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HaYidion: The RAVSAK Journal

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Please contact Marla Rottenstreich at marla@ravsak.org or by phone at 646-450-7280.

RAVSAK

120 West 97th Street, New York, NY 10025
p: 212-665-1320 • f: 212-665-1321 • e: info@ravsak.org • w: www.ravsak.org

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From the Editor

■ by **BARBARA DAVIS**

מה שהיה הוא שיהיה ומה שנעשה הוא שנעשה ואין כל חדש תחת השמש:

KOHELET 1:9 tells us “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun,” and yet we know that is not true. This issue of *HaYidion* is filled with bold ideas, with new possibilities, with hope and excitement about the future. It is surely appropriate that this is our spring issue, coinciding with the rebirth of the nature in all its fruitful glory. Likewise, it is fitting that we publish as we prepare to celebrate Shavuot, when Har Sinai suddenly blossomed with flowers in anticipation of the giving of the Torah on its summit.

There are many blooms to pick in this issue. Depending on your age and experience, you may find some that are familiar; yet regardless of your age and experience, you will also find many that are unique, original, even audacious. Boldness is appropriate at this time; we live in an age that pushes against frontiers. Scientists have discovered the elusive “God particle.” The Encyclopedia of DNA Elements has just been published. We have landed on Mars. We make cells using 3D copiers. Viruses have been engineered to produce electricity. A presidential research initiative will soon determine how neurons interact to produce thought and learning.

All of these developments will affect education, particularly Jewish education. Schools will have to radically alter their presentation and delivery methods, their curricula, their

ways of interacting with students. The 21st century is just beginning but its limits are unknowable. For those of us defined as the People of the Book—at a time when books are as endangered as technologies that were once newer (newspapers, CDs, desktops, fax machines, landlines, etc.)—it is crucial that we reevaluate our positions. There is so much that is new under the sun and we need to find our place in that sun, preserving what is vital to our tradition but being mindful of all



Dr. Barbara Davis is the secretary of RAVSAK, executive editor of HaYidion and head of school at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Dewitt, NY. Barbara can be reached at bdavis74@twcyn.rr.com.

that is going on around us. We hope this “Bold Ideas” issue will serve as a springboard for you, to inspire you to boldness in your own thinking and ways of doing things. For even if everything that was, is and will be has always been, the bold among us can yet discover and uncover many wondrous secrets. ■

חג שבועות שמח

RAVSAK's Board and Staff wish you a happy Shavuot

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From the desk of Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK Chair

■ by **ARNEE WINSHALL**

As I write my final column, counting down the final weeks of my tenure as chair of the board of RAVSAK, Jews all over the world have begun counting the days of the Omer—from Passover, when bold leadership led to freedom and redemption, self-realization and a new beginning, to Shavuot when, only 50 days after the exodus from Egypt, we celebrate the giving of the Ten Commandments, signifying the transition from an enslaved nation to a “light unto the nations.” I cannot help but think back and notice the extent of the transition I have witnessed and in which I have been involved at RAVSAK since my first exposure in 1995.

Turning the pages of this issue devoted to **Bold Ideas**, I find myself reflecting on how RAVSAK’s impact since its inception, and my aspirations for RAVSAK when I accepted the role as chair, are rooted in being ambitious and committed to doing what needs to be done, learning from obstacles and not letting them be in our way.

- What was **bold** was the creation of community day schools and then the step that was taken over 25 years ago to create a network of these schools.
- What was **bold** was outreach to families beyond the Orthodox community to commit to serious and joyous full-time Jewish schooling.
- What was **bold** (and wise) was to recruit Dr. Marc Kramer to grow and lead this organization.
- What was **bold** were the steps the Executive Committee took in 2008 to transition to an international board largely populated and guided by distinguished lay leaders committed to Jewish day school education.
- What was **bold** was for RAVSAK to invite and bring together all the day school organizations to provide a forum for growing and learning together, resulting in the North American Jewish Day School Conference.
- What was **bold** was for the first board members to undertake the responsibility and dedicate their time, wisdom and resources to take RAVSAK to the next level.
- What was **bold** was for RAVSAK, with the AVI CHAI Foundation’s encouragement, guidance and support, to undertake a thorough assessment and multi-year plan to guide the organization’s and the field’s growth.
- And what is **bold** is the undertaking of an ambitious effort to expand the scope of RAVSAK’s work and its resources, to ensure that it continues both to serve the field and to push the boundaries of the field.

- What was and continues to be **bold** is RAVSAK’s unyielding commitment to excellence and responsiveness, which ensures its provision of field-wide and personalized attention enabling all our schools to become the best version of themselves.
- What is **bold** are the individuals and foundations increasing their financial investment in RAVSAK’s future.



Arnee Winshall is chair of RAVSAK’s Board of Directors and founding chair of JCDS, Boston’s Jewish Community Day School. Arnee can be reached at arnee@ravsak.org.

- Who is **bold** is Rebekah Farber, the incoming chair of the board, whose sharp mind and strategic thinking will provide RAVSAK with insightful leadership as it continues its growth and development.

Doing my small part in making this a reality has been an honor and a privilege, as will be my continued involvement in the work of RAVSAK. I feel like one of our day school students, smiling with pride as I don the wreath of fresh flowers I have woven in honor of Shavuot.

Na’aseh ve-nishmah! We will do and learn, and only then will we have lasting freedom. It is RAVSAK’s commitment to the doing that enables us to continue to learn and to provide leadership, support, guidance and vision to the day school movement.

Thank you all for your support and partnership over the past several years.

חג שבועות שמח,

Arnee

Good & Welfare

Mazal tov to these newly appointed heads: Susan Siegel, **B'NAI SHALOM DAY SCHOOL**, Greensboro, NC; Sharon Pollin, **COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL**, Metairie, LA; Adam Tilove, **JEWISH COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL OF RHODE ISLAND**, Providence; Dr. Daniel Goldberg, **PAUL PENNA DOWNTOWN JEWISH DAY SCHOOL**, Toronto; Lee Buckman, **TANENBAUMCHAT**, Toronto; Jeff Davis, **TARBUT V'TORAH**, Irvine, CA.

Josh Sneideman, a teacher at **TARBUT V'TORAH** in Irvine, CA, was one of 27 STEM educators selected for the 2013-2014 Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program, sponsored by the Department of Energy in DC. He will spend a year in Washington working on national education policy and programs to encourage energy literacy.

The **JEWISH ACADEMY OF SUFFOLK COUNTY** on Long Island, NY, is relocating to the largest Jewish campus in the United States. It is moving to the Suffolk Y-JCC where it will have tennis courts, indoor swimming, 4 gyms, a 600 seat auditorium and much more.

In the Florida State Science Fair, two students from **HILLEL ACADEMY OF TAMPA** received awards. Eighth grader Marlin Jacobson received 3rd place in the Microbiology category, and seventh grader Josh McMurray received honorable mention in the Botany category.

Bryna Leider of the **LURIA ACADEMY** of Brooklyn has been named a winner of the Jewish Education Project 2013 Young Pioneers Award.

Junior Orlie Smith at **NEW COMMUNITY JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL** in West Hills, CA, was selected as the most talented student choreographer in Los Angeles County by the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Hundreds of entrants took part in the competition. Orlie is captain of the school's JV Dance Team.

Middle school students from the **WEIZMANN DAY SCHOOL** in Pasadena, CA, participated in the Los Angeles County Regional Science Fair. All of the thirteen projects submitted were accepted for participation; they were chosen from over thirteen hundred entries. Eleven of them qualified for special judging, and one received honorable mention in the final round. ■



Summer Conference in Jewish Environmental Education

RAVSAK is pleased to announce that we are partnering with the Pearlstone Center outside of Baltimore to co-sponsor this year's Nevatim Teacher Training Conference in Jewish Environmental Education. The conference is a unique and dynamic event, providing professional development and training in Jewish garden and environmental education for Jewish educators from around the country. While open to educators from diverse educational settings, this year's conference will have a special focus on environmental education in day schools.

Entering its third year, the conference attracts more than 60 participants. As North America's most active Jewish environmental education center, Pearlstone has been a leader in the field of Jew-

ish environmental education for years, and is well positioned to partner with leaders in the field of Jewish education in order to make this an extraordinary annual event.

The conference will take place at the charming, bucolic Pearlstone Center in Reisterstown, Maryland, Tuesday-Thursday July 9-11. During the sessions, attendees will



- Learn how to build, design, and maintain a Jewish, educational garden at your school
- Observe and create Jewish environmental curriculum for learners of all ages
- Explore the state's premier outdoor classroom at the Irvine Nature Center
- Milk goats, collect eggs, and prepare delicious farm to table meals on our 5-acre organic farm

To learn more about the conference and to register, go to <http://pearlstonecenter.org/signature-programs/early-childhood-conference/>. ■

Dear Cooki

■ by **COOKI LEVY**

While I like to think of myself as a leader who welcomes new ideas and innovation and encourages significant input from my board members, parents and staff, I find myself in the position of being lobbied heavily by a large group of parents to launch a program about which I have serious doubts. They have gone so far as to raise money specifically for this project.

How do I stop this initiative which my administrative team feels strongly is NOT right for our school without disappointing and alienating the parent body and without seeming to be averse to outside suggestions or changes?

School leaders often walk the very fine line of genuinely wanting outside suggestions and yet having to protect and preserve the mission of the school and act in the best interests of the students. When new, unexpected ideas cross your desk, you should be as open as possible, willing to listen carefully and without preconceived opinions even if the proposal seems way out in left field. But sometimes even the most open-minded and generous HOS just cannot agree to institute a given proposal. So what to do when an untenable request (even demand!) comes to your desk?

1. Have a clear process in place for the discussion and acceptance/rejection of innovative projects and programs. All stakeholders should have to answer the same questions:

What is the goal of the project?
What identified need does it address? Is this how we should be using our resources? What, if anything, are we giving up?

Is the project sustainable after the funds raised to support it are exhausted? What is the alignment between this project and our school's mission, vision and philosophy?

Is this program already offered in another community institution (the synagogue, the JCC)?

2. Never let the discussion be about the person who is making the recommendation. It's about the project and the school, nothing else.
3. Clear communication is paramount. Include the person(s) who are advocating for a certain program in at least part of the discussion about it. Listen well to their views and ask good questions that may help them see for themselves why it is not viable. Always be respectful: the idea is not a bad one just because it may not be workable at this time.

4. If you think the project could work in the future, say so, and list the things that have to happen before it can be considered. If you do not have to say an outright "no," then don't. But if you firmly believe this will *never* happen, you must say so. Assuming that your board chair is not the person pushing this program, enlist him or her as your ally. Help him/her to understand clearly what the issues are and to actively support you in your decision. If you can get the rest of the board to help in the same way, even better.

As school leaders, we know that there are times when we must make difficult decisions and live with the criticism that follows. This will undoubtedly be the case here, but as in so many other areas, a clear and consistent message will help generate understanding and acceptance by the community at large. Will everyone be convinced? Certainly not. But making the right decisions for our school is our primary responsibility nonetheless. ■

Cooki Levy is the director of RAVSAK's Head of School Mentoring Project. Previously, she served as the longtime head of the Akiva School in Westmount, Quebec. Dear Cooki accepts questions from all school stakeholders. To submit a question, write to hayidion@ravsak.org, with "Dear Cooki" in the subject line.

As school leaders, we know that there are times when we must make difficult decisions and live with the criticism that follows. A clear and consistent message will help generate understanding and acceptance by the community at large.

Please Welcome Rebekah Farber, RAVSAK's incoming Board Chair!

With joy and gratitude, RAVSAK welcomes Rebekah Farber to serve as the new chair of the board starting July 1.

Rebekah and her husband, Howard, are co-founders of the New Community Jewish High School in West Hills, California, where they remain active as board members, fundraisers, consultants, and parents. Rebekah sat on the board of the Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School in Northridge, California, and served on its executive committee. She is a Los Angeles advisor to Moving Traditions and Jewish Women International and a member of the Jewish Funders Network. Additionally, she has served on the boards and/or committees of the Zimmer Children's Museum, the Skirball Museum, The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, Adat Ari El Day School, Temple Judea, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. She was also president of the University of Georgia Southern California Alumni Chapter.

Rebekah and Howard have made significant philanthropic commitments to: New Community Jewish High School, Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School, University of Southern California Fine Arts Department, Adat Ari El Synagogue, Skirball Cultural Center, Camp Ramah of California, The Hadassah Foundation, Far West USY, American Jewish University, the



Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles and RAVSAK.

After numerous years working as a developer of corporate training programs for Bank of America, Cox, Castle & Nicholson, and Knight Protective Industries, Rebekah founded History Tours of Jewish America, an educational travel program for museums and non-profits. She developed curricula for seven different destinations in the United States incorporating the history, culture, art, and cuisine of the American Jewish experience for Jewish museums and many other organizations. She is a contributing consultant to *A Portion of the People: 300 Years of Jewish Life*

in South Carolina and Shalom Y'all: Images of Jewish Life in the American South.

Rebekah was president of the board of Our House, a grief support center in Los Angeles for 3 years, served on its board at large for 8 years, and remains active on its advisory board. She is currently co-chair of the Far West Region of United Synagogue Youth's Endowment Campaign. She was a member of the board of the Hadassah Foundation in New York, having served as its treasurer.

Rebekah received her undergraduate degree in educational psychology from the University of Georgia Magna Cum Laude; her master's degree in education from the University of Oregon,

and a master's in public policy and administration from the University of Oregon. She attended post-graduate studies in American Jewish history at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. She is also a graduate of the Wexner Heritage Program.

Rebekah divides her time between Encino, California, Crowley Lake, California, and Aiken, South Carolina, with her husband and their three children: Hannah, who works and lives in Boston; Max, a senior, and Emma, a freshman at New Community Jewish High School. In her spare time she is an equestrienne who owns show jumpers and trains in the mountains of the Eastern Sierras. ■

“Speaking on behalf of the RAVSAK board, we are thrilled and energized that in Rebekah’s new role as chair, the organization will benefit from her experience in leadership roles, her expertise in organizational development and strategy, and her passion for and commitment to day school education.”

Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK's Board Chair

Innovation Mindsets for Successful Schools

■ by **MAYA BERNSTEIN**

Some of the most exciting developments on today's Jewish landscape come from the "innovation sector," which encourages people to take an idea and run with it. Bernstein applies its principles for Jewish education.

Introduction

Why is innovation in Jewish education so critical? To reframe the question: if we believe that a Jewish education has something to offer our own community, and that individuals granted this education have something important to offer society at large, isn't it our most important responsibility to ensure that this education is vibrant, creative, inspiring, relevant, thorough, and profoundly meaningful?

In a culture in which the structures and methodologies of education have been thrust into turmoil by an increasingly flat, virtual world; in which the smartest students graduating from high school are selecting to start their own companies rather than go to Harvard (and are being paid to do so by radical venture capitalists); in which the cost of education in general, and Jewish education in particular, is unaffordable for the majority of families; and in which researchers are showing that life skills, like flexibility, grit, perseverance, and healthy attitudes towards failure, are perhaps the most important aspect of schooling, the Jewish community has no choice but to address the impact of these new realities on its educational philosophy and systems.

"Innovation," then, is not a passing fad, or hype. It is the word that is currently used to symbolize an approach and a set of tools that assist communities through critical growth and change processes. It does not imply that we need to abandon the old for the new, nor is it necessarily even new. The concepts used in today's "innovation sector" are to some extent

repackaging of concepts that have been used for decades and centuries. But they represent core values and approaches that are important as we attempt to stay nimble, flexible, and able to meet the complex needs of our community.

Based on their mission statements, our community's many excellent day schools, despite denominational differences, seem to share a unified vision regarding the overarching intent of a Jewish education in today's world. They hope to instill a grounding in Jewish values and a deep sense of Jewish identity; a love of learning and a rigorous overall education; and the desire and imperative to make a positive, mending impact on the world. Gann Academy sums it up in this way: our goal should be to foster a generation of "Jews who will be knowledgeable, sophisticated, and passionate about Judaism, and who will make lasting contributions to the Jewish community, American society, and the world at large."

This is no easy task. While our schools' secular counterparts are grappling with the challenge of keeping up with a fast-paced, global, hyper-technical, competitive world, we must face this challenge while also figuring out how to keep ancient texts and languages relevant and meaningful. Moreover, our schools need to continue to compete with excellent public and other private options, simultaneously figuring out how to stay in business and keep ballooning prices un-

der control, all while keeping their eye on the prize: the core Jewish values that make this struggle worth fighting.

