

Aligning Lessons to Aspirations



**M.A.P. FOR JEWISH
LEARNING & LIVING**

This lesson for teachers gives them a chance to try applying [My Aspirations Playbook \(MAP\)](#) to actual lessons. You can use the lessons provided or have them bring their own. The exercise uses selected aspirations from MAP. You can use the ones listed here or, if you already did the session called, [Identifying Our Top Priorities](#), then you can use the aspirations that your participants selected in that session.

Excerpts from MAP have been chosen for these activities so that teachers can practice applying the aspirations rather than debating the full document. If you have more time for teachers to explore MAP, begin with Session 1. It can be instructive to compare the top goals generated by lay leaders with those teachers prioritize. If there are differences, further editing can be done to come to a final, more inclusive list.

Goal

Teachers will explore how a small number of clear values can affect how and what they teach.

Materials Needed

- Slide or handout with excerpt from preamble
- Copies of [MAP](#)
- Top priorities from Session 1, or aspirations included in the learning activity below
- Lesson plans (linked below or teachers can bring their own), printed or with internet access

Plan

Introduction (10 minutes)

Welcome teachers to this session, where they will have a chance to explore aspirations for Jewish education and reflect on their own philosophy of Jewish education. Post the following excerpt from the preamble:

Jewish learning is intended to help us understand ourselves, our communities, and the world around us. Jewish wisdom, traditions, and culture are resources for navigating the joys and challenges of our daily lives, enabling all of us to thrive.

[My Aspirations Playbook \(MAP\) for Jewish Learning & Living](#) frames the way we think about Jewish education and guides the community in helping our children to develop a strong sense of self, belonging, responsibility, and spirituality.

Invite the teachers to take their time reading the quote and identifying its components. Ask them to illustrate these purposes of Jewish education as they see them playing out in their teaching. The drawing can be a continuum, hierarchy, Venn diagram, concentric circles, or separate bubbles, for example. Does one idea lead to another? Supersede or encompass the others? If something is missing, invite the teachers to add their own core concepts to the diagram.

Ask everyone to hold up their illustrations. Give a minute for people to observe others' diagrams without question or comment. Let a volunteer or two share their ideas.

Activities

Goals and Lessons Mix-and-Match (20 minutes)

Explain that this activity will be experimenting with prioritizing one aspiration from MAP and applying it to a lesson. (Clarify that one aspiration might require several more concrete goals underneath it for lesson planning). Divide the teachers into groups of 2 or 3. Give each group four lessons and four aspirations (below). The aspirations can be the top priorities for your congregation that resulted from Session 1 or the ones included below just for the purpose of this exercise.

Distribute or post the following directions, and ask each group to:

1. Pick one lesson (or set of activities).
2. Read over the lesson or activities and see if you can discern a learning goal. Is there an aspiration from MAP that matches best? Is there a way you would expand the lesson to more deeply reflect this idea?
3. Next choose a different aspiration from MAP, specifically from the four highlighted for this activity. How would the lesson need to be changed to reflect this idea? Suggest a few changes to the content, learning activity, and/or procedure. Would the evidence of understanding look different? Would students work in groups or do some learning with their families or other children or adults?
4. Repeat as time allows with the other lessons.

Reflection (5 minutes)

Think-pair-share on these reflection questions.

1. Was there a lesson you were drawn to more than others? Why do you think that was? Was your preference related to the goals of the lesson and your philosophy of Jewish education? Were the activities more in sync with your own skills and interests? Did you think your students would enjoy it or engage with it more for some reason?
2. What was the process like of adjusting a lesson to better meet an aspiration? Do you think the lesson was better in the end? Would it be easier to teach (than the initial lesson or than a lesson not clearly aligned to a goal)? Why or why not?
3. If you were browsing the Internet and came across these lessons in planning for Shavuot, how would you choose which one to teach? How might having clearly articulated goals affect your planning?

Conclusion (10 minutes)

Whip around the room inviting teachers to complete the following sentence: When our organization identifies clear aspirations for Jewish education, it has the potential to affect my classroom by...

In the next session, we will begin with a blank slate and try planning with the aspirations in mind.

Selected Aspirations

Category 1: Jewish children develop fluency in Jewish cultural and textual tradition, rituals, language, and history and rely on them to inform their values, decision making, and actions.

Category 2: Jewish children value Jewish friends as partners, and Jewish adults as mentors/teachers, for exploration of shared values, identities, and experiences.

Category 3: Jewish children appreciate similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Category 4: Jewish children explore the concepts of obligation and choice in reference to Jewish ideas about commandedness.

Sample Lessons or Learning Activities

Shavuot With Kids: The 10 Commandments-- A simple craft for exploring the Ten Commandments from JTeach.org.

<https://jteach.org/project/shavuot-with-kids-the-10-commandments/>

Carrying Our Burdens, Together from the Blue Dove Foundation-- A lesson on the value of asking for help, based on the relationship between Ruth and Naomi.

<https://thebluedovefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/copy-of-shavuot-middot-resource-4.pdf>

Chag HaBikkurim (Festival of the First Fruits)--From the National Library of Israel, using primary sources to explore the evolution of the tradition of “first fruits”.

https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/en/Education/Pages/itemPage.aspx?ItemID=EDU_XML_ENGSP1057

Shavuot Activities for Kids-- A variety of activities that are thematically related to the holiday of Shavuot. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shavuot-activities-for-kids/>

Shavuot Customs Padlet-- An interactive tool for students to learn about and share their ideas on different Shavuot customs.

<https://www.lookstein.org/resources/holidays/shavuot-resources/shavuot-padlet/>