BetterLesson Coaches are professional, friendly and model teachers. It has been a pleasure to watch them work and to watch our teachers learn from them. The teachers at our day schools have found the experience extremely powerful.

—Rachel Abrahams, Senior Program Officer
In 2010, the AVI CHAI Foundation announced a new initiative around supporting personalized learning initiatives in Jewish day schools. Increasing individualized instruction was an opportunity to improve the quality of education, enabling students to develop 21st century skills, and decrease the cost of schooling.

The program focused on providing seed funding for three key elements:

1. Integrating online and blended learning in established schools.
2. Incubating low-cost, high quality new schools to serve as proof points for blended learning.
3. Launching online offerings for Judaic Studies.

In 2015 BetterLesson began a multi-year partnership with the AVI CHAI Foundation, focused on supporting traditional teachers to adopt blended learning strategies in their classrooms. What started as a 43-teacher pilot has exploded to hundreds of participants and several spin-off partnerships with individual schools. The success of the partnership stems from a shared understanding of the importance of building teacher capacity by giving the the time, space, support and resources needed to successfully implement new pedagogical approaches.

“Though I have always strived to reach each of my students, this process has helped me reinvent myself and find new and improved avenues to connect with the students of tomorrow.”

Foreign Language Teacher
Quebec, QC

In the first five years of the program, the foundation launched three low-cost schools and began investing in the creation of online learning resources for Judaic Studies, but they were not seeing schools adopt blended learning approaches. Even with a multitude of grants, workshops and programming, the vast majority of schools were still teaching in the traditional way.

The foundation realized shifting to a personalized learning approach requires a system that empowers teachers to learn new skills, experiment and be deliberate about change. Creating time and space to build leader, teacher and student capacity was essential to the success of this new pedagogic approach. With this new clarity in perspective, foundation leaders began looking for solutions that could accommodate all aspects of their needs.
Exponential Growth and a Clear Way Forward
Since the 2016 pilot, the partnership has expanded to cover hundreds of teachers from across North America. Teachers have seen the coaching as transformative to their practice. “I learned so much about my teaching through BetterLesson coaching. I know that I am more reflective and, to a large degree, more responsive to the needs of my students,” claimed Joanne Ketcham Another teacher found her new approach to teaching has changed her student’s approach to learning. “I see that students are taking more responsibility for their successes and failure. They know the areas they need to work on and are not upset when they work on different things in class. They are interested to do the best they can.”

Administrators at participating schools also noticed the impact of BetterLesson Coaching. “Teachers are differentiating more, they are excited about new tools, incorporating more technology, transferring ownership to students, and feeling good about it!” noted Aliza Chanales, Assistant Principal of Yeshivat Noam.

Tracie Glazer, Head of Hillel Community Day School has seen changes across her school. “I was able to witness teachers applying new ideas and innovative practices in their classroom. My math teacher started utilizing station approaches and individualizing instruction in his classroom. My Judaic studies teacher for Kitah Aleph has consistently shared how valuable her time with a coach has been for her and her instruction.”

Abrahams sees shared understanding of the time, space, support and resources needed to build capacity as critical to the strength of this partnership. “BetterLesson Coaches are professional, friendly and model teachers. It has been a pleasure to watch them work and to watch our teachers learn from them.” With the partnership now in its third year, the focus is now on equipping schools to continue the initiative before the foundation sunset.