I would like to suggest that in order to address these pivotal questions, and ensure that our community's schools are nourishing and challenging the next generation of committed, engaged, inspired Jews, we must embrace certain core mindsets that



Maya Bernstein is the strategic design officer at UpStart Bay Area. She can be reached at maya@upstartbayarea.org.

will allow us to continue to adapt and grow to meet the next generation's changing needs. These mindsets, culled from the latest thinking in the entrepreneurial innovation sector, are crucial in ensuring that the next generations of Jews will be given the opportunity to become sophisticated, knowledgeable, and passionate about their Judaism, and also prepared for a rigorous life in the 21st century.

Seven Innovation Mindsets for Successful Schools

Focus and Passion

Unless we can articulate why we care about our work, we will be unable to do our work well. The expression of why our work is important, what value it brings, is the first step necessary for doing the work well. In his book *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, Ronald Heifetz observes,

People need inspiration and drive to step out into a void which only later is recognized as a place of creativity and development. ... The

practice of leadership requires, perhaps first and foremost, a sense of purpose—the capacity to find the values that make risk-taking meaningful. ... Preserving a sense of purpose helps one take setbacks and failures in stride.

Day schools must take the time to genuinely explore their purpose: is it to create knowledgeable Jews? Jews committed to certain core values? Jews who practice in particular ways? Some combination? Each activity in the school, the classes offered, the structure, the underlying message, should resonate with this mission and these core values.

Profound Optimism

Global activist Lynne Twist, in her book *The Soul of Money*, explains that we suffer today from a constant attitude of scarcity:

For me, and for many of us, our first waking thought of the day is “I didn’t get enough sleep.” The next one is “I don’t have enough time.” Whether true or not, that thought of not enough occurs to us automatically before we even think to question or examine it. We spend most of the hours and the days of our lives hearing, explaining, complaining, or worrying about what we don’t have enough of. ... Before we even sit up in bed, before our feet touch the floor, we’re already inadequate, already behind, already losing, already lacking something. ... We go to sleep burdened by those thoughts and wake up to that reverie of lack.

This “reverie of lack” is unfertile ground for creativity and exploration, the key ingredients of innovation, and it is not only rampant in society at large, but is an unspoken shadow in the Jewish community. Our passion for Jewish education cannot be grounded in a fear of Jewish extinction, of anti-Semitism, of intermarriage, or even of Jewish survival. Jewish life must be motivated not by what we are afraid of losing, or not having enough of, but by what it contributes to our lives. An attitude of optimism, of hope, of anti-lack, is critical for continued innovation in Jewish life.

Listen to the People and Collaborate

Innovation is a democratic process. It thrives on collaboration between people



Go out and find some real people. Listen to their stories. Don’t ask for the main point. Let the story run its course. Like flowing water, it will find its own way, at its own pace.

with different skill sets, experiences, approaches, and beliefs. It assumes that the experience of a student in a school is as important as the perspective of the head of school, and it creates opportunities to make less authoritative voices heard. Innovations enter systems from a wide variety of streams, and it is more likely that insights and new ideas will emerge when there are multiple streams flowing into the system. IDEO’s Tom Kelly, in his book *Ten Faces of Innovation*, writes,

Go out and find some real people. Listen to their stories. Don’t ask for the main point. Let the story run its course. Like flowing water, it will find its own way, at its own pace. And if you’ve got patience, you’ll learn more than you might imagine.

In order to grow and stay relevant, we need to ensure that the widest spectrum of perspectives is included in the conversation and imagination of what might be. The voices of students, in particular, can be especially illuminating. How might day school professionals create more op-

portunities to listen to their students and involve them in the design of their school life?

Be Creative

We take our work seriously, as we should. But we sometimes take ourselves too seriously for our own good. Yes, the education of our children is no game, no laughing matter. But unless we learn how to be more playful in its design, we may look up and realize that the kids have gone to play somewhere more fun. If we want to design inspiring, exciting learning experiences, we need to employ exciting, inspiring methodologies. Innovation thrives in playful soil. Our planning meetings, conferences, and board meetings can benefit from some more art, theater, outdoor experiences, from more play, to help re-train us to be more open, more relaxed, and even sometimes silly, because that is the state in which we can be most inspired, and inspiring.

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Be Patient

Real change takes time. As Chip and Dan Heath, in their book *Switch: How to Change Things when Change is Hard*, note,

Change isn't an event; it's a process. There is no moment when a child learns to walk; there's a process. And there won't be a moment when your community starts to invest more in its school system, or starts recycling more, or starts to beautify its public spaces; there will be a process. To lead a process requires persistence.

Innovation can happen only when we slow down, and feel that our challenges are no less important, but perhaps slightly less urgent.

Failure is Educative

What do successful people and ventures have most in common? Failure. Tina Seelig, a professor at Stanford University, in a talk on “The Art of Teaching Entrepreneurship and Innovation,” shared that she asks her students to

Make failure resumes—the resume of their biggest screw-ups, personal, professional, and academic. And the idea is—it is OK to fail as long as you learn something from it.

The idea is also that if you don't allow yourself to fail, you might not grow. Mark Zuckerberg, in his letter to shareholders upon Facebook's S-1 filing, says,

This means—take risks! We have another saying: “The riskiest thing is to take no risks.” We encourage everyone to make bold decisions, even if that means being wrong some of the time.

Stay Lean: Experiment, and Learn

We know that new ideas and projects can be tremendously resource-consuming. Often, this prevents us from tackling them; who has the budget to make the changes we ideally would like to see? This should not prevent us from making those changes.

Instead, we should devise small experiments to test our ideas and assumptions, learn from them, being less afraid to make mistakes because there is less at risk, and then revising them, and trying again. Only after we have run multiple experiments are we ready to ask for the investment of time, and capital and human resources, to make larger changes. In his book *The Lean Startup*, Eric Reis writes,

Successful entrepreneurs do not give up at the first sign of trouble, nor do they perse-

Make failure resumes—the resume of their biggest screw-ups, personal, professional, and academic. And the idea is—it is OK to fail as long as you learn something from it.

vere the plane right into the ground. Instead, they possess a unique combination of perseverance and flexibility.

Schools should shift perspectives on what it means to introduce new programs, curricula, or structures into their institutions. Significant growth can happen from relatively simple, inexpensive “tests” of new ideas.

Conclusion

If we hope to continue to inspire and challenge the next generation to fully and actively embrace Judaism as a meaningful way to live in today's world, we must honestly ask ourselves: What is working in our spaces of Jewish education? What is not? And why? And, ultimately: how might we best educate today's Jewish children to be excited about Judaism, nourished by it, and use its teachings to contribute in lasting ways the global good?

The innovation sector in the business world is facing a different set of questions; and yet they too grapple with the ultimate challenge of how to catch the attention of people who are inundated with information, demands and opportunities. The most successful entrepreneurs today are adopting the mindsets, and the tools that emerge from these mindsets, to design experiences and products for people

that genuinely meet their needs.

I hope that Jewish day schools will explore some of their best practices, and transform them to create Jewish educational experiences that genuinely challenge and nurture, inspire and enrich, all those who seek a Jewish education. I believe that we should focus our energies on creating educational environments that are exciting and collaborative, in which teachers guide learning processes, and students are involved in shaping the

direction and timbre of the learning. We should seek pedagogic methodologies that prepare students to be active participants in society, and that help them weave connections between their Jewish learning and their actions in the world. I envision a future in which our students bring their curiosity, interpretive skills, desire, and courage to make an effective, positive and lasting impact, deeply embedded in core Jewish values, on the world at large.

Together, these mindsets, and the tools that come with them, can help pave paths that have the potential to lead us towards a better future. I believe that the first step in creating meaningful, necessary growth in our educational spaces is to educate and challenge ourselves to experiment with these approaches.

The values of the innovation sector are actually very much aligned with core Jewish values; these are the values that have allowed our community to keep its traditions and beliefs alive through so many centuries. Our community can both gain from the innovation sector's approach and contribute to it. With an attitude of plenty, of hope, of patience and passion, and of willingness to laugh and get back on our feet each time we slip, we can design educational experiences for our children that inspire them to stay engaged in, and contribute to, a vibrant Jewish community. ■

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Child-Centered Jewish Exploration

■ by **REBECCA MILDER**

“Child-centered education” sounds great on paper but is not easy to put into practice. Here’s a description of how one recognized practitioner school goes about it.

How can a child know, *I matter*? For out of this security, learning will proceed.

At the Jewish Enrichment Center, partnership with children is at the center of our work. We strive for an environment in which every child is known as an individual: interests, friendships, what brings laughter, what she does when tired or angry, what he wants to get better at, what’s happening at school and home. We also strive for an environment in which children know their peers to be resources for learning, and can voice their ideas in a respectful community.

Out of this base of belonging, educators and children together engage in long-term, thematic Jewish exploration, in a warm, Hebrew- and text-rich environment. Our community includes unaffiliated, congregational, and day school families. Currently, we enroll children nursery-3 through second grade, growing one grade each year. A public blog of our work is available at jewishenrichment.org/blog.

An In-Depth Look at a Single Thematic Exploration

Let’s see what child-centered Jewish exploration entails by examining a final project. Picture 1 shows an installation from a first and second grade child-centered Jewish exploration. Two layers of Jewish ideas are visible in the picture. First, the large size signs and the visual stacking of layers of Jewish interpretation demonstrate the idea that we—Jews today—take part in a centuries-old in-

terpretive process. Second, the picture shows individual children’s interpretive ideas, both about a particular Torah text (on the rainbow background) and about classical rabbinic commentary (purple, on the bottom).

Furthermore, it’s clear that children’s ideas play an important role in the installation, and that every child’s work is unique; every child asked a different question of the Torah’s text. The children’s thoughts about the Torah text and about the classical rabbis’ interpretation are included both as transcripts of dialogues among children (to the left of each child’s painting) and as visual expressions (in pointillism and comic strips).

There is a lot about child-centered Jewish exploration that cannot be seen in the picture. Not visible are the educators’ hours that made these final projects possible, spent planning for exploration, reflecting on children’s work, and collaborating on ideas. Or the Hebrew vocabulary and grammar incorporated into this thematic exploration. Or the morning our ideas were shared with parents and special friends to deepen our own thinking. Or the strides chil-

dren made in learning to work together, and the language we practiced in order to make collaboration possible between young children. Or the numerous blog posts, Jewish texts, pictures, and book recommendations we posted in order for parents to continue the conversation at home.

We—educators and first and second



Rabbi Rebecca Milder is founding director of the Jewish Enrichment Center, a new center for afterschool and Sunday Jewish enrichment in Hyde Park, Chicago. She can be reached at jewish.enrichment.center@gmail.com.

grade children—began our exploration together by reading the Torah text closely (in this case, Noah’s ark, Genesis 6-9). We tried hard to understand the words of the text without preconceptions, to separate what we may have heard about the story from what the Torah was actually saying. As we read, children had many, many questions. We took transcripts and recorded conversations on our smartphones.

Educators noticed that some children’s inquiries had come to center on a particular element of the story that troubled them, so we invited children to share their “burning questions.” In Yetzirah (our art studio, which children visit nearly every session), children had been learning to mix colors, to reinforce Hebrew con-

Placing children at the center of learning, then, requires educational modes that allow children time to process new information, and time to revisit ideas.

tent for this theme and to offer children an additional tool for visual expression. Together, the Yetzirah specialist and the children's lead educator decided that children would learn pointillism, and the final installation shows the connections between the children's dialogues about their "burning questions," their recorded ideas about the Torah text, and their pointillism textual interpretations (Picture 2).

At *kibud* (snacktime), educators read back children's transcripts, and children discussed each other's work. As children's pointillism work drew to a close, educators introduced classical rabbinic interpretations related to children's "burning questions," and once again, ideas flew. Growing short on time for the theme's exploration, we asked children to share their reflections on rabbinic ideas through an expressive form with which they were already familiar, a comic strip. Before the morning with parents and special friends, children reflected on their work, writing and drawing about what they learned and felt proud of. We then asked our visitors



PICTURE 1

to do likewise in dialogue with the children.

What makes this kind of child-centered Jewish exploration possible?

Time for Reflection & Revisiting

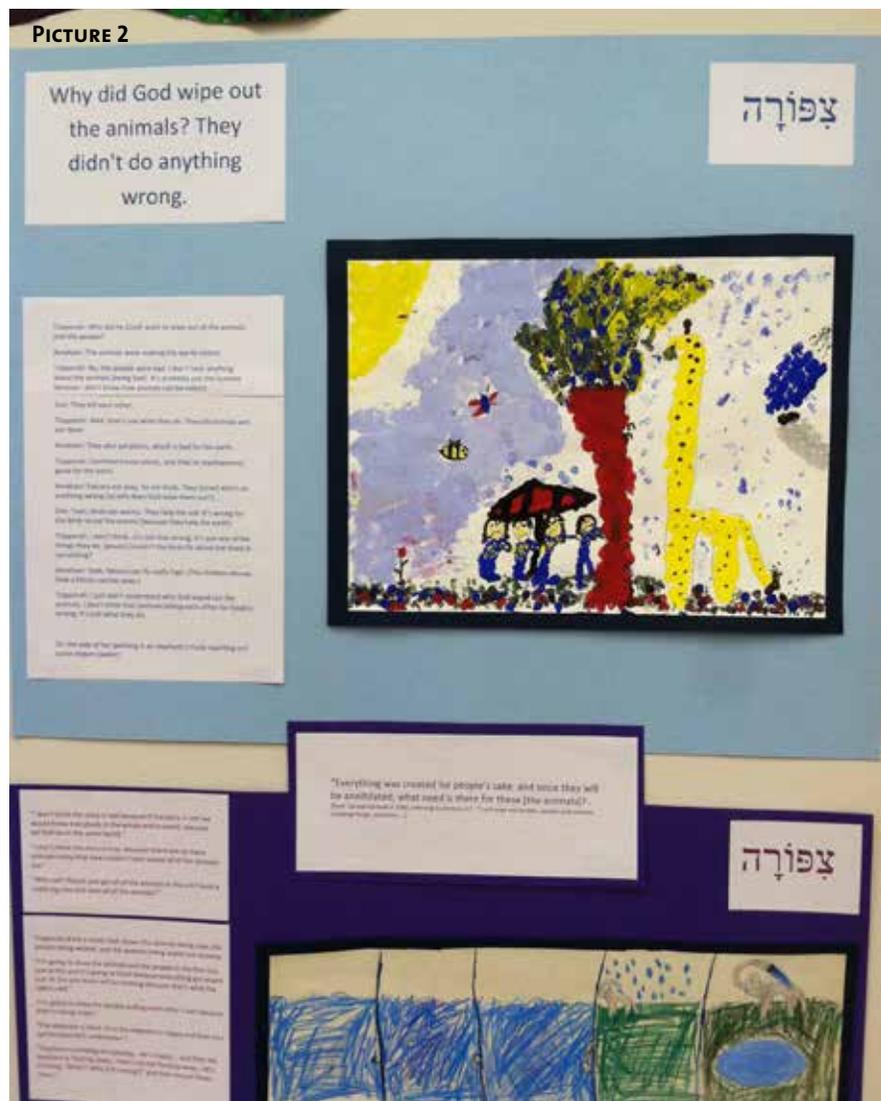
Children need time to learn. Not only do children require time to practice new

skills and vocabulary until they flow with ease, children need time to wrestle with new ideas. Each child comes to us with a different way of making sense of the world, and so every child will understand new ideas in his or her own way. I can read the story of Noah's ark with a child, but I can't *tell* a child how the story will be meaningful to him/her.

When we provide time and support for a child to become aware of how the story affects his/her worldview, this process, repeated month after month and year after year, offers children a structure through which to create a personally meaningful approach to Judaism. Placing children at the center of learning, then, requires educational modes that allow children time to process new information, and time to revisit ideas. Project-based learning provides a flexible structure in which educators can reopen a conversation that took place a few weeks earlier in order to unearth the development of children's understanding and questions.

In addition, child-centered Jewish exploration requires a good deal of reflection time for educators. Educators need time to sit together and examine children's work, searching for evidence of what children understand and what remains to be learned before the theme draws to a close. Educators require time to think through children's words, to hear underneath children's sometimes terse or oblique language what ideas children are grappling with. Educators, too, need time to collaborate and brainstorm their next educational moves. This reflection and collabo-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 16]





PICTURE 3



PICTURE 4

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15]

ration needs to be part of educators' paid work time. Nearly a third of staff's paid time at the Jewish Enrichment Center is spent in professional development, reflection, and crafting an intentional educational environment.

Intentional Educational Environment

Child-centered Jewish exploration requires an intentional environment sup-

portive of children's engagement with material and peers. The physical environment—choice of furniture and its arrangement, educators' use of wall space, materials available for children's use—should affirm children's right to explore materials and ideas (Picture 3). Can a child see him/herself in the room (and the school), represented through pictures, past work, quotes, and ideas-in-progress? Does the physical environment encourage children to explore ideas and skills at their own pace, alone and with peers?

