



Educating for a Jewish Spiritual Life: Nurturing the Spiritual Capabilities of Jewish Students

What is Educating for a Jewish Spiritual Life (EJSL)?



EJSL is a three-semester, professional development program that provides educators with concrete ways to teach students to become spiritual seekers and makers of meaningful lives. It invites a deeper connection to and joy in Judaism as a pathway for engaged living and lifelong growth.

Educating for a Jewish Spiritual Life:

- Teaches mindfulness: the skill of paying attention, non-judgmentally, in the present moment;
- Develops social and emotional learning skills, including expanded capacity for managing emotions, being empathetic, paying attention, resilience, and positive relationships;
- Reduces stress; and
- Deepens connection to self, others, and Judaism.

The core spiritual practices your faculty and students will learn include: Jewish mindfulness meditation, *tikkun middot* (developing prosocial character traits like humility, patience, loving-kindness, and respect), and contemplative *tefillah* (prayer), which turns rote prayer into an open channel to the heart.

“When we first started teaching [a popular secular mindfulness program], the preliminary observation is that the students were better able to settle in assembly.

Now [thanks to EJSL], we touch the spirit of the child.”

(Head of School)

For Educators

Modeling and teaching mindfulness in the classroom necessitates educators developing their own mindfulness practice—which can take as little as five minutes a day. Participants in an early version of the program reported feeling more connection and compassion, and less stress and reactivity.

“I gained so many skills. Pausing; non-reactive responses; taking deep breaths; thinking before saying; focusing and noticing choices; gratitude; food appreciation; more attention to all the beauties in life and the holy world around us.” (Teacher)

EJSL for Your School

Adopting a program focused on mindfulness and social and emotional learning supports schools seeking to provide innovative and student-centered programming. EJSL impacts your educators as well as your students and their families (we provide “mindful moments” that parents can reinforce at home.) And, with the increase of mindfulness and mediation in popular culture, it can serve as a differentiator for parents making decisions about where to send their children.

What makes Educating for a Jewish Spiritual Life unique?

- The Jewish framework.
- The teaching of multiple spiritual practices, including *tikkun middot* (the development of character traits like patience and compassion), contemplative *tefillah* (prayer), and mindfulness meditation.
- The dual professional development and personal growth opportunities for educators.
- IJS’s expert faculty and 20 years of experience.

The Educating for a Jewish Spiritual Life Program Model

Participating schools commit to a one-semester training course, with the option to continue for up to three semesters, spread over 18 months. Each semester begins with a half-day workshop for faculty run by an IJS trainer. At the conclusion of the workshop, inspired participants enroll in an online, on-demand, self-study course: *The Gift of Awareness for Educators*. The online course experience is supported by webinars, a discussion forum, and email access to a coach.

Online course participants interact with educators from across the country in webinars and discussion forums. To learn how a local group of three to four schools can come together as a local Consortium and have their own webinars and discussions during the online course, please email Rabbi Sam Feinsmith at sam@jewishspirituality.org.

Semester 1: Building Fundamental Skills focuses on educators developing a personal, Jewish-framed, mindfulness meditation practice, and concludes with specific techniques to model mindfulness in the classroom and age-specific ways to introduce “mindful moments.”

Semesters 2 and 3: Expanding the Toolkit & Deepening the Work building on the foundation laid in semester 1, through *tikkun middot* practice in semester 2 and contemplative *tefillah* (prayer) in semester 3. The practices in the second and third semesters are more focused, and the additional supports (e.g. webinars), are more personalized and centered on classroom integration and teaching students.

Time Commitment: 60-90 minutes per week per educator to view the online course modules and engage in mindfulness practice. Frequency trumps duration. For mindfulness meditation, as little as 5 minutes a day of practice starts to produce benefits for many people.



EJSL Model

Semester 1: Build Fundamental Meditation Skills

- Half-day in-service workshop: Intro to EJSL & Jewish mindfulness meditation
- *Gift of Awareness for Educators: Jewish mindfulness meditation for you and your students* (online, on-demand, self-study course)
- Online Course Supports: Monthly webinars, discussion board, journaling, and email access to a trainer/coach

Semester 1 Outcomes:

- Foundational skills for adopting a regular Jewish mindfulness meditation practice to support Jewish spiritual engagement, well-being, and authentic teaching;
- Skills for modeling mindful, non-reactive presence in the classroom;
- A toolkit for delivering mindful Jewish moments in the classroom.

"... I have learned so many different ways to practice Jewish mindfulness with kids in the classroom. This has allowed me to choose which activity would be the best in the moment. The overall impact has been overwhelmingly amazing-the kids will often ask for certain "favorite" mindfulness activities and they are now much better able to explain how they are feeling about something." (Teacher)

"I teach general studies and I always felt less than competent when touching on Jewish aspects of the curriculum. [Because of EJSL] I'm more present and don't feel embarrassed to inject the Jewish aspects." (Teacher)

"The huge variety of practices that I have been introduced to through the EJSL program have opened doors and windows to Judaism that I didn't even know existed." (Teacher)

Semester 1 Sample Time Table

Daily (don't worry—everyone misses practice sometimes!)

- 5-10 minutes per day, 5-7 days per week, of practice, e.g., meditation

Weekly

- 30 minutes per module (there are 14 modules) watching videos, which are available in 4-5 minute segments
- 5-10 minutes per module on the reflection questions and journaling
- 5-10 minutes per week participating in the discussion forum (optional)
- 5-10 minutes per week (or 1-2 minutes per day) communicating with your practice partner (optional)

Monthly

- 1 hour per month attending an online webinar

**Semesters 2 & 3:
Deepening Practice,
Expanding the
Toolkit**

- Half-day in-service workshop, each semester:
 - Semester 2: *Tikkun Middot*
 - Semester 3: *Tefillah*
- Online, on-demand self-study course with supports

Semesters 2 & 3 Outcomes:

- Foundational skills for applying mindfulness skills to *tikkun middot* practice and personal *tefillah*;
- A more meaningful and transformative engagement for students with *tikkun middot* work and Jewish prayer in everyday life; and
- A concrete toolkit that enables teachers to help students cultivate spirituality, resilience, and character as foundations for well-being.

*“The middot that you bring are the middot that you are, because you bring your whole self.”
(Teacher)*

Investment: Get started for as little as \$1,570 for a full semester of Jewish mindfulness meditation training!

Following the professional development workshop, your budget is the only limit on the number of educators per school who may enroll in the online course. EJSL schools pay the reduced rate of \$180 per educator (list price: \$240) for the online course: *Gift of Awareness for Educators: Jewish mindfulness meditation for you and your students*. The example below shows four educators per school enrolled in the online course.

	Professional Development	Online Course		
	Workshop (18 minimum)	4 educators per school	Total Per Semester	
	Cost per school per semester	(No limit - \$180pp)	per (non-host) school	
Online course participants attend webinars & access discussion forums with educators from across the country				
Single School	\$1500	\$720	\$2,220	Plus trainer travel
Shared Workshop: 3 Schools	\$850 per school (host school: \$425)	\$720	\$1570	Trainer travel included
Shared Workshop: 4 Schools	\$750 per school (host school: \$250)	\$720	\$1470	

Register at ijs.regfox.com/EJSL-registration today to enhance the resilience, sense of well-being, and connection to self, others, and Judaism that your teachers and students will learn to access—every day.



Questions? For more information about bringing Jewish mindfulness to your school, reach out to **Rabbi Sam Feinsmith**, Director of the Educating for a Jewish Spiritual Life program, at:

sam@jewishspirituality.org

(646) 461-6499 ext 012