

Tefillah Inspirations

1. Set clear, concise and directed goals ahead of time and refer back to them often.
2. Plan a balance between kevah and kavanah.
3. Look at all aspects of physical space. Purposefully plan the space to help attain your goals.
4. Train the staff on a regular basis and check in often.

Suggested Methodologies:

1. Hang a poster with the matbeah written out with page numbers. Put special parts in a different color (e.g. Torah service).
2. Announce the page numbers but also spell them out (“amood matayim chamishim v’shalosh. Shtayim. Hamesh. Shalosh). Show the numbers on a page. Page numbers can be kept in a three-ring notebook and stood up next to the shaliach tzibur.
3. Pair up buddies (a la swimming buddies). Campers who feel more confident than others sit next to those who are less confident. Being in pairs helps zugot stay on the same page. Every now and then say “sheket, zugot!”
4. Encourage eztbah al hamilah. It’s corny but it works.
5. Teach hand motions to go along with the tefillot. Utilize the natural energy that younger campers have and direct it in a positive way. Asking/expecting young kids to sit quietly without fidgeting is not a reasonable expectation.
6. Use a projector for hands-free davening. All eyes are on the words. You can highlight words and focus everyone on the word you want to teach.
7. Sing or read almost everything out loud together.
8. Build from a basic structure and add to it. Incorporate prayers as you teach them. Repetition will reinforce the learning.
9. Tefillah “shorts”: Staff can model this by talking about their favorite prayer. A two-sentence explanation right before a tefillah works best. Asking questions is also good. Take one or two possible answers from the group. Table it for another time or give a short explanation and go back to the service (e.g. “my favorite tefillah is the Shema because it connects me with Jews all over the world.” OR “Why do some people move around when they daven?”)
10. During the Torah service, ask questions or give challenges for each section that is being read. The campers will have something to look for as the Torah is being read. At the end of that section ask for the answers, while the next aliyah is being set up.
11. Act out the parsha on days when the Torah would be read, but you may not be reading formally.

Shaliach Tzibur:

With younger children, it helps to “chunk” davening. Rotate who leads a specific prayer by tzrif, by going around the room, or have two or three campers lead together. Up until Bar/Bat

Mitzvah age, campers can lead tefillot together to build confidence. Find a theme for each tefillah and vary the ways you introduce the theme or main point of each tefillah. Instead of trying to teach every bit of each tefillah, work on general meanings and how to daven. Keep it light and engaging, so campers will want to come back for more.

Some suggestions to get you started:

Ashrei:

- Alternate boys/girls, top bunk/bottom bunk, left side of the room/right side. Be creative so that each day there is a different twist.
- Put large sheets up with the letters A to Z along the left side of the page and aleph to tav on the right side of the page. Leave markers hanging by the paper. Ask campers and staff to come up with their own acrostic, one word for each letter that describes a positive aspect of their relationship with God. It may take a few days but people need time to think about their responses. Leave the papers up so that everyone can read them.

Amidah:

- Start with body language, first paragraph, and opening chatimot (signature brachot that end each paragraph). End with oseh shalom. After a few days of mastering that, add one or two chatimot each day, explaining the meaning as you add them. Hang up a piece of poster board with the ending of the chatimah and a short synopsis of the meaning. Put them in order where everyone can see them.
- Give a 30 second break before shome'ah tefillah to encourage personal prayers.
- Get a list from the marp of people who are staying overnight and add them to the rofeh cholim section.

Decoding tefillot is a skill that can be taught easily and help answer the adolescent resistance of "I don't know what the prayers mean so I don't feel comfortable saying them." One way to decode is to teach the main root words. See page 421 in [Siddur Lev Yisrael](#) for a list of the root words. Teach one each day of the summer and constantly reinforce and quiz everyone on their meanings. By the end of the summer, every camper will be able to give you a gist of what each prayer is about.

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT DAYS OF THE SUMMER:

1. The first day it is crucial to set a tone and make the tefillah experience so special and WOW that even the most resistant camper will be drawn to it.
2. About ten days before the end of the session, begin to discuss ways to take tefillah home. If we don't make the bridge accessible and doable, then tefillah remains a summer-only-with-a-group-and-a-lakefront experience and we have not succeeded. See page 358 in [Siddur Lev Yisrael](#) for a guide on making tefillah part of your everyday life.