At the Jewish Enrichment Center, for example, our rooms' *Pinat Ivrit* (Hebrew corner) includes puzzles, games, writing materials, magnets, children's Hebrew work, pictures of children working on Hebrew, and more (Picture 4). The physical environment should also provoke children's curiosity and extend children's thinking, as in (Picture 5). A rich physical environment, intentionally crafted and updated frequently, will support children's Jewish exploration.

In addition, for child-centered Jewish exploration, educators must intentionally craft the social environment. Children need an emotionally safe space in which they can explore ideas and practice working together. Educators can create such a space by prompting children to consider their own thoughts and feelings, make decisions, and turn to peers and books for assistance. Children become certain that their opinions count, both about Jewish topics *and* about next steps for a small-group project. Educators' language, too, can support children in thinking creatively to solve academic and social challenges, and support children in developing stamina for trying multiple solutions. Furthermore, when we practice language for friendship and problem-solving, and when this emphasis is school-wide, children internalize the knowledge that using kind words and actions matters.

Flexibility During Exploration

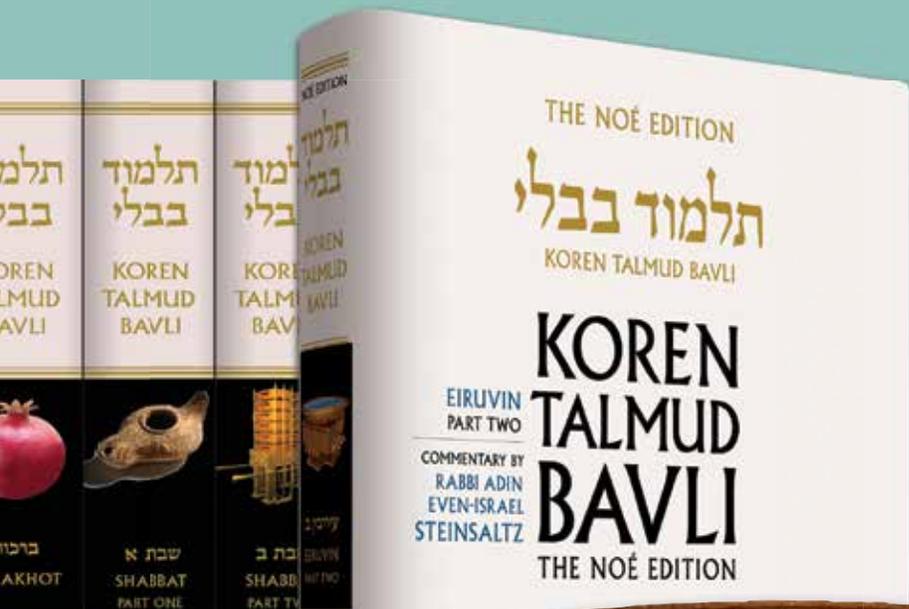
In child-centered Jewish exploration, we

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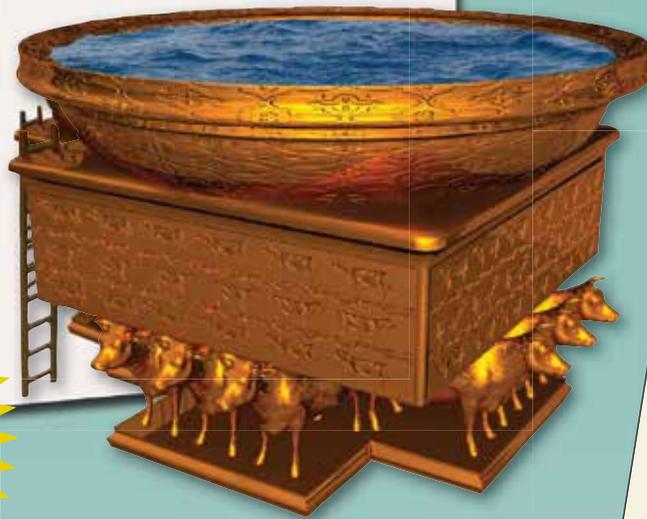


PICTURE 5

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Hands-on, Inclusive Education: Building a New Future for Jewish Day Schools

■ by **ANDREA ROSE CHEATHAM KASPER**

“Hands-on” is not a classical description of Jewish pedagogy, yet it is increasingly valued today in all educational settings. Kasper ups the ante, envisioning a school that is intensely hands-on and Jewish at once.

The Jewish media reports regularly about the lack of inclusion within the Jewish community. February was Jewish Disabilities Awareness Month and the coverage made it painfully clear that as a community we have failed a large segment of our population. Sadly, Jewish education has reflected this same failure, excluding an even larger segment of our community than those labeled “disabled”; it has also excluded a wide variety of students who simply don’t thrive in the dominant model of schooling. We need to reimagine schooling so that it serves the totality of our diverse learning community. It is time to build Jewish schools that educate the whole child in the vision of past progressives, to develop a pedagogic vision that integrates across subjects and intelligences, that folds manual skills into the general curriculum and that, as a result, is accessible to more of our students.

Jewish education has a lot to learn from the MIT Media-Lab, where researchers from diverse disciplines come together to “design technologies for people to create a better future.” The first lesson is that we are *all* disabled, just at different levels. Special education teachers have known this for decades, and their expertise and knowledge have slowly leaked into mainstream education, spawning buzzwords such as *scaffolding* and *differentiation*. Many Jewish day schools tout small class size and the ability to provide individual attention to the grow-

ing needs of each child. The emphasis has been on molding the children to the predominant pedagogical expectations rather than molding the pedagogy to the children. So while committed teachers work to scaffold and differentiate appropriately, they do so for a limited range of abilities.

The second lesson is that there is no such thing as a disabled person—what is disabled is the technology that is supposed to be serving the community known as “disabled.” Applying this idea to the classroom means that our pedagogy is disabled, not our students. Jewish educators should reflect on current pedagogic assumptions and ask whom we have excluded from our institutions. The third lesson is an “anti-disciplinary ethos,” where issues are explored in “wildly different ways from the past, unencumbered by preconceived notions of what is possible or what the solutions ‘should’ look like.” This concept allows educators to recreate and reimagine day school education, where they can directly address issues of diverse learning needs, subject integration and 21st century skills. Howard Gardner helped educators classify multiple intelligences, but the Media-Lab has successfully modeled how cross pollination and application of various intelligences

to different disciplines results in exciting learning, critical thinking and problem solving.

Jewish education has embraced the development of the intellect, and many in the Jewish community have been successful at harnessing this focus by becoming leaders in academic and professional fields. However, it is time to expand our focus beyond academic achievement,



Andrea Rose Cheatham Kasper is an EdD student in Jewish educational leadership at Hebrew College and Northeastern University. She can be reached at archeatham@gmail.com.

beyond those within our community who can achieve within this narrow definition. The Jewish community lacks options for many of its students, especially in the high school years. Jewish community high schools are simply not appropriate to all of our learners, and leaders in Jewish education must address this issue. They must offer new modalities of learning, which aim at intellectual and cognitive development through hands-on skills and applied learning—to build a school that welcomes and honors diverse learners, looking for new ways to engage in Jewish education.

The Vision

A Jewish Academy of Applied Academics provides a new kind of Jewish high school offering a balance in Jewish education by stressing the link between the

production of the hands and the stretching of the mind. The school community is guided by the following question: How does direct application of knowledge and ideas help me engage in the world, strengthen collaboration, expand my thinking and find new connections to Judaism, humanity and the world? This kind of school fundamentally challenges the status quo by expanding Jewish education's focus on intellectual creation to include physical creation of the hands.

This shift in pedagogical ideology and application makes school more accessible to a wide range of students with dissimilar learning needs. An emphasis on hands-on education and physical creation expands learning by providing opportunities to connect the learning to concrete skills. While direct application and clear applicability of knowledge to "real" life is particularly important for students struggling to make abstract connections, it is equally powerful for all. Students in this school will learn a variety of skills allowing them to participate professionally in a wide array of work within their communities, including green construction, agriculture, welding, textile-making, culinary and fine arts. By providing multiple pathways to success, this school naturally honors the wide array of abilities and interests within the Jewish community.

Naomi Brunnlehrman, cofounder and executive director of the Jewish Deaf Resource Center, explained that the Jewish deaf community has been shut out of Jewish life and parents do not consider a Jewish day school education for their hearing impaired children. Deaf students, she explained, would feel welcome in an environment where there is little, if any, frontal classroom teaching but continual occasions to learn visually. Arlene Remz, Executive Director of Gateways, states that a holistic approach to education which focuses on various tasks and allows for non-college bound students to succeed is especially appropriate to many special needs students. Many students on the autism spectrum will find the small group work and ability to move in and out of individual work a successful platform to both grow and share their talents alongside their peers.

LINKS TO INNOVATIVE, HANDS-ON SCHOOLS

San Francisco Brightworks: Reimagining K-12 education with experiential, hands-on, project-based learning
<http://sfbrightworks.org/>

Big Picture Education: Leading vital educational change in innovative, personalized schools working with the real world of the greater community
<http://www.bigpicture.org/>

High Tech High: Charter school coalition in San Diego, K-12 education, teacher education and graduate programs, focusing on school-to-work strategies
<http://www.hightechhigh.org/>

Studio School Movement: Bold approach to learning, teaching through enterprise projects and real work grounding student learning in the real world (UK)
<http://studio-school.org.uk/>

The Jewish Montessori Society: Partnering with Jewish communities looking to build Jewish Montessori schools
<http://www.jewishmontessorisociety.org/>

The Binah School: New Orthodox girls' middle and high school using project based learning, empowering Jewish girls
<http://moodle.thebinahschool.org/>

Online Jewish Academy: Innovative, online, personalized, collaborative Jewish education for students who couldn't access Jewish education for diverse reasons
<http://www.onlinejewishacademy.org/>

Guided by Jewish values, applied Jewish education is appropriate and open to students of all backgrounds and academic abilities, and offers them a full range of career options. Imagine a thriving year-round school community working to redefine Jewish education that is founded on past wisdom yet unencumbered by old assumptions. Most importantly, it could offer a new learning paradigm for Jewish students who do not fit into the traditional structures of our educational system.

Let's build schools that offer a new educational model addressing system-wide change within the context of both the American educational system and Jewish education in the United States schools that rethink pedagogy, student body, applicability of Jewish education, hands-on work and production, faculty roles, age-based groupings, cognitive and intellectu-

al development, work-based learning and preparation, and the appropriate methods to most effectively meet the needs of students. The educational vision of such schools incorporates and integrates practice and theory, providing a powerful and obvious answer to the question "why do I need to learn this?" Using a project based approach, students move from application to theory in a cyclical pattern to enhance their understanding of both, all the while focusing on how to better understand and make efficient their skills of production. Each project focuses on the Jewish, academic and production aspects of the work. Reflecting on kibbutz life, visualize redefining Jewish literacy through hands-on and practical knowledge grounded in physical creation.

This educational philosophy posits that

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in-depth, long term emphasis on a project will result in educational engagement and profound learning. The pedagogy focuses on a method that grounds learning to a specific project. Rather than learning subject matters in a way that is disconnected, students experience the connection between all academic and religious subjects as they are all grounded in the project. Furthermore, learning with this method allows for more complex understanding and intense subject concentration. This methodology presents an alternative way of learning and alternative curricular development based on student interests, self-discovery and exploration. Hands-on work provides students with essential instant feedback and the safety of working in a medium, similar to technology, that has no judgment. In this alternative learning environment, teachers work with students both in small groups and individually to help them gain the necessary skills to succeed in each of their projects as well as develop skills in critical thinking, collaborative and independent work and cross-discipline problem solving.

You walk into these schools and see a group of students, two freshman, two sophomores, one junior working as an assistant advisor, working together guided by a faculty collaborator with the goal of building a table and chairs to be reproduced for the dining room. They compile a list of essential questions that draw from a range of disciplines: mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, literature, history and Judaism. Here are questions the students begin to explore:

- Where in Jewish literature is wood discussed, for what purposes? How do Jewish sources connect our learning to other disciplines?
- What is the purpose of this furniture, both literally and metaphorically?
- What properties of wood must we understand in order to build them?
- How do forestry, reforestation, sus-

tainable wood and wood imports/exports affect our choices?

- How do wood properties affect the physics and design to assure strength? How do various designs affect weight distribution?
- How has furniture use and design developed throughout history?
- How do the environment, soil chemistry and ecological systems affect tree growth?
- How do lumber costs, energy costs, man hours and projected revenue factor into the manufacturing cost of the furniture?

Meeting with the Jewish studies collaborator, the students begin by exploring the Tanakh and other texts for the use and mention of wood. Bereshit provides them quickly with areas of exploration from creation of growth

Where in Jewish literature is wood discussed, for what purposes? How do Jewish sources connect our learning to other disciplines?

and trees, their stated purpose in Gan Eden, the building of Noah's ark from gopher wood (a species still contested by scholars), and in Shmot the use of wood for the building of the mishkan, especially the ark. The students learn about *atzvei shittim* (acacia wood) which leads them to learn of its 1300 species and understand its properties for building, medicine, resistance to fire (an especially interesting understanding when they discover that some believe it was the burning bush). They also discuss and explore language associated with wood and trees (the Tree of Life) and consider why a wood box was constructed to be placed between two gold boxes to house the broken tablets from Sinai (a subject of interest for many rabbis and scholars). This method enables the students to make connections from the Jewish sources to their studies in chemistry, mathematics, physics, biology and ecology.

The students meet with the rest of faculty from various disciplines to refine the questions and gain a deeper appreciation of how each of these areas expands their understanding of the process they must undertake. The team determines individual and group responsibilities required for the following three to six months to complete the project. Throughout the entire process students work in several writing styles to express and present their ideas, information found and data collected. They practice scientific writing, prose and creative writing, reporting of primary and secondary data collection.

The students are charged with the learning in these areas as well as building several prototypes for comparison, data collection, analysis and final recommendations. The project culminates with a presentation and workshop for the rest of the school community as well as an objective measure of whether they succeeded in building a satisfactory prototype for use in the school. This powerful

combination provides an important balance between the learning acquired and the complex variables involved in building a useable, aesthetically pleasing and durable product that is put to use. It also reflects what Frank Moss, the director of the MIT media lab, terms "hard fun."

At the heart of the Jewish community is a sense of social justice and inclusion that must move into action on behalf of our diverse students. This action must challenge the dominant image within the community and allow each and every member to thrive and contribute. This is not about building a special needs Jewish day school; it is about building a Jewish day school education that is fundamentally inclusive by offering the appropriate pedagogic model. Jewish educators desire to create community, connection and opportunities for relevant learning. We have the tools, the resources and dynamic models; now it is time to act. ■

Project SuLaM Graduates Its Fourth Cohort at a Shabbaton on Israel Education

Participants of Project SuLaM came together for a celebratory shabbaton at the end of April. Lead professionals were joined by colleagues and lay leaders for a weekend of study and reflection upon the theme of Israel and Zionism. During daily sessions they discussed sources ranging from the Tanakh to classical Zionism and contemporary Israel, with an eye to the ways that Israel today stands in relation to the rich and complex Jewish traditions about our ancestral homeland.

The Sulamites took a day trip in New York City to learn about contemporary issues and initiatives. Israel's minister for economic and social affairs at the UN Mission, Shuli Davidovich, discussed trends in Israel's relations with the other UN members both in public sessions and behind closed doors. Yehuda Kurtzer, the president of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, shared the philosophy and pedagogy of Hartman's new program in Israel education called iEngage. Both programs gave participants information, ideas and resources to inspire them and their colleagues in their work at their day schools.

As always, the shabbaton was filled with lively conversation and chevruta learning of Jewish texts. Participants led services, gave stirring divrei Torah and supported each other in their personal and professional lives. On motz'ei Shabbat they enjoyed a Beit Cafe with Israeli snacks, drinks, pictures and music.

In the program's second year, members of a school's SuLaM team worked on a project designed to have a powerful and lasting impact on the Jewish life and learning of their school. Sulamites created exciting projects in a wide array of areas, targeting volunteer engagement, Hebrew blended learning, Jewish environmental education, the creation of a school siddur, parent education, and more. These projects generated a host of new partnerships, new curricula, new activities and new excitement throughout participating schools. ■



Beyond Denominations: Expanding Pluralism in Day Schools

■ by **ELIANA LIPSKY**

In the Jewish world, the term “pluralism” tends to be thought of primarily in denominational terms. Lipsky urges schools to recognize other forms of difference and empower students to own and explore them.

At the heart of a pluralistic Jewish community day school is the vision of Jewish children from an assortment of denominational and ideological upbringings learning and working together, building a stronger Jewish community. The definition of pluralism in our schools and our communities has generally focused on developing the worthy qualities of respect, tolerance and an appreciation for different types of Jews. What vision offers more hope than that of our children coming together and recognizing that, despite our differences, we are one people?

