

# A Framework for Effective Jewish Educational Leadership

■ by **THE AVI CHAI FOUNDATION**

---

## Setting Vision, Priorities

Effective leaders:

- envision a positive operational and educational future for the organization;
- pursue that vision with relentless focus;
- influence others to move in those directions;
- ensure their achievements are sustained beyond their tenure and/or through transition;
- regularly realign educational systems toward the continual improvement of instruction, optimal student learning, and the realization of the Jewish mission.

## Jewish Lens

Leaders of Jewish institutions:

- view all their goals and actions through the prism of their Jewish mission;
- see their school as critical to the development of students' Jewish literacy and identity;
- continually deepen their understanding of the Jewish values their school espouses;
- ensure that the values are enacted in the daily life of the institution;
- acknowledge diversity in individual commitment and communal involvement with Judaism;
- see their school as an integral institution for the future of the Jewish People.

## Understanding Context

Effective leaders:

- know, understand and analyze the organizational context of their schools;
- can understand school cultures and sub-cultures;
- keep abreast of, and are sensitive, to changes in the Jewish community and the world of education;
- have a large repertoire of organizational knowledge and practices and the capacity to choose from that repertoire as appropriate to the context.

## Data Driven Assessment and Accountability

Effective leaders:

- monitor a variety of data related to all areas of JDS functioning, including, e.g., enrollment and financial data, pupils' achievements and progress and the quality of teaching;
- employ evidence-based decision-making (i.e., subjecting each possible solution to rigorous standards and evaluation based on data collection and analyzed over time);
- understand themselves as accountable to their boards, staffs, parents, and students.

## Building Staff Capacities

### Strong leaders:

- develop and empower staffs by distributing leadership;
- share authority and responsibility for achievement;
- effectively build and cultivate leadership teams, and know how to function as an effective member of a team;
- have an eye on leadership succession, both within their schools and for the field as a whole, by identifying qualified candidates and grooming them to be future leaders;
- are instructional leaders, creating an environment conducive to learning for both children and adults;
- lead by example and in turn build learning organizations which drive school improvement and promote the Jewish mission of the school.

## Collaboration

### Leaders of Jewish day schools:

- are effective collaborators both within the school and with related constituencies in the community at large;
- promote collaborative cultures in their schools at all levels: among teachers, students, staff and volunteer leaders.

Successful collaboration means the harnessing of diverse ideas into wise action in support of the growth and development of the school, its students, and the Jewish People.

## Communication

### Strong communication skills are integral to effective leadership. Skills include:

- explicitly promoting the school and its mission, especially the Jewish goals and character of the school
- maintaining ongoing, honest and open 2-way communications with all constituencies
- keeping all stakeholders informed of progress toward high priority goals
- promoting listening as a critical communication skill
- maintaining strong relationships with volunteer leaders
- advocating for the school and telling its “story” in a compelling way to diverse constituencies

## Learning and Self-Reflection

### Leadership involves continuous learning and self-reflection.

#### Effective leaders:

- exhibit openness to self-examination, the ability to admit mistakes and learn from them;
- are dedicated to turn learning into practical action;
- continuously learn from and seek out sources to keep abreast of new research and proven practices.

## Self-Management Capabilities

#### Effective leaders:

- understand that their actions heighten their salience and their impact on others;
- cultivate awareness of their own emotional states;
- learn to manage their behaviors in ways that strengthen school culture and model school values;
- balance conflicting demands and maintain an appropriate work/life equilibrium.