

For immediate Release

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MMA students benefit from data-driven learning

Menachem Mendel Academy founder Chaya Mushka Ben-Shabat reported with pride the Year 1 Academic Results at a recent Showcase Dinner in Paradise Valley celebrating the completion of the school's first year, pointing to assessments that demonstrate between 2- and 5-years *growth* in both English and Math by *every* student.

Mrs. Ben-Shabat attributes this remarkable success to several factors. "Each MMA student enjoys individual attention with small classes, customized curriculum, coaching on personal issues and life skills, and frequent evaluations without stressful tests. One reason that we are able to set personalized goals for each student and provide the help they need to meet them is the University of Oregon DIBELS assessment system."

DIBELS tests are used to screen where students need extra help and to monitor progress in both English and Math. A Yeshivah University professor recently developed a way to track Hebrew reading skills based on the DIBELS method, which MMA hopes to use in the future.

At MMA, students were given formal assessments three times during the year (beginning, middle, end.) Unlike typical standardized tests, DIBELS screenings are not time-consuming and are designed to detect key predictors of future success. Each DIBELS measure has a research-based benchmark goal which means if a student meets that goal, he or she is more likely to be on track for reading and computing at grade level.

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For example, to measure Oral Reading Fluency students read aloud from a grade level passage for one minute and the number of words read correctly (WRC) is recorded. The benchmark goal is 40 WRC at the end of first grade, 90 WRD at the end of second grade, and 110 WRC at the end of third grade.

Since DIBELS reading tests only take one or two minutes each to complete, and math tests usually take two to six minutes, they are “indicators” of the student’s overall reading or math status and rather than comprehensive measures of achievement.

Like using a thermometer to take a child’s temperature, which provides a quick indicator of general health, these tests provide teachers with information about a student’s reading or math health, and how well he or she is progressing on such skills as vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, computation, and algebraic thinking. When needed, extra help is given to achieve concrete goals. By repeating the tests throughout the year, teachers and students can measure how well an intervention is working.

Rabbi Yoseph Werneck, MMA’s new principal, commented “By using real time data taken from regular diagnostic testing we are able to teach the student as opposed to teaching a curriculum. Our first-year results demonstrate that all students have enormous growth potential, and when the teaching is student-focused, this potential will be realized.”

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