While admirable, this practice of pluralism is limited in scope. It overlooks other important areas of difference save for Jewish observance. We must recognize that children differ not only in their religious understanding and practice, but also in family makeup and history, socioeconomic standing, political worldview, and more. These, and all, children remain underserved so long as we engage in a one-dimensional view of pluralism.

The hit television sitcom *Modern Family* has done an excellent job of helping Americans change their perception of the traditional family unit. In the show there are three distinct family types, including a traditional family with a mother, father, and three children. The other two family units are what one might call nontraditional. One family is two fathers and an adopted child from Vietnam and the

other is a divorcé remarried to a much younger woman from South America who has a child from a previous relationship. Similarly, in our schools we have a growing number of families made up of parents who fall into an array of categories such as married, single, divorced, or partners.

Furthermore, we have students whose parents or who themselves might be heterosexual, homosexual, or transgendered. We have also seen an increase in families who are adopting children, many from countries with different ethnic backgrounds. And as is the nature of the community school, we have a very broad socioeconomic population. Why is it important to raise this issue? While we have been struggling to meet the needs of the diverse Jewish *hashkafot* (ideological perspectives) that comprise our pluralistic communities, we have not been sensitive enough to meeting the other cultural needs of our students. After several decades of focusing on attending to a broad spectrum of *hashkafot* it is time to turn our energies toward our students' other cultural needs.

There are many ways to define the word culture. In his book, *Choosing Democracy: A Practical Guide to Multicultural*

Education, Duane E. Campbell enumerates a plethora of items that comprise one's culture: ethnicity, country of origin, socioeconomic class, religion and family traditions, to name a few. He also defines the word pluralism as one type of democracy where people believe that there is more than one perspective or opinion. He argues that pluralism needs to be taken one step further to create cultural democracy. “Cultural democracy,” Campbell explains, “argues that



Eliana Lipsky is a curriculum and instruction EdD candidate at Loyola University Chicago, focusing on student empowerment in the Modern Orthodox Tanakh class. She can be reached at etlipsky@gmail.com.

our society consists of several cultures. In this multicultural society, each culture has its own child-rearing practices, languages, learning, and emotional support systems. ... Culture, gender, and socioeconomic class overlap within the home to produce behavior patterns, attitudes, and values.”

What does this mean for us as Jewish educators? We need to take into account cultural characteristics beyond religious ideology when creating our curricula. At the very least, each student's ethnicity, country of origin, family unit type, and socioeconomic status also need to be considered when choosing what and how we teach.

There are two main reasons for why we need to extend our definition of plu-

ralism. First is the underlying fact that children come to our schools with their own understanding of the world and their families' place in it. The phrase "funds of knowledge," developed by education professor Luis Moll, refers to the wealth of information, practices and traditions that each child is taught through his or her culture at home before ever entering the classroom. All children bring with them a set of knowledge and skills that have been transmitted by their family.

When teachers recognize that their students come to class with these funds of knowledge, the teachers can set their students up as cultural resources. This acknowledgement that a student does not enter the classroom as an empty vessel is key because it sends students an important positive message: each student is an expert in something valuable and each student should have an opportunity to teach peers about his or her expertise. This can build confidence in individual students and put them in greater esteem with their peers while simultaneously increasing student engagement in the classroom.

The second reason we need to broaden our definition of pluralism is related to the term "culturally responsive teaching," which is currently featuring as a central issue in general education community debates. Culturally responsive teaching aims to create curricula that take into account the cultural backgrounds of the students for whom the curricula are being designed. Though it is primarily focused on enhancing education for students of color, it should be considered an educational desideratum.

Geneva Gay explains that knowledge of these cultural differences allows teachers to make their curriculum more personally meaningful to their students which in turn will lead to greater student engagement and overall academic success. It is important that students see themselves and their experiences reflected in the curriculum they are learning because it provides them a context for relating to the material. Educational research has shown time and again that when students can use concrete examples from their own



Teachers could work together in teams to create cultural maps of their classrooms. These maps would identify both the similar and unique cultural characteristics of the students in their classes.

lives to make sense of what they are learning, they grasp the material in a more meaningful way and understand it more deeply. This is the same concept as having social studies teachers infuse the traditional American history narrative with voices of women so that female students can see themselves in our nation's story.

According to Gay and Campbell, teachers need to know how their own culture affects their pedagogy. By having teachers "understand how their own cultures affect their lives, their teaching strategies, and the lives of their students," in Campbell's words, teachers can better recognize where their curriculum might need to be supplemented or reworked to meet more of their students' cultural needs. It

is important that our curricula reflect the students whom we are teaching.

The same way we need to choose a plethora of assorted Jewish texts and media in our courses to represent the array of Jewish denominations we serve, we must choose a range of general media that speaks to all cultures represented in our student population. Our intentionally pluralistic schools are focused on fostering respect, appreciation, and tolerance for diversity. Gay writes, "Building community among diverse learners is another essential element of culturally responsive teaching." Students should be considering cultural issues that affect them, their classmates and those who are not represented in our schools.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 32]

Cosmopolitan Jewish Education for the Jews Next *Dor*

■ by **BENJAMIN M. JACOBS**

Our schools look for the right balance as we educate students to be both good Jews and good citizens. Jacobs argues that we should take the latter just as seriously as the former; he sketches out a curriculum to accomplish that.

In the 21st century, Judaism, Jewish life, Jewish peoplehood, the Jewish state, Jewish identity—indeed, almost all facets of the Jewish experience—are in a post-modern, post-denominational, post-ethnic, post-Zionist, post-diaspora, or what we may simply call a “post-everything” age.¹ In the post-everything age, Jewish identity is fluid, contested, and complicated, while the outlook for Jewish continuity is unsettled at best. Longstanding conceptions of what it means to be Jewish, let alone a “good Jew,” are being challenged by new emphases on individualism alongside a declining sense of collective identity.

As a result, many young Jews in the post-everything age no longer feel defined or constrained by the rubric of Jewish religious/ethnic/national identity. Instead, they live with diverse identities that are constantly being constructed and reconstructed in an ever-changing and complex, but nonetheless increasingly interconnected, world. New types of post-everything cultural, ethnic, civic, and/or religious Jewish affiliation are becoming more appealing to a rising generation of American Jews who no longer regard establishment ideas, institutions, and concerns relevant. (This idea was explored in the aptly named study by Greenberg and Berktold, *Grande Soy Vanilla Latte with Cinnamon, No Foam:*

Jewish Identity and Community in a Time of Unlimited Choices).

The challenge of Jewish education in the post-everything age is to find something meaningful for the large number of rank-and-file (i.e., non-Orthodox, but also non-secular), coming-of-age, so-called Generation Next, or Next *Dor* American Jewish youth, who may in fact participate in Jewish education activities and seek positive connections to Jewish life but are not especially motivated by what they actually experience in Jewish schools.

For the Jews next *dor*, I propose a program of *cosmopolitan Jewish education* in tune with the post-everything zeitgeist. The American Jewish education enterprise must shift its thrust from cultivating good citizens of the Jewish community, ostensibly prepared to sustain its growth and perpetuation (“identity and continuity”), to cultivating good Jewish citizens of the world, who are able to contribute to the progress and enhancement of our changing cosmos more generally.

Jewish education for rooted cosmopolitanism, whereby young Jews are “attached to a home of one’s own, with its own cultural particularities, but [also take] pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other,

different people,” in the vision of philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, is what is now needed. Being cosmopolitan—often understood as being a “citizen of the world”—means embracing a broader horizon of outlook, a broader horizon of concern and a broader horizon of people beyond one’s immediate context.

It also means remaining rooted in one’s local/family/community culture, being mindful of heritage, and retaining moral allegiance to one’s own customs and habits, for they may provide sensibilities that can help one respond to the com-



Benjamin M. Jacobs is assistant professor of social studies, education and Jewish studies at New York University. He can be reached at bjacobs@nyu.edu.

plexities of contemporary life. In the words of philosopher David T. Hansen of Teachers College, Columbia, educational cosmopolitanism “aspires to be universal without being universalistic, to be local without being parochial, to be culturally conservationist and tradition-respecting without being traditionalistic, to be open to learning lessons for life from other traditions and inheritances, and to esteem the individual human being without becoming individualistic.”

Cosmopolitan education calls for students to be initiated into their local culture, traditions, and way of life, so that they have a backdrop against which to compare people of differing backgrounds, values, and practices. From there, the educational program would endorse liberal, deliberative, and analytical stances toward those very same local

¹ Adapted from Benjamin M. Jacobs, “Problems and Prospects of Jewish Education for Intelligent Citizenship in a Post-Everything World,” *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 7:1 (2013), 39-53.



traditions and inheritances, so as to develop in the young the capacity for critical detachment from what is familiar to them, in order to be at once reflective on their own cultural foundations and also receptive to understanding the cultural foundations of others. The critical detachment is not meant to dismantle one's affection for or affiliation with the local community and its traditions. It is only meant to enable students to see themselves as others might see them, warts and all, and to recognize the complex ways in which human experiences are interrelated across spatial, temporal, racial, ethnic, national, religious boundaries.

In the process, it might even persuade individuals to appreciate the contributions of their local culture to the cosmos, or enlighten them about ways they can bring about change from within in order to make the world better. Encouraging students to learn from other traditions as a means of clarifying their own ways of seeing the world also fosters cross-cultural understanding, an appreciation of shared fate, and a capacity to see the potentiali-

The American Jewish education enterprise must shift its thrust from cultivating good citizens of the Jewish community to cultivating good Jewish citizens of the world, who are able to contribute to the progress and enhancement of our changing cosmos more generally.

ties of building common ground for the sake of cultural creativity and social transformation the world over.

What might a program of cosmopolitan Jewish education look like, and by what means might it be effectuated? Cosmopolitan Jewish education begins with an intensive program of Jewish socialization, that is, the local socialization that is prerequisite to further edification, which we will call Yiddishkeit. While this might look quite similar to Jewish education programs of the past century, with their attention to tradition, history, and culture, now special emphasis would be placed on Jewish current events, communal concerns, social problems, cultural de-

velopments, politics, economic activities, demographics, social science, education, and other facets of 21st century Jewish life, so as to attune Jewish youth to the complexities of the contemporary Jewish world.

In contrast to conventional forms of Jewish education, in which contemporary concerns are often subordinated to matters of tradition, cosmopolitan Jewish education calls for backward planning, that is, starting with contemporary Jewish problems and exploring their historical and conceptual roots. In a similar vein, cosmopolitan Jewish education calls for multiple possible approaches to a problem rather

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Day School as Hub of Adult Jewish Education

■ by **SARA HEITLER BAMBERGER**

For parents fully to buy into day school education and serve as ambassadors for it, they need to understand it and value it for themselves. Bamberger provides one model of a program that gives adults the joy of shared Jewish learning.

What would a hit-the-ball-out-of-the-park adult education program based at a day school look like? While I spend a lot of time shmoozing with other parents at birthday parties, play rehearsals, and soccer games, how well do I really know them? What would it be like to connect once a month with a handful of other parents around Jewish learning—the one value that we all share?

It would seem that a day school is the perfect hub for an adult education program. The community has already bought in to the value of Jewish education, and a parent's commitment to their own Jewish education is at least (if not more) influential on a child's Jewish identity than what school they attend.

That said, there are obvious challenges, including lack of resources, lack of parent leaders to coordinate such a program, and sadly, a perceived lack of interest. So most day schools offer a smattering of adult programs throughout the year, on topics both Jewish and secular. Is that really the best we can do?

As the founder of Kevah, a Bay Area-based adult education network, I will share a bit about its history and early successes as a way of encouraging bold thinking about what a school-based adult education program might look like.

An Experiment in Jewish Adult Education

Kevah was conceived of around a Berke-

ley kitchen table in 2008 when four friends began meeting to brainstorm how to create accessible ways for young adults to explore classical Jewish texts. Kevah, meaning “a set practice,” is the word used in the Mishnah (Pirkei Avot 1:15) to describe how Torah study—a 3,000 year tradition of analyzing stories, embracing dialectics, and seeking truth—should be integrated into the life of each and every Jew.

As a first step, Kevah launched two home-based study groups, each of which met twice a month. Over the past few years, the number of Kevah groups has mushroomed from two to almost 75 groups. Kevah receives requests daily from individuals around the country who want to launch Kevah groups of their own. In addition, Kevah has partnerships underway with synagogues of all denominations, JCCs and Israel-program alumni.

What About This Model Is Working?

Deep, Personalized Content

Kevah provides participants something that is simple, yet surprisingly elusive: the opportunity for meaningful philosophical conversation. In our networked, facebooked, tweeted world, adults appre-

ciate the somewhat retro appeal of gathering with a group of friends for a great discussion. The community and personal growth that Kevah offers is deeply satisfying on an intellectual, spiritual and personal level. Whether the topic is leadership, social justice, or the book of Genesis, every meeting includes laughter, new ideas and personal epiphanies. In addition, participants get to grapple with a piece of Talmud or explore a Bible



Sara Heitler Bamberger, the founder and executive director of Kevah (www.kevah.org), lives in Berkeley, California, with her husband and five children. She can be reached at sbamberger@kevah.org.

story, often for the first time. In order to best strengthen Jewish identity and build Jewish community, Kevah focuses on the following questions:

Is the topic of interest to the group?

The organizer of each group suggests the topic, shares it with the educator, and then puts it to the group to approve, tweak or throw out. By this collaborative process, groups home in on a text or topic that is tailored to their interest.

Is the discussion meaningful? Whereas other adult education organizations prefer an academic approach, Kevah teaches “Torah”—both knowledge and wisdom. Participants start with the plain meaning of the text (peshat), draw historical, literary or other textual references, and then explore the relevancy of the text to their own lives. Kevah educators are trained to help participants feel comfortable bringing their whole selves into the discussion. The content of a Kevah group is



by definition old—usually at least 1,000 years old—but the ideas that emerge always feel brand new.

Innovative Business Model

The other reason for Kevah's success is its innovative business model. Kevah's work consists of three overlapping processes.

First, Kevah cultivates an ever-expanding network of volunteer group organizers who launch Kevah groups both outside of and within existing institutions. You know these people: they are the PTA presidents, the party hosts and the network weavers. They are the kind of people that when they invite you over, you show up.

Second, Kevah empowers these organizers with top-notch support. This includes help sending out reminders, collecting payments, paying educators, and troubleshooting group dynamic problems as they arise.

Third, Kevah recruits talent—an ever-expanding pool of educators who facilitate text-based discussions. With Kevah's ad-

Participants come to each meeting expecting to go deep—deep into the material, deep into each other's lives, deep into their own heads and hearts.

ministrative support and dynamic facilitators, even the busiest organizer can be successful in creating a Kevah group that provides intellectual and spiritual sustenance for its members, and that continues to meet regularly month after month, year after year.

Kevah's goals are that each group should be *small* (8-14 people), *sticky* (high level of relationships), *sustainable* (all participants pay), *empowered* (participants have ownership and feel comfortable self-correcting) and *fertile* (each group should generate at least one other group). With these goals in mind, Kevah creates customized learning communities which leaves participants in some small way transformed.

Kevah's vision is that within five years, at least five cities will have a network of

at least 50 groups each, thereby creating a national network of groups that serve adult learners. Some of these groups will be affiliated with synagogues, day schools, JCCs and other institutions; many will be autonomous.

How Might Kevah's Approach Be Applied in a Day School Context?

Think Small

The starting point of Kevah's work is to start small. Kevah's smallest group has five regular participants; its largest has seventeen. In general, Kevah encourages groups to aim for 8-14 members: large enough to have a rowdy conversation; small enough so that everyone notices

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if you don't show up. The commitment to smallness is based on the premise that transformative conversations and personal epiphanies happen much more in places where we feel valued, heard and challenged. While a Purim carnival or a Lag B'Omer barbeque can be fun for families, it is unlikely to be the place for personal growth. A small group, by contrast, can be that place.

Think Deep

Kevah groups talk about real things: the difficulties of parenting; the meaning of spirituality in a fast-paced world; the practical and existential challenges of assimilation and integration in American society. Although making time and space for these conversations is difficult, the spiritual and intellectual satisfaction that such conversations leave lingers for days.

Kevah's success stems from our ability to create a setting where a meaning-making conversation isn't the exception, it is the norm. Participants come to each meeting expecting to go deep—deep into the material, deep into each other's lives, deep into their own heads and hearts. In working with our educators, we encourage them to think about the following questions: Does the topic address questions the participants are already asking? Does it touch their soul?

Think Sticky

Each Kevah group is led by a group organizer around a specific affinity principle that is the nexus of three axes: geography (what neighborhood do you live in?), demography (what life stage are you in? with or without children?), interest (parenting? medical ethics? Talmud?). Most frequently, the organizer identifies the geography and demography of the group, and then the group together figures out its topic of interest for the semester.

