

## Guidance for Using the Tefillah Enrichment Tool

Display [this web page](#) on the IWB (Interactive Whiteboard) and click anywhere on the picture to bring up the [full size pdf](#).

It is fairly self-explanatory, but here are some thoughts on each of the four sections:

### MY PERSONAL TEFILLAH

Having a personal tefillah in mind is a way to imbue each child's tefillah with a sense of importance, meaning and substance, and to make it relevant and personal. First, the children are given a few moments before davening begins to think of a personal tefillah that they would like to have in mind throughout their tefillot. They can be reassured that, even though they may not yet understand every word they read from the siddur, having one or two personal tefillot in mind that they would like conveyed to Hashem is a good way to help themselves establish real kavanah, keep themselves focused and take their davening seriously.

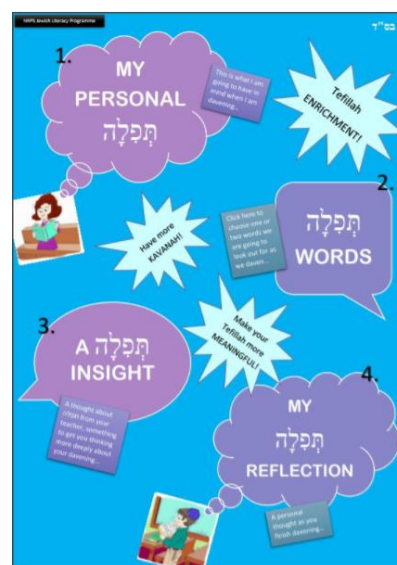
Once davening is underway, the teacher keeps reminding the children to have their *personal tefillah* in mind as they are davening, and so to daven sensibly so that Hashem will hear their personal tefillah and IYH answer it, *letovah*. The new *personal tefillah* aspect of the children's davening now also becomes a powerful support for the teacher in putting children back on track when they might lose focus, become playful or chatty. You only have to quietly, sensitively (and try smiling) remind a child that his/her tefillah needs to be sensible and thoughtful if he/she really wants Hashem to listen to it. This is far preferable to the customary reprimands and rebukes for poor davening which do not aid setting the desired tone at all.

Making reference to the children's own deepest personal tefillot as a way of refocusing them is therefore a very powerful tool, which utilises the children's own wishes for their tefillot to be heard as a strategy for managing their engagement with prayer. However, this strategy should be practised by the teacher with great sincerity, not as a trick or superficial technique. The child will respond appropriately when he/she believes the teacher is behaving with empathy, and with a genuine interest in helping the child to get his/her tefillot heard by Hashem.

### TEFILLAH WORDS

Regarding the 'Tefillah Words' section, try getting a different child each day to choose a Tefillah word or word family "...that we are all going to look out for as we daven," - or two children to choose one word or word family each - and everyone then looks out for that word or words. When children see the word, or any word with that shresh, for example, they all raise their hand as they continue davening. This keeps them focused on their actual davening, yet also simultaneously actively thinking about those words and their meanings - which the teacher explains when the words are chosen.

Regarding the resource you will use for selecting Tefillah words, you can have a Tefillah Words wall display in your class (print them from [here](#) – I have given them black borders so you don't even need to mount them all on backing card!) to use every day for choosing your focus words, or just use the words that come up when you click in the box on the pdf ("[click here to choose one or two words we are going to look out for as we daven](#)"). Much of this vocabulary is specific to the siddur, and does not come up much or at all in Chumash, so it's really worthwhile regularly reinforcing this vocabulary.



### A TEFILLAH INSIGHT

For the Tefillah Insight, you need to have something ready each day - a short thought, or story, etc. You can deliver this before or during the Tefillah session. It's worthwhile to prepare these in advance so that you end up with a good collection and wide range of insights to give the children over the course of the year. However, it will be really powerful whenever you manage to connect the different aspects of your *Tefillah Enrichment*. For example, should the child whom you have asked to select a word / family of words choose no.23, "פלא נפלאות נפלאות" then you can connect that to a *Tefillah Insight* about the berachah 'Asher Yatzar,' which contains the words *לעשות ומפליא* רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות. This would be a great opportunity to explain to the children that this wonderful (נפלא!) berachah is an expression of gratitude to Hashem for the wondrous

mechanics in our bodies – certainly it is a specific thanks that our bodies have successfully discarded waste – but it is far more than that. Asher Yatzar is a recognition of the millions of *wonders* – *nifla'ot* – that are taking place in our bodies all the time, from the moment we are born etc., etc.

To give your 'insight' a little permanence, write a short summary of it in a narrow column at the edge of the regular whiteboard – it can stay there for the day, for the children to look at and think about. You could give the children a small *Tefillah Insights* notebook, in which they will write down your daily summaries. This can escort the children through the school, and upon graduating they will have a truly rich and enormously valuable little book of hundreds of tefillah insights to review and PG pass on to their own children!

### **MY TEFILLAH REFLECTION**

The 'Chassidim Harishonim' (the 'Early Chassidim') paused for thought for an hour prior to Tefillah, davened for an hour and then paused again to meditate on their prayers for another hour! (Berachot 32b) This is the background to the *Personal Tefillah*, the *Tefillah Insight* and now 'My Tefillah Reflection.'

Focused *Preparation*, *Concentration* and *Reflection* are key to effective Tefillah, and even one or two personal thoughts, inspiring messages or perhaps a quick story can surely together set and help maintain the right tone and provide inspiration.

For the *Tefillah Reflection*, give the children 20 or 30 seconds of silent thinking time at the end of their davening each day, for reflecting on their own thoughts and on anything that you have said or that has been discussed. All previous aspects of the **Tefillah Enrichment** can now come together in the children's minds as they step away from their davening and begin their day. Direct them to value a few moments of contemplative silence, perhaps even close their eyes, and give some thought to their personal tefillot and any ideas they have heard or thought of themselves as they davened. Just as we take leave from Hashem when we take three steps backwards after the Shemoneh Esrei, this short, silent reflection time is a much needed device to give the children a sense of the significance of their prayers, such that the respect due to them warrants a purposeful, reflective withdrawal.

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I think this simple set of four strategies can be pitched at different ages, and it will be for you to make this work in your own class.

However, for more sophisticated discussion and stimulation in older classes, think about using these discussion questions at the beginning of davening to get the children thinking even more deeply: <https://torahschool.co.uk/tefillah-corner/>

Finally, please read my '*Thoughts on Teaching Tefillah*,' which focus particularly on finding the right balance between the '*doing*' of Tefillah and the '*learning*' of (about) Tefillah. These reflections very much influenced me to construct the *Tefillah Enrichment* concept, which is intended and designed to add great depth to the children's tefillot (their '*doing*' of Tefillah) while only minimally interrupting the flow and continuity of actual daily davening with a few small but powerful mechanisms.

This system was conceived, then, on the premise that enhanced Tefillah can be achieved through small injections of direction and inspiration, which do not detract from the actual davening as lengthy academic diversions might. Each school will additionally design its own detailed 'Bi'urei Tefillah' (*Explanations of Tefillah*) courses, which will likely provide additional material for the enrichment of actual davening.

I hope you find this system and these notes helpful.

May all of our tefillot be heard well and answered לטובה.

Thank you, and behatzlachah,

Jeremy