

# Israel Engagement CoP: Creating Standards and Benchmarks for Israel Education

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**Guest:** *Dr. Alex Sinclair*

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## Goals

- To learn together about the new Standards and Benchmarks Project regarding Israel Education
- To share our thoughts about the document on standards and benchmarks as it is emerging
- To think about how this may be applicable to your own school

# Agenda

- Welcome our guest
- Review of standards and benchmarks movement in education
- Example from the Tanakh Standards and Benchmark Project
- Review of the Israel Education Standards and Benchmark Project to date
- Discussion and application to our settings

# Meet our Guest



## Dr. Alex Sinclair

- Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem
- The Jewish Theological Seminary, New York
- MAKOM Israel Engagement Network, Jerusalem

# Questions to Consider

- Why is vision important in Israel education and engagement?
- What are standards and benchmarks or indicators?
- What do Israel indicators look like?
- How do you react to the indicators that you have seen so far?
- Can we come up with indicators that are appropriate for our schools?

# Vision

From “Vision at the Heart” by Seymour Fox :

- If you begin a new project with serious ideas and lofty ideals, some people will criticize you for being grandiose or for “too much thinking”. And it is true that in the normal course of events you will invariably fall short of your carefully thought-out vision. That is the way of the world: If you start with cognac, you’ll be lucky to end up with grape juice. But that’s not a bad result when you consider the alternative: if you start with grape juice, you’ll probably end up with Kool-Aid!
- Let me put it another way. Education that is essentially pareve – that’s neutral and doesn’t take a strong stand – has little chance of succeeding. In my experience, all effective education has at its foundation a distinct and well-considered vision.



## Defining Standards and Benchmarks/Indicators

- Standard: Given a domain of learning, a standard is an **overarching learning outcome** exhibiting a synthesis of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Benchmark/indicator: A **more specific learning outcome** that is a component piece of a particular standard; what a student will be able to know and do.

## What does Vision have to do with Standards?

- Standards take vision seriously
- Standards concretize vision.
- Standards are the *instructional manifestation* of vision.
- If vision doesn't get translated into instruction, it's just words on paper.

# Clarifying Questions?

Participants wanted to know “How can we quantify knowledge?”

Dr. Sinclair shared that the S tandards and Benchmarks offer a system for describing behavior(s) of student(s).

# Example

## Standards and Benchmarks from the Teaching of Bible

Standard 2: Students will be engaged in the learning of ancient, rabbinic, and modern modes of interpretation of the biblical text and will see themselves as a link in this ongoing chain of interpretation.

- BM 2.2 (K-2): Contributes personal ideas about the narrative.
- BM 2.9 (3-5): Distinguishes between midrash and the Torah text.
- BM 2.16 (6-8): Understands that there can be multiple interpretations to a textual issue.
- BM 2.27 (9-12): Applies inner-biblical interpretation to selected texts.

# Standards and Benchmarks for Israel Engagement

**Vision of Israel education and engagement**



**Outcomes that we seek that are rooted in that vision  
(standards and benchmarks/indicators)**



**Big ideas and essential questions that emerge from the  
standards and indicators**



**Assessments (both formative and performance-summative) –  
aligned with all of the above**



**Lessons, *peulot*, activities that will enable students to attain  
mastery at the assessments**

# The Makom Israel Indicators Project

- Indicators that describe the desired knowledge, understandings, dispositions, activities, and skills of learners / chanichim / bogrim / participants in various contexts of Israel engagement.
- Programs, activities, events, lessons, peulot, etc. (either real and documented or imagined and potential) that serve as models and exemplars for the kind of thing we are talking about.

# Israel Standards in Formation

## 1. Arts and Culture

Members of Jewish communities will be proactive consumers of Israeli arts and culture, making myriad and diverse connections between Israeli arts and culture and their own Jewish lives and identity.

## 2. Travel

Members of Jewish communities will travel to Israel at several stages in their lives, on trips that enable them to experience and converse with the multivocal, enriching, diverse, complex, beautiful, yet sometimes frustrating reality of contemporary Israel.

## 3. Religion

Members of Jewish communities will infuse their religious experiences, ceremonies and practices with inspirations from, references to, dialogues about, and interactions with both ancient and contemporary Israel.

## 4. Education

Members of Jewish communities will learn about, converse with, and make personal meaning through engagement with Israel's past and present, through a wide variety of prisms, including (but not limited to) the political, artistic-cultural, social, linguistic, military, and religious.

# Discussion: How would this apply in your settings?

- The presentation underscores for us the importance of integrating Israel into all areas of the curriculum as well as other areas of the students' experiences.
- Indicators need to be written specifically about integrating Israel engagement with other areas of the curriculum; e.g., the student can compare the writings, such as, John Steinbeck to Amos Oz.
- The standards and benchmarks can help us in our schools to ascertain if the students are being exposed to the body of work that we aspire to. If not, we need to re-calibrate our lessons. One school shared that they did this with their Hebrew and social studies programs in order to make room for more Israel-specific content.
- Dr.Sinclair shared that he hoped that the standards and benchmarks document would become a “conversation starter” in schools.
- The document should allow teachers and faculties to work on their own outcomes for their students .
- The standards and benchmarks are not a prescriptive curriculum.

## Next Steps

- Within any of the standards, create one new indicator and one new program idea that are appropriate for your school
- The CoP is invited to continue the work on the Standards and Benchmarks Project at a WIKI group:

[http://israelindicators.wiki-site.com/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://israelindicators.wiki-site.com/index.php/Main_Page)

# Discussion on Google Groups

Please add your comments, questions and experiences using the standards and benchmarks in your school in our Google Group:

<http://groups.google.com/group/peje-israel-engagement>

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