Not surprisingly, this approach tends to create micro-communities that are sticky. Their stickiness comes from bonds that form between participants, as well as the sense of connection that emerges with the teacher and with the material itself. In

a day school context, one could have some groups based on the age of their children (parents of K-2nd graders), some on a specific theme (tzedakah, parenting, Shabbat) and others on specific book (Genesis, Pirkei Avot, Tractate Megillah, etc.).

Think Empowered

Although each Kevah group has its own affinity principle, the experience of participants is surprisingly similar. All groups have a DIY ethos, and a boutique, salon feel. Each group feels like they are the only group to ever have such a personally meaningful experience, and that is largely because the experience is not shaped for them to consume, but for them to create.

It takes some work to launch a Kevah group, and with ownership comes responsibility. Kevah cushions responsibility by letting group organizers know that they can call on us for support. We help send out reminders, collect payments, give educators feedback, and help the group self-diagnose problems and address them. Whether it is someone from Kevah or someone at the day school, having a staff person responsible for the program is critical for enabling groups to feel empowered.

The goal is to have participants leave wanting more: more learning, more ritual, more bonding, more questions, more good food and great conversation, and ultimately, more sense of being part of a vibrant and committed parent community. In day schools, encouraging all parents to learn regardless of their background is all the more important, as many day school students become more Jewishly knowledgeable than their parents, even from the early grades. Empowering parents to become Jewish learners themselves will have a powerful impact on our students as well.

Think Democratic

Kevah takes a very democratic approach to learning, which is in some ways a new idea. Historically, serious Jewish learning was not a fully democratic activity: it was primarily for men who knew Hebrew and Aramaic, and had spent years learning the vocabulary unique to the world of the Talmud and classical commentators. It

assumed a level of Jewish literacy that surpasses even many of our day school graduates. At Kevah, we firmly believe that Torah is the inheritance of all Jews, or in the words of the Talmud (Yoma 72b), "Torah is the crown for all Jews who come and claim it." By teaching in English and training teachers to be sensitive to the variety of the backgrounds of our participants, we welcome learners who have never heard of Tanakh to those who learn Daf Yomi.

Embrace Failure

One of the most powerful lessons that Kevah has learned is the importance of creating a culture that embraces failure as part of the growth experience. This is certainly a core Jewish value, reflected in the experiences of the Golden Calf, the destruction of the First and Second Temples, and many other moments in Jewish history. Our ability to fail, dust ourselves off, and try again is one of the secrets of the Jewish people's survival.

At Kevah, we recognize that while most groups will thrive, not every organizer will be successful, not every educator is brilliant all of the time, and not every group gels. Early in the launch process we try to prepare organizers for the likely reality that not everything will go well all the time. Their job is to work with our staff to make sure that as many factors as possible are going well as much as the time as possible, and when they are not, we intervene early and without blame. Whether it is a poor group-educator match, a participant who talks too much, sporadic attendance, or an organizer who has trouble making folks feel at home, it is critical that someone helps groups navigate the small failures and reframe them as opportunities for improvement.

Find your Niche/Seek Out Partners

Finally, it seems worth noting that before plunging enthusiastically into designing a new adult education program, it is worth looking at what already exists. A number of organizations such as Oorah and the Kohelet Foundation have emerged to try to catalyze Jewish learning among day school families. Similarly, organizations

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Jewish Day Schools עתידנו Our Future

An Orthodox Track: Meeting the Needs of the Whole Community

■ by **AVI WEINSTEIN**

Especially in smaller communities, community day schools often have complicated relations with the local Orthodox population, which usually sends children to day schools but can be demanding about the Jewish content. Here's one model to make that relationship succeed.

For many, even most, Orthodox parents, a community day school is not an optimal choice for their child's education. Even if they like the idea of their child mixing with a diverse group of peers, the particular needs of having an observant community for their child often takes precedence. They want the values and rituals practiced at home to be unapologetically reinforced at school. For many, the usual fare of Jewish studies offered at community day schools is insufficient at best, or potentially inappropriate when it comes to what is taught. It is also important that their children have a circle of friends that are likeminded when it comes to Shabbat observance and kashrut. Would it be possible to answer the particular needs of this community within the context of a community day school, and how would this be achieved?

Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, a K-12 RAVSAK school, is the only Jewish day school in the metropolitan Kansas City area. There are an estimated fifteen to twenty thousand Jews in Kansas City. Mindful of its responsibility to the entire spectrum of Jewish practice, HBHA has been particularly challenged with regard to the needs of the Orthodox community. The experience here was that when Orthodox children became of school age, their families left town for communities with Orthodox schools. A separate Orthodox school was attempted and closed after several years.

Members of the community kollel (Orthodox institute for higher Torah learning) together with the rabbi of the main Orthodox synagogue, Beth Abraham Israel and Voliner (BIAV), approached the leadership of Hyman Brand to explore the possibility of having a separate Orthodox Jewish studies program for elementary grades. The BIAV community was willing to provide seed money to compensate for the extra budgetary expenses. As one of the major supporters of Orthodox life in Kansas City said, "I want my kids back in town—I want to see my grandchildren regularly."

The resulting program, Matmidim ("striving scholars"), has grown a grade at a time and is now in its fifth year. It began with an incoming kindergarten class of six, and the present kindergarten class of 2012-13 has eleven students, expected to expand to fifteen students next year.

Several factors have been crucial to the program's success. The financial support of the BIAV community covered its considerable added expenses. We have been able to attract acceptable teachers/role models for the program either locally or through Yeshiva University's job fair.

Having a head of Jewish studies who is Orthodox solidified the school's reputation as a place that understands the needs of the whole spectrum of the Orthodox community.

There have been several challenges as well, some expected and others either underestimated or unexpected. The anticipated challenges concerned perceptions by the general community. Was one community favored over another? Would people see us as an Orthodox school? How would this work logistically? Do we have enough space? Would our cur-



Rabbi Avi Weinstein is the head of Jewish studies of Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, of Overland Park, Kansas. He can be reached at aweinstein@hbha.edu.

rent Jewish studies faculty embrace this change or would they see it as unnecessary at best, and threatening at worst?

Despite some misgivings from Jewish studies faculty, by and large they are accepting that the school benefits from the increase in enrollment. Because teachers have felt they have accommodated Orthodox students well—and they have—there is suspicion regarding why such a move was necessary. On a practical level, it has added to the workload of those involved in scheduling and general logistics. Each of these classes requires a separate room, which becomes more difficult as the program expands.

One unforeseen challenge is the amount



of tuition assistance that a significant number of students need to attend the program. The new classes are small, and many of these students need significant support with school fees. The support from the Orthodox community covers only the added faculty, not general school expenses.

The greatest unanticipated challenge is that Orthodox concerns are not monolithic. The KC Orthodox Jewish community, although relatively small, has representatives from very modern Orthodox Jews to charedi and Chabad adherents. The disagreement among these different factions about the nature of the school's hashkafah, its religious outlook, was not fully considered. For instance, even though we created a letter of understanding that outlined our worldview as a Zionist school where Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Hashoah are observed, teachers who came from a less-Zionist background were offended by the Israeli pronunciation of prayers. Parents also entered the fray. In response, the guidelines offered were that students would be taught in Israeli pronunciation, but would not be

The Matmidim program has been mutually beneficial, helping to stabilize enrollment at the day school and already contributing to the growth of Kansas City's Orthodox community.

corrected if they chose to pronounce their prayers, or study Jewish texts, with an Ashkenazi pronunciation.

Because of the diverse community within the major Orthodox synagogue, there is a sense that whichever faction has the most students at the end of the day will ultimately be the one who will control all these issues. This has ramifications for how the school day looks for students who opt for this program. For instance, beginning in third grade, instead of going to specials—computer, music and art—Matmidim students had Chumash enrichment. For one parent, this change was enough reason to opt out of Chumash enrichment in favor of specials, thus truncating a small class even further. It is clear now that added Chumash enrichment will be nonnegotiable for some, but specials will be equally important for oth-

ers. The one thing that was universally rejected was the proposed extension of the school day. Now that we are preparing for fourth grade, this issue is being revisited.

In one of the benefits of the program, parents from more liberal backgrounds, some of whom felt threatened by the overt Jewishness of the school, now feel that the general program is much less intimidating since there is a separate program for the Orthodox. This reaction has been gratifying and totally unanticipated.

The Matmidim program has helped stabilize enrollment and has already contributed to the growth of the Orthodox community. With proper preparation and open communication, a school can fit each community's needs, as long as it understands that one *size* does not necessarily fit all. ■

Day School as Hub of Adult Jewish Education

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like Kevah, Project Zug and the WebYeshiva try to lower the bar to make Jewish learning available even for busy parents.

Finally, there may be other organizations in your local community that would be ideal partners for creating an adult education program, especially if many of your school's students attend the same cluster of synagogues or utilize the same JCC. Positioning your adult education program as a collaboration can soften the sense of competition that other organizations may feel from your initiative.

Quality, Community, Sustainability

To conclude, I suggest three core questions that a bold adult education program should address.

Are we providing a high quality experience? Parents are busy, and there is nothing more annoying than blocking

out time and getting a babysitter for a program that is less than great. If the program is a frontal lecture, the opportunity for disappointment is high. If, by contrast, the activity is getting together with a group of friends around a topic of shared interest with a carefully vetted teacher, the likelihood for success is much higher.

Are we building community? At Kevah, we believe that learning Torah and deepening relationships should be inseparable. Creating an adult education experience that strengthens bonds among parents and between parents and the school will have positive ripple effects in terms of parental involvement, fundraising and satisfaction.

Is the program sustainable? Of course, sustainability has to do with coming up with a financial model that the school can maintain. But it also has to do with coming up with a smart way to allocate

staff time. One of the most important lessons that we have learned is that it takes the same amount of time to organize and publicize a one-time event as it does to empower a parent to launch a Kevah group that can continue to meet for years. Given this, why not invest some resources in “planting” learning communities, in addition to hosting events?

Conclusion

To the extent that day schools take adult education seriously, they provide a better service not only for parents but also for the children, as parents are the primary role models for Jewish learning and Jewish life. In the vision of Nachmanides, just as the stories of Genesis foretell the future of the Israelite nation, *Ma'aseh avot siman labanim*—the actions of our parents will also be a sign for our children. As we invest in the richness of parents' learning, we reap their learning and benefit our students as well. ■

Expanding Pluralism in Day School

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In order to meet the cultural needs of our students our teachers need to be better prepared. Future teacher professional learning communities or communities of practice should dedicate time to building teachers' awareness of their own individual cultures. Teachers could work together in teams to create cultural maps of their classrooms. These maps would identify both the similar and unique cultural characteristics of the students in their classes. Students could be involved in this process by being asked to submit essays or graphic representations of what they think is important to know about their families and heritage.

Using these cultural maps, the teacher teams should review their curricula to identify potential opportunities for increasing content or instructional methodological diversity that better reflect who their students are. A wider range

of Jewish sources as well as general materials that represent a broader range of socioeconomic class and cultural diversity should be included. School leaders also need to ensure that their teachers feel confident in meeting their students' varying cultural needs. For example, this might require that administrators work with several advocacy groups to help train teachers on how to meet the needs of children who might be struggling with sexual or gender identity, adoption, etc.

Administrators might also create teacher-parent advisory groups that are responsible for helping teachers identify ways to best meet the needs of children in their classrooms and in the greater school environment. Parents should be used as guides for how teachers can meet the needs of adopted children, children of nontraditional family units, children who are questioning their sexual or gender identity, and children who are ques-

tioning their Jewish identity.

School communities where cultural pluralism is vibrant have teachers inviting the students and parents into classrooms to engage their community members in sharing cultural knowledge. Teachers in these schools support this sharing by ensuring that their curricula reflect their students and that all students see themselves and their peers as experts of cultural knowledge. In an era where we are attempting to meet the needs of the whole child, our intentional pluralism needs to incorporate a broader cultural pluralism that considers all of the foundational pieces contributing to our children's beliefs, behaviors and learning. And to ensure that our students can continue building a strong, vibrant, and diverse Jewish community we must build awareness, appreciation, respect and tolerance for the myriad cultures within our community, not just our Jewish ideologies. ■

Child-Centered Jewish Exploration

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make room for children's ideas and interests to influence the trajectory of an exploration. Before starting a thematic exploration, educators and administrators can brainstorm possible directions that children's ideas will take, but we can't know, in advance, exactly what ideas will catch our children's imaginations. Flexible exploration requires that educators leave space in our own minds to hear *what children are expressing*, rather than hearing *what we expect* children to be saying.

The second kind of flexibility required during exploration is a kind of creativity, in which educators must match children's interests with the kinds of exploration opportunities (e.g., games, discussions, art, imaginative play) that we imagine will open doors for children to take their ideas further, build skills, and deepen friendships. Educators can maintain flexibility by asking, What questions and ideas are the children most engaged with? How might we match children's interests with long-term goals? What might we offer children to increase understanding and take ideas forward?

Imagining a Thematic Exploration

When starting a new theme, administrators and educators have much to consider before the first, heart-pounding week with children. Even with careful planning, the first week (or longer) can be messy, as educators assess what previous knowledge children are drawing on and exactly where children's questions and interests lie. During the initial phase of an exploration, educators may offer children exploration opportunities that turn out to be only tangentially related to the trajectory of the theme. It's not wasted time; it's time spent grappling with core ideas in order to figure out how to match long-term goals with children's questions and interests.

Extensive planning by administrators and educators, though, *is* essential for child-centered Jewish exploration. Let's start with the administrators' perspective.

Imagining a Thematic Exploration: Administrators' Perspective

One of the most important roles fulfilled by administrators is to ensure that thematic exploration matches the culture and Jewish orientation of the school. For example, at the Jewish Enrichment Center, we aim to set children in the context of an evolving Judaism, and partner with children to develop skills and attitudes for making a meaningful Jewish path for themselves. Our thematic exploration is oriented within this idea. Other orienting ideas for schools include, for example, living a life of mitzvot, or social justice through a Jewish lens.

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Day Schools, Disrupt!

Why Day Schools Should Provide Supplemental Jewish Education

■ by **DANIEL LIBENSON** and **ANA FUCHS**

This article and the next two advocate for day schools to provide programming beyond their core constituency. Fuchs and Libenson say it's time for day schools to step in where synagogues have largely failed: supplemental education.

The landscape of American Jewish education is changing. Jewish disengagement and a depressed economy pose substantial threats to the financial viability of day schools, as well as to the future of synagogues and the supplemental education programs they have traditionally offered.

Day schools can address these challenges and even bring about an educational renaissance if they are willing to “disrupt” the current status quo by becoming providers of Jewish supplemental education. Doing so would bring high-quality Jewish education to large numbers of Jewish children and stabilize the economics of day schools through diversification.

What Is Disruptive Innovation?

Harvard Business School's Clayton Christensen developed the theory of disruptive innovation to explain why game-changing innovations usually come from new players in a market, rather than from more established companies. He calls these innovations “disruptive” because they upend and replace a market's operative assumptions and processes.

Christensen's research has found that game-changing innovations frequently start at the low end of a market. When a disruptive product first comes on the scene, it is typically not as good as the dominant product in certain respects, although it is much better in others (think about digital photography in its early

days). As such, the new approach appeals to a very different set of customers from those buying the current product. Over time, disruptive products tend to get better and better, eventually becoming “good enough” to attract even the customers of the established product.



“non-consumers” in the current market. Of the children who are enrolled in Jewish educational programs, about half are enrolled in day schools and half in supplemental education programs, such as synagogue religious schools.

The number of Jewish children not enrolled in Jewish education programs of any kind is likely to grow in the years ahead, in part due to the very limited options available. For ideological and economic reasons, most Jewish families

Daniel Libenson is the president of the Institute for the Next Jewish Future, an idea and education center dedicated to accelerating bold innovation in Jewish life. Ana Fuchs is the executive director of Jewish Kids Groups, Atlanta's Independent Hebrew School and Afterschool Community. They can be reached at dan@nextjewishfuture.org and ana@jewishkidsgroups.com.

The company most famous for employing a disruptive strategy is Apple, which not only disrupts markets where other companies are dominant (music, for example), but also is willing to disrupt its own markets. When Apple released the \$500 iPad tablet computer, it “self-disrupted” its own high-end laptop business. It did so because it recognized that the new market for tablets would dwarf the market for laptops and that Apple would more than make up in volume what it lost in profit margin.

The Current Jewish Educational Landscape

Let's look at Jewish education through the lens of disruptive innovation theory. Many Jewish children—about a third according to one study—receive no formal Jewish education; their families are

will not choose full-time day school education for their children. In many communities, the only other option is synagogue-based supplemental education; more and more Jewish families will not be willing or able to pay synagogue dues in order to gain access to such programs, due to the expense and often to their poor quality.

