... and not all like trying new things.”

- “It’s hard to get teachers to move away from textbooks.”
- “There are teachers who have learned about sound-to-print but then go back to their old ways. It’s hard to get them to change.”
- “Having teachers that will follow #OnwardHebrew’s learning principles is also a challenge. As a Hebrew Through Movement example, I visited a class and saw a native Hebrew speaker teaching an HTM lesson using English 75% of the time!!!”



- “I have an HTM teacher who thought she was doing HTM, but when I observed, I saw that she really was not – rather, she was improvising with her own way of teaching.” **And speaking of Hebrew Through Movement, the learning can move beyond the specific HTM lesson.**

- “Our sixth grade Hebrew teacher made a connection between the HTM command לִשְׁבֹּת (*lashevet*; sit) and the prayer word בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ (*b’shiv’t’cha*; “when you sit”) from the *V’ahavta*. The children were excited to learn that.”
- “In a Judaic class discussion about the Four Questions, learners brought their understanding of some of the Hebrew learned in an HTM class to this bigger-ideas-conversation.”

But HTM learning can also get stuck.

- “I have an HTM teacher who has taught for a couple of years, but never seems to get to the holiday or prayer/blessing units. The kids just jump and run and spin.”
- “I haven’t seen my HTM teachers do the prayer lessons. I’m not sure she knows they exist.” [HTM teaching ideas for prayers AND ready-to-print picture cards may be found here:

<https://www.hebrewthroughmovement.org/prayers--blessings.html>]

- **“We have been tapping some of our great Hebrew teachers to help in a bigger way.”**

- “We are priming our fourth grade teacher to help with the bigger picture of #OnwardHebrew.”
- “I’ve hired a Hebrew Through Movement coordinator. She teaches in our weekday early childhood program – including Hebrew Through Movement – and among other things, works on Sundays coaching teens to teach HTM.”



- **There are other options for Hebrew teachers:**

- “We have a *shinshin* (a post-high school Israeli who volunteers for a year prior to their army service) who does a fantastic job with Jewish Life Vocabulary. He connects many of the words to the Israeli culture from which he comes.”
- “We use teens”
 - “Two teens were trained last fall. During the first semester, they worked through the online HTM seminar together and then they started teaching. While I felt the teaching was going slower than expected, the adults whose classes the two teens came into reported that they were doing really well. However, we are losing them both for the coming year. One is heading to college and one wants to do something different. It’s time to look for new HTM teachers!”
 - “We have a Hebrew supervisor who makes sure the teens plan their HTM scripts. I, the director, was available during the training process, but after it ended, couldn’t engage regularly. Looking back, I feel the teens could have used more support and encouragement.”
 - “I have six teens on the Hebrew Through Movement team – they meet with our HTM coordinator to learn Hebrew and the skills to teach HTM and then teach. This way each class is able to have HTM weekly. The teens also handle ‘*Rega Shel Ivrit*’ (‘A Moment of Hebrew’ – our version of JLV) at *t’fillah*. Empowering these teen assistants has been incredible!”
 - “When picking the teens for this, I made sure they knew this is not just an assignment (as in, “I’m assigning you to work with the 4th grade”) – the teens have to want to be the HTM teacher.”
 - “We had a challenge with the dynamics between the (younger) teen’s role as the teacher ‘in charge’ of an HTM class and (1) the adult teacher accompanying the group, (2) the other teen assistants who were asked to follow their peer’s directions. Some of this was because of concern about stepping on toes. It needs to be talked through in advance and during the year.”