

Hebrew Assessment: Essential, Effective, and Easy as 1-2-3

Imagine a pilot trying to land a plane without being able to see the runway, and without a compass to keep on course. Flying blind.

We don't want to teach Hebrew flying blind either. We want to know what our students are learning and whether we're accomplishing our curricular objectives. Ongoing assessment can become a compass. It can help us understand the development needs of our students. It can reveal which parts of the material they learn most easily, and which are most difficult. Done well, it can help us understand where students need individualized remediation, and where they can forge ahead.

To be most effective, assessment needs to be both ongoing and individualized. Jay McTighe, author with Grant Wiggins of the Understanding by Design system of curriculum planning, and a nationally recognized expert on assessment, compares assessment to photography. What we want, he says, is not a single snapshot depicting what a student knows on a given day, but rather an ongoing "photo album of achievement."

Ongoing assessment provides a series of snapshots of a student's progress along a continuum of learning. Over time, the teacher can develop a profile of each student's progress and can make appropriate adjustments to the learning plan. Two British academic researchers, Paul Black and Dylan Williams, call them "assessments *for* learning" rather than "assessments *of* learning." They see assessments not as end products of their own, but rather as part of an organic and dynamic process, providing information for action.

Assessment can help the teacher:

- Specify individual and class learning goals.
- Develop instructional plans that make the best use of limited class time.
- Identify specific areas the whole class needs to review.
- Correct Hebrew reading and pronunciation errors before they become ingrained.
- Uncover an individual student's trouble spots.
- Provide effective, frequent, and positive feedback for students.
- Provide feedback to the Director of Education about overall class progress.
- Develop report cards and prepare for parent conferences.
- Create informative, data-driven reports for the religious school committee.

Our digital applications are especially suited for Hebrew assessment because automatic assessment features are *built right into the software*. These features allow real-time assessment of every student in every class *without using up valuable class time!* The information is collected automatically, whenever students log on to complete a Hebrew exercise or play one of the reinforcement games.

So assessment doesn't have to take up class time, *and* it is combined with something that can be fun for kids. Students never need to feel pressured to perform. Teachers and principals can monitor progress at any time. The information is always available online, whenever it's needed. It's that easy.

Our digital applications, such as *Kol Yisrael* and *Alef Bet Quest*:

- Correspond precisely, chapter-by-chapter, to the textbook.

- Provide practice of letter, word, and prayer pronunciation.
- Reward completion of a chapter with a video game that further enhances prayer skills; for example, in “Ruin Quest” students play a side-scrolling adventure game while identifying letters by collecting Hebrew words that contain them.
- Track progress for each student, automatically.
- Help extend class time by encouraging work at home, without calling it homework.
- Make results available to the teacher online at any time.
- Let students email or print out a results page after every session, to show what they have accomplished.

How Does Software Assessment Work?

As you complete a chapter in class, assign the parallel chapter on the CD for home review. (Be sure to assign CD home review consistently throughout the school year!) You can go online any time to monitor the students’ progress, or you can ask them to email the results page at the end of the chapter. You can also ask them to bring a printout of the results page to class each week.

Online Assessment—As Easy as 1-2-3!

The interactive CDs all contain thorough, *automatic* assessment features for every student—and teachers can review the assessment online. This assessment can be accomplished any time, and from anywhere. All you need is Internet access and the serial number that was provided with your students’ CDs. There are three simple steps to monitor student progress online:

- 1) Go to the Behrman House home page, www.behrmanhouse.com. Click on the blue “ASSESSMENT” button in the lower left-hand corner.
- 2) From the Online Assessment Menu choose the CD your class is using.
- 3) Type in your class’s serial number and click SEARCH.

Instantly, you have before you results for every student in every exercise of every chapter they have completed on the CD.

The CD assessments show you two key pieces of information:

1. How many times each student has completed each exercise or game, and
2. Each student’s high score for that exercise or game.

You will see immediately who has done the work, who “gets it,” and who may need a bit of encouragement, additional review, or a new learning strategy. This is real information you can really use, every week.

With the automatic assessment features of *Kol Yisrael*, *Alef Bet Quest* and Behrman House’s other digital applications, you and your students will never fly blind again.