The growing number of non-consumers represents a tremendous “market opportunity” for a specialist provider of non-synagogue-based supplemental Jewish education. In several cities, small start-up organizations are beginning to serve this population in very creative and exciting ways that we believe represent the leading edge of a disruptive reinvention of American Jewish education, a process that could be accelerated if day schools get involved.



The independent start-ups recognize that parents who do not send their children to day schools or to synagogue-based schools are not necessarily uninterested in Jewish education. Rather, neither day schools nor synagogue-based programs are right for them.

The readers of this article are already familiar with some of the most common reasons families do not elect to send their children to day schools. Families who also do not send their children to a synagogue-based program report that it is because

- they don't belong to a synagogue or feel connected to a particular religious denomination
- their children are exhausted after a long day of school and complain about having more school in the afternoon and on Sundays
- as working parents, they cannot transport their children from school to synagogue during the week.

At the same time, many parents want their children to have Jewish educations and to make Jewish friends. Also, working parents have child care needs that they must meet somehow; if a Jewish program

Someone will step into the vacuum of unserved and underserved children created by the atrophy of synagogue-based supplemental education. Day schools have quite a few competitive advantages.

could meet them, the program would be providing real value to them.

The successful independent providers, such as Atlanta's Jewish Kids Groups and Chicago's Jewish Enrichment Center of Hyde Park, with which we are involved, have built programs that meet these needs by creating nondenominational curricula that emphasize Jewish culture and Hebrew language, employ child-centered pedagogy and a camp-like approach to learning that feel fun at the end of a long school day, offer flexible schedules, and transport kids from their public and private schools. This year, Jewish Kids Groups even launched a five-day-a-week program to address families' general need for childcare.

Walk into these Jewish afterschools, or into others in Berkeley, Boston and DC, and you will see children laughing, playing, learning, creating, studying and praying together in a community of Jewish peers. The growing number of start-ups

and their rapid growth indicate that families are enthusiastic about this new model.

Day Schools as Supplemental Jewish Education Providers

Make no mistake: *someone* will step into the vacuum of unserved and underserved children created by the atrophy of synagogue-based supplemental education. Day schools have quite a few competitive advantages over independent start-ups. The independent afterschools, like many entrepreneurial ventures, are small and underfunded. These infant organizations struggle to tackle simultaneously the logistical, financial and personnel challenges that confront all new organizations and educational models.

Day schools, on the other hand, already have much of the physical and organizational infrastructure in place, as well as a wealth of professional talent. While we do not minimize the challenges involved in

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a day school's taking on any large new endeavor, we believe that day schools are in a stronger position than independent start-ups to provide stellar supplementary Jewish education right away.

Day school buildings, largely unused on weekday afternoons and on Sundays, often include a gymnasium, kitchen, dining hall, music room, art facilities, playing fields, and many other resources that a start-up program could only dream of. Day schools already employ highly credentialed professional Jewish educators of a caliber that start-ups are hard-pressed to afford. And, critically, day schools have existing transportation systems and expertise, which puts them in a prime position to arrange pick-up from public and private schools at the end of the regular school day.

Running supplemental education programs would also provide great value to day schools beyond an additional income stream. For one thing, it would enable the creation of more full-time teaching positions, as well as more flexible schedules and part-time positions, so day schools could attract the very best teachers. For another, a vibrant and creative afterschool program that included enrichment options, such as sports, music lessons, and other activities might be of great value to parents of day school students as well; we know of quite a few day school children attending Jewish afterschool programs.

Likely Objections

We recognize that stepping into this work will not be easy for most day schools. Some objections will be principled and some will be practical. Below are four likely objections.

1. We will lose families from our day school.

Objection: "People who really care about Jewish education will stretch financially to send their kids to day school if the only other option is low-quality supplemental education. If we offered a lower-cost high-quality after-school program, some of our day school families would take their kids out of the day school, and we would be worse-off financially."

Response: The fear of self-disruption is understandable and explains in part why even mighty for-profit companies die. Apple understands that a high-quality product positioned at the low-end of the market might cause some cannibalization, but that is outweighed by the positives: a higher volume of sales and protection from the inevitable disruption from someone else. We hope that day schools will be disrupters like Apple and not dinosaurs like Kodak.

Many day schools families have already fallen away due the challenging economic environment of recent years. An after-

school program could be a way of getting them back. Furthermore, some families might be so pleased by the afterschool that they move their children into the day school, just as the iPod or iPhone serve as "gateway drugs" to the entire range of Apple products. We anticipate that great supplemental programs would lead more families to "upgrade" to the day school program than to "downgrade."

Supplementary programs would also bring hundreds of new families into day school buildings, exposing parents to the schools' educational approaches and teaching teams. It is hard to believe that the revenue stream created by new tuition-paying afterschool families and the donor opportunities the program creates (think anxious and relieved grandparents) will not outweigh any lost day school tuition.

We also believe that there is a first-mover advantage for day schools willing to take the risk: we suspect that funders and foundations would offer financial support for early experiments.

2. Synagogues won't be happy.

Objection: "The synagogues in our community would view our offering supplemental education as direct competition. Doing this would harm important relationships in the community and wouldn't be *mentschy*."

Response: Synagogue schools are very expensive to run and require heavy subsidies from general synagogue funds. Some might actually see it as a relief to have a legitimate way out of providing a synagogue school. Progressive synagogues around the country are exploring alternative options, including subsidizing members' participation in local afterschools.

The synagogue model of requiring membership and enrollment in the synagogue school in order have a bar/bat mitzvah is collapsing. But it would be tragic if this collapse resulted in a further decline in the number of Jewish children receiving any form of Jewish education. While we think it is important to work with,

not against, synagogues, and we urge day schools to manage these relationships thoughtfully and creatively, we do not think that the objections of synagogues (whose educational programs will soon close their doors anyway) should prevent the emergence of an innovation that is good for the Jewish community.

3. We don't have the bandwidth.

Objection: "We are so busy running the day school. We can't even imagine opening an entirely new program!"

Response: The main reason that dominant players fail to bring game-changing innovations to market is that they are so busy serving their current customers that they don't devote the time, energy, resources, and focus to R&D that might be the long-term salvation of the company. Christensen's research offers a roadmap for companies—and nonprofits—struggling with this "innovator's dilemma." Apple is not the only company that has successfully navigated these waters. The Dayton-Hudson Corporation was a successful department store company that understood the impending threat from discount retailing and started a little side project called "Target." A few years ago, Dayton-Hudson changed its corporate name to Target and sold off the department store business.

Starting a new afterschool program would not be easy and would require the invest-

ment of time and money. Aside from providing new revenue streams as explained above, such programs would also protect day schools from being disrupted themselves. If day schools do not get into supplementary education, independent providers will. This represents a long-term threat to day schools, according to disrup-

A day-school-based Jewish afterschool would offer high-quality education to a much larger number of Jewish children, would engage their families, and would contribute to a renaissance of Jewish life.

tion theory, because over time the afterschool programs will get good enough to attract many day school families.

4. Supplemental Jewish education is in conflict with our commitment to day school Jewish education.

Objection: "We believe that all-day immersive Jewish education is the only way to develop the kinds of Jews that we want our students to become. We do not believe that we could do it any other way."

Response: We respect this principled point of view because it is based on a fundamental belief that Judaism is serious and important and that we should insist on high quality. However, it represents a view about Jewish education stuck in the

binary options available today: all-day immersive high-quality day school education delivered by professional educators versus one- or two-day-a-week under-resourced synagogue-based education delivered mostly by college students and other non-professionals. A day-school-based Jewish afterschool would offer high quali-

ty in a different format; we think it would be good enough and would get better over time. And we think it would offer high-quality education to a much larger number of Jewish children, would engage their families, and would contribute to a renaissance of Jewish life.

Conclusion

What is the mission of a Jewish day school? Is it to provide all-day immersive Jewish education to those that want it and can afford it? Or is it to provide high-quality Jewish education to a respectable percentage of Jewish children? We believe that the latter represents an exciting and inspiring new framework that preserves the all-day immersive model of Jewish education and also pioneers a new approach that meets the educational needs of today's Jewish children and the practical needs of their wage-earning parents. While most people measure the success of for-profit businesses only by the financial bottom line, nonprofits have a double bottom line: they must aspire for both economic success and mission maximization.

Day schools can ensure their long-term financial health and can maximize their contribution to the Jewish future by becoming disruptors of Jewish supplemental education. Moreover, we believe that doing so will defend them from being disrupted by independent Jewish afterschool programs. For Jewish day schools, getting into the afterschool business would be bold indeed. Some might say it would be risky, but staying the course is riskier still. ■



A Community Day School for the Whole Community

■ by **NICOLE NASH**

Nash describes the highly ambitious project that her school undertook to provide a variety of Jewish family programming and education for underserved Jews in their catchment area.

Can a day school become more than just a learning community for the K-8 families and students it serves?

In 2007, Hannah Senesh Community Day School opened a new building in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn, traditionally an Italian neighborhood with little Jewish life. Since then, the demographics of the neighborhood have shifted markedly, from older first generation Italians to young middle to upper-middle class families with babies, including many Jews. And according to data findings by the New York Federation's "Early Jewish Engagement Study," many of these families are searching for increased Jewish engagement.

This burgeoning need opened up an opportunity for us to become a hub of Jewish life in the area. We created Small-City@Senesh, a project that invites members of the greater Brownstone Brooklyn community to experience Jewish education in a variety of ways, engaging many different learners, including adults, teens, and families with young children, in informal Jewish education.

Starting with a grant from UJA Federation-NY, Senesh kicked off community programming in 2011 with Sundays@Senesh, a Sunday morning playspace for babies and toddlers in our school's spacious and sunny gymnasium. Exhausted parents and energetic children could escape the confines of small apartments during the cold winter months to enjoy bagels and coffee, share play equipment and even engage in some grown-up conversation in our large gym.

filled with the sounds of happy kids every Sunday morning throughout the winter, we learned that these young parents were thrilled to be able to socialize with other young families in a warm, friendly, and Jewish environment.

To build on this program's success, we conducted research through online surveys, informal conversation, and focus groups, and learned that the parents were interested in more Jewishly focused programming. They were eager

to be a part of holiday programming that included Jewish and Israeli music, holiday related performances, and art activities led by Senesh teachers. Large numbers of families attended this holiday programming. We kept track of sign in information, and discovered that people were coming from far and wide, not just from the immediate neighborhood.



Nicole Nash is the head of school at the Hannah Senesh Community Day School in Brooklyn. She can be reached at nnash@hannahsenesh.org.

Then we did more research and realized that we could open up programming to different age groups. We had discussions with various stakeholders and the idea



was easily accepted by our leadership as a wonderful way to serve a need and raise the school's profile in the community. We applied for a grant from the Covenant Foundation and SmallCity@Senesh was born.

As we embarked on program development our mantras were "quality" and "mission clarity." We made sure each program was as excellent as possible and involved our best staff in planning and running it, and we partnered with the sharpest, smartest, best run community organizations. Mission clarity means that all programming should share a common theme. For us as a school, the common theme is open, non-judgmental, joyous Jewish education that can be delivered and received by a diverse group of constituents. We aimed to create conversations that lead to connections and community building. Having clarity about mission is the key to staying focused and making it clear that you are offering something new and unique.

The foundation support has enabled us to launch quality community programming and attract many participants to these programs. But providing programming does not mean providing free programming. A budget for every program needs to reflect a path towards sustainability. We are not in the business of making money in this arena, but we want a program that will exist in three years. The school charges for programming, perhaps less than some for-profit outfits in the neighborhood, but enough to manage the program responsibly both now and in the future.

In creating a program it is important to stay true to your vision of what you are and what you want to become. What we have learned is that Jewish programming is not a zero-sum game. The market is vast (at least in Brooklyn), and embarking on an effort to reach out and open doors only adds to enhancing Jewish life in the larger community. There are many different ways to be a Jew: synagogue, meditation, theater and song, learning, communal work. SmallCity@Senesh offers new paths into Jewish life for a people who have varying personal relationships with Judaism.

For families, our holiday programming allows young children and their parents to interact with art, music, storytelling and movement as a way to explore holidays and develop their Jewish identity. For teenagers we offer Kehilah, a Jewish community high school program that meets on Sunday evenings and includes Senesh alumni, other day school educated teens, and Jewish teens from a public school background. Adults from all over the borough attend Jewish meditation classes and Israeli dancing on Wednesday evenings.

Our internal team continues to think of other populations and to brainstorm ways to reach them. In my opinion, this should be the goal of Jewish outreach of any kind: bring people in on their terms, connect them to a Judaism they can appreciate, and give them some skills and resources to begin creating their own Jewish narrative.

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Bursting the Jewish Bubble

■ by **REBECCA VOORWINDE**

As a director of the prestigious Bronfman fellowships, Voorwinde believes that some of the most powerful learning happens when day school teens encounter their Jewish peers from other schools—for their mutual growth.

“Maybe I’m missing something, but how is leaving the lights on for twenty-five hours and wasting electricity, which is bad for the environment, in the spirit of Shabbat?” Ben’s question cut to the heart of a two-hour debate. As one of twenty-six high school juniors selected as a Bronfman fellow, Ben’s Jewish educational background was the most limited in the group. Unlike others sitting in the circle that first Friday afternoon in Jerusalem, he had never attended Jewish day school, a Jewish summer camp, or any kind of supplementary school.

The discussion about celebrating Shabbat as a group took a familiar course before Ben spoke. Observant fellows talked about the laws of Shabbat and restrictions that needed to be enforced. Day school fellows, whether shomer Shabbat themselves or not, explicated in great detail the reasoning behind Sabbath laws. Fellows raised in the Reform movement talked about summers at camp playing guitar on the lawn and singing zemirot. But Ben raised a unique voice. This conversation was his first hearing from people who kept Shabbat. It was his first time discussing the ideas he had just read about in Heschel’s *The Sabbath*, a required reading assignment for all fellows before arriving in Israel. And so, he had a different take that pushed the group into a deeper exploration about meaning and purpose.

Studying Jewish text and discussing Jewish ritual in mixed groups of Jewish day school students and Jewish students

with limited Jewish educational experiences, enriches students’ understanding. I have witnessed this phenomenon as co-director of the Bronfman fellowships, a pluralistic Jewish leadership program for high school juniors with an alumni community of 1000 across Israel and North America. There is an untapped potential in the day school world to bring these groups into contact educationally for the benefit of developing future Jewish leaders who can see the world through a lens greater than their own.

The Power of the Naïve Reader

Day schools shape the way students approach Judaism. This is mostly a wonderful thing. Students learn the context and history behind the texts, commentaries and laws they encounter. They also learn a method for textual interpretation and discussion. However, theoretical exposure, at times, leads even the brightest day school students to fall into the trap of censoring their own voice.

Early on our educational staff wondered if our day school educated fellows would benefit from text study on our program if they already study text throughout the school year. Remarkably, after 27 years in the field, we’ve consistently found that

our text study is most enhanced by the interplay between students who have worked with Jewish texts before and those who have not.

Something magical happens when a Jewish student who has never attended a Jewish day school brings to a text study discussion their own questions and interpretations. Because they have never encountered these Jewish ideas in depth before, they come to the text unhindered and free to give a fresh reading. In certain academic circles this concept is called the “naïve reader,” who ap-



Rebecca Voorwinde is the co-director of the Bronfman fellowships, a pluralistic Jewish leadership program for high school juniors with an alumni community of 1000 across Israel & North America. She can be reached at becky@byfi.org.

proaches a text without any historical, theoretical or cultural criticism to influence his or her interpretation. Naïve readers remain free to read and respond using their own sensibilities. The non-day school students inspire creativity in the discussion because of their “naïveté,” and, in so doing, the deeper layers of a text emerge and the discussion picks up momentum.

For their part, day school students energize their peers with less Jewish education by offering interpretations they have encountered in the classroom—whether a Rashi commentary or a drash from one of their teachers. Non-day school students are often amazed by the wealth of exposition that our tradition provides. This depth serves as a foundation for day school students to then move to offering their own insights.

Redefining the Jewish Bubble

I often speak with fellows who talk about the social isolation that comes from attending a day school. As a day school graduate, I know what they mean when they refer to “living in a Jewish bubble.” They lament that the names in their Facebook friends list looks more like an Israeli phone directory than that of an American teen. They share fears of walking onto a college campus and only then for the first time encountering non-Jewish students. These fellows are aware of a certain social segregation that comes with intensive Jewish education. Many Jewish schools attempt to remedy this separation by partnering with Christian and sometimes Muslim day schools for exchanges and programs. Parents often send their children to town sports, summer camps, or extracurricular activities to compensate for this separation from non-Jewish peers.

But the “Jewish bubble” that enwraps Jewish day school students applies also to their relationship with other American Jews. Day school students are often out of touch with a wider range of Jewish mindsets and identities. Despite the best efforts to diversify day school enrollment, families that send their children to day schools are those who have, somewhere along the way, made the choice that day school, a strong, immersive Jewish education, is an important value. This self-selection and prioritization of Jewish learning has made the greatest impact, indelibly and perhaps subconsciously, on the mindset of students.



This “Jewish bubble” is even smaller when you take into account estimates compiled by the Jim Joseph Foundation using recent censuses of classroom-based Jewish education for school-age children that around 45% of Jewish youth between



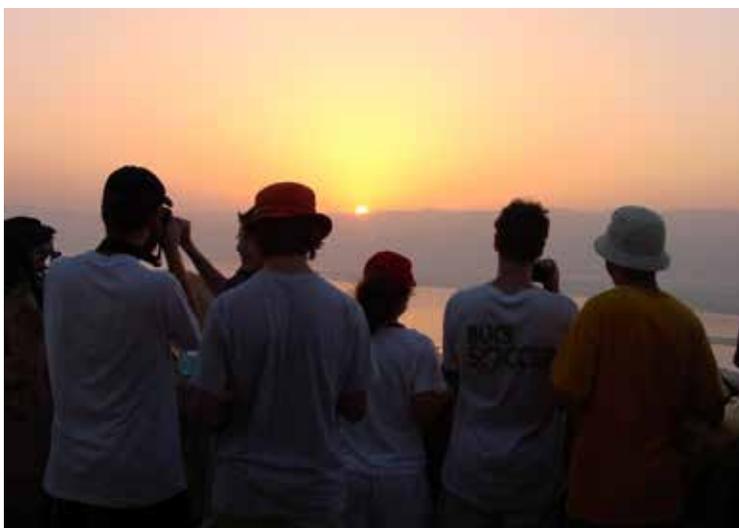
grades 1-12 attend either day school or supplementary school (“Effective Strategies for Educating and Engaging Jewish Teens,” p.3). Though the rise in enrollment in Jewish summer camps has helped to bridge socially between day school at-

where everyone in a diverse Jewish group are regarded as equals to the learning process. Day school graduates, if exposed to this diversity, could help generate more shared learning experiences when they enter the “adult” Jewish community.

tendees and other Jewish students, an attitudinal shift is needed when it comes to the educational divide.

Jewish camps are an excellent place for informal Jewish education and identity formation, but they sometimes inadvertently reinforce or bring into focus the knowledge gap between differently educated young Jews. For many of my camp friends who attended Hebrew school at their synagogue, they were never more intimidated by their “lack” of Jewish education as when they sat beside a day school student during tefillot at camp.

Perhaps this imbalance comes from the way we convey to students that only those at the top end of a “Jewish knowledge hierarchy” can properly undertake “serious” text study. Day school programs that bring students together could contribute to righting this potentially divisive attitude. On the Bronfman fellowships, we’ve seen that study sessions that generate the most unique insights are those



What Can Day Schools Do to Widen Their Students’ Lenses?

Here are a few ways Jewish day schools might contribute to bridging the divide between their students and other Jewish peers.

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Moot Beit Din: Amazing Students + Remarkable Teachers = Extraordinary Learning

Can a young Jewish woman attend her Catholic best friend's church wedding?

Teams from 20 RAVSAK high schools throughout the US and Canada converged on Philadelphia last month for the Moot Beit Din shabbaton. Prior to gathering, students took a challenging case that required them to examine the history of Jewish-Catholic relations and

concern for a grade or reward.

This year's program was made possible through the generous sponsorship of an anonymous donor. Special thanks to this year's host school, the Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy in Bryn Mawr, PA.

All of the teams did extraordinary work in the Moot Beit Din. RAVSAK congratulates the winning teams:

GROUP A

- First Place: The Weber School, Atlanta, GA
- Second Place: TanenbaumCHAT - Wallenberg Campus, Toronto, ON

GROUP B

- First Place: Schechter School of Long Island, Williston Park, NY
- Second Place: Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, Overland Park, KS

GROUP C

- First Place: Solomon Schechter School of Westchester, Hartsdale, NY
- Second Place: Adelson Educational Campus, Las Vegas, NV

Moot Beit Din gave me the opportunity to seriously explore and engage Jewish texts in a modern and practical manner. Not only was I able to connect more with Judaism, but the friendships I made connected me with the American Jewish teenage community.

JOSH LURIE, student, San Diego Jewish Academy, San Diego, CA

explore the potential and limits of interfaith friendships. They formed a moot "beit din," a Jewish court of law, and issued a ruling based on their study of the issues and Jewish legal sources. In Philadelphia they presented their conclusions in front of judges, rabbis from the range of denominations, who asked them probing questions that forced them to think on their toes and stretch their reasoning, all in front of a live audience.

The shabbaton is about much more than the case. Students quickly bond over icebreakers and common interests. They heard from a Catholic professor and a rabbi about changes in Catholic doctrine and interfaith relations. They gave back to the host community through several chesed projects. Students led soulful tefillah and spirited singing during Shabbat. They tapped into the talents of the advisors, who delivered divrei Torah and led study sessions on a wide range of topics. The entire program and shabbaton epitomizes the value of Torah lishma, studying Jewish sources for its own sake, without



For me, Moot Beit Din is a culmination and a celebration: a culmination of my students' hard work in wrestling with the Jewish sources and applying them to the contemporary issues of the case, and a celebration of the joy of Torah study, multiplied when shared with their peers from across North America.

MICHAL CAHLON, teacher, Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, Overland Park, KS

Child-Centered Jewish Exploration

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33]

An administrator's role is to work with educators to define Jewish content boundaries of a theme, set motivating Jewish texts for exploration, and define language for the theme, all based on the values and philosophy of the school. Staff text study helps establish the school's orientation towards the text as distinct from educators' personal orientations, and also offers educators a role in developing language for a particular theme supportive of the school's orientation. At our center, because our community holds diverse beliefs and practices, we develop language for Torah study that values our different approaches to the text.

Imagining a Thematic Exploration: Educators' Perspective

Before starting a new theme, educators consider what we know about the children with whom we work, both academically and socially. What do we know about how a particular group of children likes to learn—through dialogue, games, imaginative play, or otherwise? Are there particular social-emotional foci needed right now, or that fit well with the theme? Educators consider, too, how to connect the upcoming thematic exploration with previous learning: What big ideas are children still wrestling with? What misunderstandings/confusion do children have related to long-term goals that might be addressed through this theme?

In addition, educators can plan opportunities for integrating Hebrew language learning and review, and potential avenues for connecting with parents and community members around the theme. If children are working on specific tools for self-expression, such as painting or storytelling, or have expressed fascination with three-dimensional work, for example, educators can consider how these skills and interests may be developed through the theme. Educators plan, too, a starting point for the educational environment: what materials to make available to children and what visuals to put on the walls.

And then we're off on our exploration, partnering with children, maintaining flexibility for what children offer and how we can together meet long-term educational goals.

Conclusion

Child-centered Jewish exploration is challenging. This kind of children's learning may require changes to a school's staffing structure, physical layout, and timing of the school day—not small changes. At its core, child-centered Jewish exploration may require a shift in thinking about children. Placing children at the center of learning requires us to believe that children are resourceful, capable and imaginative; that children are naturally curious, enjoy discovery, challenges, and

achievement; that children learn through play, observation, reading, listening, art, games, reflection, questioning, and relationships with peers and adults. We must trust that children, given the opportunity, will offer their best.

For when we give children time to grow skills and make meaning of Jewish ideas; when we are intentional about creating a learning environment rich in exploration opportunities and social-emotional support; and when we maintain flexibility for matching children's interests with long-term educational goals, children *know* they are in a safe learning environment that values them in their fullness. In such a Jewish environment, a child knows, *I matter*. The boundaries for learning become limitless. ■

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Hebrew Poetry Contest 2013

Rabbi Yehuda used to say: The whole world was on one side, while Abraham was on the other side.

Breishit Rabba 42:8

This famous midrash about Abraham explains why he is called ha-ivri, the Hebrew, and by extension, it tells us something about the Hebrew language. Abraham was willing to take a stand; as the world's first monotheist, he bravely stood on one *ever*, one side, while the rest of the world stood opposed to him, on the other side. Similarly, Ivrit, the Hebrew language, is the language of Hebrews. To use Hebrew is to take a stand, to connect oneself with the Jewish past, present and future. To use Hebrew is to draw a line that connects us with other Jews throughout the world and especially in the state of Israel. Language is much more than a tool for communication; it is an ocean that carries an entire history and culture. To write poetry in Hebrew is to connect one's own personal creativity with the heritage and creative genius of the Jewish people.

This year, the RAVSAK Hebrew Poetry Contest inspired numerous Abrahams and Sarahs to remarkable achievements in quite a variety of forms. For the first time we received a Hebrew haiku as a winning entry! Other winners take the form of a dramatic monologue and a letter of condolence, draw inspiration from nature or from dreams, reflect inner states, philosophical ideas, and Jewish history and themes. One striking trend is the use of rhyme and meter throughout many of the poems, an interest in the craft of poetry. We were pleased to receive poems from schools throughout the US and from some of RAVSAK's partner schools in Israel.

A special thanks goes to this year's judge, Janice Silverman Rebibo, herself a wonderful Hebrew poet and a recipient of the President of Israel Award for her fourth collection entitled *A Stranger in Zion*. Janice is a senior program officer and technology director at Hebrew at the Center, which works with day schools and other Jewish educational settings to change and radically improve Hebrew instruction. Janice read all submissions with care and commented generously on all winning entries.

1st place: Grades K-5 Non-native

Dalia Shvartsman

5th Grade—Rabbi David L. Silver Yeshiva Academy,
Harrisburg, PA

The Sounds of Rain

צלילי גשם

I'm sitting in the street
while music flows to a beat
from the sky above us all
slowly like a waterfall.
Myriad drops fall and amaze
in a colorful daze,
gathering to the ground
the warm drainpipe sound.

אני ברחוב יושבת
ומוזיקה זורמת.
ירצאת מן השמיים
לאט כמו מפל מיים.
טיפות יורדות לפלא,
צבעוניות כאלה,
אוספות באדמה
צלילי גשמה חמה.

Judge's comments: Fifth-grader, non-native Hebrew speaker Dalia Shvartsman does a more competent job in Hebrew than any rough English translation can represent. Her concise lines, engaging rhythm and feminine end rhymes connect sight and sound, concluding with a couplet in masculine rhyme that receives the rain from sky and gutters down into the earth with a song.

Runner-up: Grades K-5 Non-native

Zev Goldhaber-Gordon

5th Grade—Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School,
Palo Alto, CA

Open Your Mouth and
Your Words Will Shine

תפתח פיך ויאירו דבריך

Tell all of your ideas, and
they will be heard.
About a big robot or world
peace, speak out.
In America and Israel, there
is freedom of speech.
Only imagine and tell your-
self: I believe in myself.
Open your mouth and your
words will shine,
But you also need to open
your eyes.

תאמר את הרעיונות שלך, והם
ישמעו.
על רובוט גדול או שלום לעולם,
אז תדברו.
בארצות הברית וגם בישראל, יש
דיבור חופשי.
רק תדמיין ותאמר לעצמך: אני
מאמין בעצמי.
תפתח פיך ויאירו דבריך,
אבל גם צריך-לפקוח עיניך.

Judge's comments: Zev Goldhaber-Gordon's well-chosen words carry forward the wise and witty tradition of the Sages.

1st Place: Grades K-5 Native

Yaheli Penso

4th Grade—Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL

Rivka

My husband is Isaac. I am Rivka.
 I am a unique, attractive woman and one of a kind.
 I perform the mitzvah of “hospitality to guests” in the correct way.
 With Eliezer’s assistance, I found Yitzchak,
 The son of Avraham and Sarah.
 I left my father’s house without fear or apprehension;
 A big secret in my ears,
 G-d himself whispered,
 In my belly, two boys will grow up to be rivaling nations.
 I loved Yaakov much more than his brother Esav;
 Thus, my plan was for Yaakov to receive the blessing of the first born,
 Although I knew it would make everyone very upset.
 Esav went into the field, looking to hunt.
 While I will disguise Yaakov as Esav.
 Yaakov will receive the blessing from Issac,
 Despite the fact that Esav will be extremely angry.
 Esav traded the lentil stew over the blessing;
 Thus, it is only himself that is to be blamed.
 This is my son, Yaakov. Or, if you would like, Yisrael.
 This is me: the narrator.
 Rivka, the daughter of Betuel.

Judge’s comments: Fourth grade native-speaker Yaheli Penso works in the classic genre of dramatic monologue with an immediacy that transports us into the presence of an outspoken Rivka and her favored son. A bold use of contemporary and classical registers and syntax is only one expression of this poet’s craft. As you read Yaheli’s rhymed first-person narrative, pay attention to the shifts in Hebrew tenses that draw us into the fateful scene, כאן, here and now, just as it is about to commence.

רבקה

בעלי הוא יצחק. אני רבקה.
 אני אשה לא רגילה, טובת מראה ומיחדת במינה.
 אני מקיימת את מצוות “הכנסת אורחים” בצורה
 טובה,
 כך מצאתי, בעזרת אליעזר את יצחק
 בן אברהם ושרה.
 עזבתי את בית אבי ללא פחד ונחשש,
 סוד גדול באזני, ה’ בעצמו לחש,
 בבטן שלי, שני בנים שיגדלו להיות עמים יריבים.
 אהבתי את יעקב יותר מאשר עשו אחיו.
 מצאתי תכנית כך שיעקב יקבל את הבכורה,
 אפלו שינדעתי שזה יבעיס את כלם גורא.
 עשו לשדה יצא, כי ציד חפש,
 אני כאן את יעקב לעשו אחפש.
 יצחק את הברכה ליעקב יתן,
 גם אם את עשו זה ממש יעצבן.
 את הבכורה מכר לו בנייד עדשים,
 כך שרק את עצמו יוכל להאשים.
 זהו בני יעקב, או אם תרצו ישראל,
 זו אני המספרת, רבקה בת בתואל.

Runner-up: Grades K-5 Native

Bernard Netanel

5th Grade—Rockwern Academy, Cincinnati, OH

World of Colors

עולם של צבעים

Red like sweet, juicy cherries
 Blue and white as a bowl of cream and berries.
 Black, white and shiny like a pod of killer whales
 Pulling seals off little snow islands by their tails.
 Deep blue as a sparkling, sapphire lake
 Rich, dark brown as a chocolate birthday cake.
 Burnt orange like sunset skies
 Aquamarine as a kitten’s eyes.

אדום כמו דובדבנים מתוקים עסיסיים
 כחול ולבן כמו קערת שמנת ופרות יער.
 שחור ולבן ומבריק כמו לוחתנים קטלניים
 שמושכים פלבי ים בזנבותיהם
 מאיי השלג הקטנים.
 אגם כחול ועמוק כספיר נוצץ,
 חום כעוגת שוקולד ביום הולדת.
 כתום שרוף בשמי השקיעה
 צבע ירוק כמו עינייה של חתלתולה.

Judge’s comments: Bernard Netanel fills our world with color in his vivid, extended similes.

1st Place: Grades 6-8 Native

Yoav Cooper

6th Grade—Keshet Democratic School, Zichron Yaakov, Israel

Falling Stars

I see falling stars every night.
I hope my life like them will be bright.
Through the window I've seen little speckled balls,
Sometimes one, sometimes two, even many in all.
Like a dreamtime angel, splitting the night sky,
From cloud to cloud, day and night they fly.

I imagine myself a meteor in space,
Soaring without hindrance at a furious pace.
But being a child is really not so bad,
Even when things get messy or a little sad;
A falling star that fulfills every wish,
Still can't beat childhood, that's not always a dish.

I see falling stars every night—
But I've learned that my life is a pretty good sight.
Perhaps the stars see me and think:
"We'll take human life in a blink!"

Judge's comments: The instructive message in 6th grader Yoav Cooper's poem, in the peripatetic tradition of contemplating the outdoors, is achieved cleverly with considerable formal and informal musicality. Note the leap the poet has taken from every child's "When you wish upon a star..." even if he, too, is only looking out the window.

כוכבים נופלים

אני רואה כל לילה כוכבים נופלים,
אני מקווה שחיי יהיו כמותם יפים.
כדורים קטנים כתומים ראיתי מהחלון,
לפעמים אחד, לפעמים שניים ולפעמים
ממש המון.
חוצים את שמי הלילה כמו מלאך מהחלום,
מענן לענן הם קופצים- לילה ויום.

אני מדמיין את עצמי כמטאור מן החלל,
עף כל כך מהר, בלי בעיות בכלל.
אבל גם להיות ילד זה לא ממש חבל,
אפילו שזה סיבוך גדול, ולגמרי לא קל,
להיות כוכב נופל שממלא כל בקשה-
זה לא טוב יותר מילדות, שהיא קצת קשה.

אני רואה כל לילה כוכבים נופלים,
אבל למדתי לקח שחיי מספיק טובים.
אולי הכוכבים אותי רואים ואז חושבים:
"הלוואי שלי היו כאלה חיים אנושיים!"

Runner-up: Grades 6-8 Native

Maor Cohen Kidron

7th Grade—Rabbi David L. Silver Yeshiva Academy, Harrisburg, PA

Leaves in the Fall

One day I had a dream,
In which one leaf said to me "Shalom!"
There were lots of plants,
They seemed so happy...
There was kind of a sound,
And lots of joy and happiness.
I was walking barefoot in the leaves,
It was very pleasant.
And in the morning, when I woke up,
Immediately I got out of my bed and stood on the floor.
I looked through the window,
And there were lots of piles of leaves.
The fall began last week,
And because of that a lot of leaves are dropping now.

Judge's comments: Maor arranges direct, everyday language into rhymed couplets to effectively convey the simple joy of autumn leaves.

עלים בסתיו

יום אחד חלמתי חלום,
ובו עלה אחד אמר לי שלום,
היו שם המון צמחים,
הם היו נראים כל כך שמחים.
היה שם כזה מין צליל,
והמון שמחה וגיל.
הלכתי לי יחפה בין העלים,
זה היה נורא נעים.
ובבוקר, כשהתעוררתי,
מיד מהמיטה על הרצפה נעמדתי,
הבטתי דרך החלון,
וערמות של עלים, היו שם המון.
לפני שבוע התחיל הסתיו,
ובגלל זה נושרים המון עלים עכשיו.

Poetry Contest 2013

1st Place: Grades 6-8 Non-native

Bayley Goodman

6th Grade—Rockwern Academy, Cincinnati, OH

Lake

Lake

A place where I can think,
I'm looking down at my reflection,
It's so peaceful here in the middle of the forest,
All I can hear is the trees swaying,
Back and forth,
The water is blue,
The sun is beaming down on the lake,
I throw a pebble in the lake,
It jumps up and down,
The water ripples,
Then suddenly I realize,
My reflection,
Fading away.....

אָגם

אָגם

מקום שבו אני יכול לחשוב,
אני מביט למטה בהשתקפות שלי,
כל כך שקט כאן באמצע היער,
כל מה שאני יכול לשמוע זה
תזוזות העצים, הלך ושוב.
המים כחולים,
השמש קורן על האגם.
אני זורק אבן
היא קופצת למעלה ולמטה.
תנועת המים,
ואז פתאום אני מבין,
ההשתקפות שלי,
נמוגה.....

Judge's comments: In 6th grader Bayley Goodman's first-person, contemplative poem, we find ourselves reminded of Bialik by his "pool." The poet allows us to accompany him as he calmly examines the natural surroundings step by step, moving toward a realization. We join the poet at this revelatory point of creation, where image and figurative language meet to express the otherwise inexpressible.

Runner-up: Grades 6-8 Non-native

Marcelle Lobar

7th Grade—Rockwern Academy, Cincinnati, OH

Rainclouds

ענני גשם

Clouds of rain
Bursting into water
Many puddles

ענני גשם
התפוצצו למים
הרבה שלוליות

Judge's comments: Marcelle Lobar's haiku strikes us with crystal clarity and the right touch of whimsy. Note that our "ear," be it Hebrew or English, might expect the equivalent of "burst" or "exploded into pieces," while Marcelle's twist—"exploded into water"—communicates the scene with maximum economy. In three quick steps, her "puddle world" is created and revealed.

1st place: Grades 9-12 Non-native

Karen Lapscher

10th Grade—David Posnack Jewish Day School, Davie, FL

A Letter to the Families

מכתב למשפחות

Dear families,

משפחות יקרות,

I am very sorry that this happened.

אני ממש מצטערת שזה קרה

This was not supposed to happen.

זה לא היה אמור לקרות

But now we know,

אבל עכשיו אנחנו יודעים

That things like these can happen.

שרברים כאלה יכולים לקרות.

I would have never pictured this

אני מעולם לא דימיתני.

In the world that we live in.

שלכם בזיכרון

In your memory,

חנה לפשר

Karen Lapscher

Judge's comments: Many writers who submitted to the poetry competition applied their talents to the difficult subject of the Munich Olympics Massacre. Karen (Hanna) Lapscher's poem stood out for its highly suitable simplicity and directness. She shaped her poem in bold, underlined, centered lettering, forming a text that reminds us of a printed death notice. Writing a letter—an epistolary poem—allowed her to reach out to her imagined addressees with the touching, authentic expression, "I never imagined...".

Hebrew Poetry Contest 2013

Runner-up: Grades 9-12 Non-native

Andrew Moss

12th Grade—Frankel Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit, MI

Heart in the Kinneret

I am moved when I go to the Kinneret.
The wind on my face feels like life,
The sun on the water looks like the creation of the world.
The end of the beach is hot. My feet are cold.
My eyes glisten like the sun on the water.
There is no one with me.
I am alone.
There is a Jewish star around my neck,
My ancestors are in my head,
I feel close to god.
I will be me,
And I am happy.

לב בכינרת

אני מתרגש כשאני הולך לכינרת.
הרוח על הפנים שלי מרגיש כמו חיים.
השמש על המים נראת כמו בראשית העולם.
סוף הים חם, הרגלים שלי קרות
העיניים שלי זוהרות כמו שמש על המים.
אין אנשים איתי
אני לבד.
יש מגן דוד על הצוואר שלי.
האבות שלי בראש.
אני מרגיש קרוב להשם,
אני אהיה אני
ואני שמח.

Judge's comments: Andrew Moss' poem displays the utmost authenticity in his use of the Hebrew he has learned. This is crucial to his success in making his personal epiphany ours.

1st place: Grades 9-12 Native

Sagiv Levi

11th Grade—NCJHS, New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, CA

Silence

The fan was buzzing,
Children's laughter is heard from the neighbors next door,
And I am alone at home,
Silence.

Darkness surrounds me,
And the land had rested,
Loneliness winks to me,
I am surrounded by darkness.

The sound of the heart,
A bark was heard from a far,
Loneliness is a transitory condition,
But such silence has not been heard.

My soul is lost,
Sudden rumbling sound outside,
The silence is so long,
Have forty years passed?

דממה

המאוורר זמזם,
צחוק ילדים נשמע מזהבית הסמוך,
ואני לבדי בבית,
דממה.

חשכה מסביב,
והארץ שקטה,
הבדידות קורצת לי,
אני בעלטה.

רחש הלב,
מרחוק קול נביחה,
בדידות זה מצב חולף,
דממה כזו עוד לא נשמעה.

הנשמה אבודה,
רעם פתאומי בחוץ נשמע,
הדממה כלכך ארוכה,
כבר עברו ארבעים שנה?

Judge's comments: Sagiv Levi's competent, existential poem delights us with its ironic closing question. The reference to the magic number of "40 years" anchors Sagiv's universal lines firmly in the shifting sands of Hebrew tradition. Sagiv's choice of closure in effect opens this poem to further musings by the reader in retrospect.

Runner-up: Grades 9-12 Native

Ishay Haykeen

11th Grade—NCJHS, New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, CA

Freedom to Love

החופש לאהוב

Like a pair of feathers on a bird's wing,
Almost touching almost together.
Sitting in the shade and light,
Looking for a little hope and comfort.

כמו זוג נוצות על כנף ציפור,
כמעט נוגעות כמעט ביחד.
יושבות בצל ולא באור,
מחפשות מעט תקווה ונחת.

And the feather tried to stretch out her hand,
Almost broken and not recovering
Touching distance from her love,
From which she is desperate.

וניסתה הנוצה להושיט ידה,
תכף נשברת לא מתאוששת.
מרחק נגיעה מאהבתה,
אשר ממנה מיואשת.

And one day the feather dropped,
Abandoned who she loved.
And left to the next world.

ויום אחד נשרה הנוצה,
נטשה את אשר אהבה.
נדם ליבה על ההחמצה,
ועזבה לעולם הבא.

While one was floating in the clear air,
It also seems the other.
Slowly falling dropping down the steep path,
That the other one went down too.

בעוד האחת מרחפת באוויר הצלול,
נדמה גם השנייה.
לאיטה צונחת צונחת במסלול
התלול,
שהלכה בו חברתה.

Then suddenly when they both fall,
They lost a beat and life.
Fate wanted that they would pair hands,
And meet in a different life.

אך לפתע פתאום כשנופלות שתיהן,
אבודות פעימה וחיים.
רצה הגורל שזוג ידיהן,
יפגשו בחיים אחרים.

And slowly they land on the ground
Clasped hands and look.
New love now hatched,
By one feather to the other
And I'm a feather and you as well,
Residing together in the same nest.
Small heart beats for you.
Know this, I will not go without you.

ולאט נוחתות אל האדמה,
שלוכות ידיים ומבט.
אהבה חדשה שכעת נרקמה,
בין נוצה אחת לחברתה.
ואני נוצה ואת גם כן,
שוכנים ביחד באותו הקן.
לב קטן שפועם בשבילך,
דעי זאת, בלעדריך לא אלך.

Judge's comments: This is a fully conceived poem, whose central figure is sustained consistently and with remarkable sensitivity. Ishay Haykeen's text is skillfully turned from an act of rhymed and metered narration to a direct declaration of love, strengthened by a final touch of classicizing diction.

Hebrew Poetry Contest 2013

First Place: Teacher

Deborah Kramer Netanel

Rockwern Academy, Cincinnati, OH

Footsteps

Footsteps
A lifetime of footsteps
Footsteps that echo across polished floors
Tread cautious over icy lakes
Climb mountains and walk the streets of the world.

Footfalls

A lifetime of footfalls
Footfalls that bound with energy,
Leap with joy
Spring to life, to action.
Steps that dance and quiet steps too
Silent steps on plush cushions and
Steps on tiptoe-they whisper; they are delicate, not sly.
And the steps that take us there.

Step by thoughtful step

Let the feet proceed unfaltering
With confidence, an endless travel on a path that we create
What we feel beneath the feet is not a tightrope
The undisclosed need not spell danger
The yet-unsampled awaits.

Heartbeats

A lifetime of heartbeats
Heartbeats that echo without caution
Heartbeats that cry and shout with joy and pain
Heartbeats that make us want and feel
as we hear their thunder and their peace

Footsteps

Footsteps longing to stride ahead
Unhesitant, unwavering and purposeful
Footsteps waiting to jump, glide or saunter
Footsteps that want to simply walk, comfortably together
Footsteps that hear the heartbeats and want to follow

The heart beats and beats
The feet move from side to side
The mind and soul decide

צעדים

צעדים
חיים של צעדים
צעדים שמהדהדים על פני רצפות מבריקות
הילוך זהיר על אגמים קפואים
מטפסים על הרים והולכים ברחובות העולם.

צעדים

חיים של צעדים
צעדים מלאי אנרגיה שקופצים בשמחה,
לחיים, לפעולה
צעדים שרוקדים וצעדים שקטים
צעדים של דממה על כריות קטיפה
וצעדים על קצה האצבעות
לוחשים, עדינים, לא ערמומיים
ופסיעות שמובילות לשם.
צעד אחר צעד מתחשב-תן לרגליים להמשיך
בלי היסוס!
בביטחון, ולא על חבל דק.
נסיעות אין-סופיות בנתיב שאנו יוצרים.

דפיקות לב

חיים של פעימות לב
דפיקות לב שמהדהדים ללא זהירות
דפיקות לב שבוכות וצועקות בשמחה ובכאב
דפיקות לב שגורמות לנו לרצות ולהרגיש
כשאנו שומעים את רעמם ושלותם

צעדים

צעדים שנוקקים לצעוד קדימה
בלי היסוס, בלתי מתפשר ותכלתי
צעדים שמחכים לקפוץ, לגלוש או לטויל
להנאתם
צעדים שרוצים פשוט ללכת בנוחות, יחד
צעדים ששומעים את פעימות הלב ומכנים
ללכת בעקבותם

הלב פועם חזק

הרגליים מצד לצד נעות,
מחכות
למוח ולנפש לקבל החלטות

Judge's comments: Deborah Kramer Netanel's centered poem hangs in the balance. It is built on myriad repetitions and variations, reflecting the endless footsteps and heartbeats that persist while the mind and spirit hesitate.

Bursting the Jewish Bubble

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41]

Tap into natural peer networks. For Jewish high schools, check whether there's a Jewish Student Connection group in your local public school or contact the Bureau of Jewish education about other public or private secular school relationships that may already exist. A day school could host a joint learning or discussion session or find another way to collaborate. Similarly, student leaders could identify Jewish friends and invite them to join an event, class, or activity hosted by their day school.

Virtual chevruta. A few years ago, two Bronfman alumni paired their friends for regular skype and phone chevruta study. Half of each chevruta was a public

school student from Berkeley, CA and half attended a day school in the Boston area. Day schools could spearhead an effort like this and could 'find' non-day school students through camps or youth groups.

Host community learning. Many day schools already open their building to programming for the local Jewish community. Consider targeted programming that attracts non-day school students to participate.

Joint after-care programming. Day schools might host or promote a Jewish after-care option for children attending day schools and those who do not. In Chicago, Rabbi Rebecca Milder, a Bron-

fman alumna, has set up an inspiring model that brings together day school students and other Jewish students at the Jewish Enrichment Center for learning and fun after-school. (See her article in this issue.) More programs like this are needed.

The reciprocal benefit of bringing day school and non-day school students together is clear. The relationship between day school students and other Jews will influence the building blocks of tomorrow's Jewish community. We have the opportunity to ensure both types of students are enthusiastic about building a Jewish future in partnership with all Jews and with a true appreciation of the varied lenses every Jew can bring to the discussion. ■

A Community Day School for the Whole Community

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39]

Not every community has as much need for Jewish programming as our corner of Brooklyn. Nonetheless, every day school is rich in resources that can benefit the larger community. Here are five things to consider about providing community programming.

Market research. Before you begin developing a program, learn about your target market and what it needs. Does your community have a large number of young families with children, empty nesters, elders, Russians, and/or Israelis? When you have learned what segment in your community is most interested in programming, begin to collect emails or phone numbers. After this, do the research through many different vehicles: focus groups, online surveys or phone call interviews. Ask your market what they want in the way of programming, what times of the week work best for them to go to a program, how much they would be willing to pay, and if they'd prefer drop-in or to register for a handful of classes.

Program Development. Once you have

established your market and its needs, you can start to build the program. The program should be high quality and mission consistent. Hold brainstorming sessions with as many different people as possible so that you can collect creative ideas about what your program can be. Be realistic about the gap between what your market might say they want, and what they are able to commit to.

Marketing outreach. Know how your market finds out about programs and be vigorous about reaching them there. This means making sure you regularly list on neighborhood listservs if that is how they get their information, or put listings in local newspapers if that is their preference. If you are working with elders, you might need to have a phone bank once a week to remind them to come to programs. This takes work and planning, but outreach and marketing is key to getting the attention you need.

Sustainability. Only do programming that you can financially sustain. Even if you are using your programming as a way to drive attention to your school,

there is no reason to lose an exceptional amount of money for the long term. You might decide to lose money to build a program that you know can be successful after a few months, but that should be a strategic decision. Otherwise, charge more and find a less expensive teacher.

Be reflective and be flexible. Be prepared to drop something if it isn't working. If after much marketing and effort a program is losing more money than you would have expected, move on and try something else. This is an important part of program refining; there is no reason to commit to a program that isn't doing anything for the community you serve.

Day schools are hubs of talent and resources that have the capacity to enrich the lives of many more people than are usually found within their walls. Community day schools in particular are adept at serving the full range of Jews that exist in our neighborhoods. Seeing ourselves as part of a living and growing Jewish ecosystem can enrich both our schools and our communities. ■

Robotics: Empowering Jewish Creators

■ by **JUDY MILLER**

Miller shows how robotics can be much more than an exciting way to engage students in STEM learning. Students can use robotics in all subjects to create dynamic models that represent the values and activities they want to display.

Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, “Our concern is not how to worship in the catcombs but rather how to remain human in the skyscrapers.” At Columbus Jewish Day School, a new robotics curriculum has provided a way for students to find the “human in the skyscrapers” through its potential for creativity and self-directed learning. Bringing STEM education into our integrated Judaic and general studies curriculum not only prepares students for a changing world, it enables them to be the changers of that world as they view it through the lens of Jewish knowledge.

In partnership with the Battelle Company, we launched a pilot robotics curriculum for students in kindergarten through third grade. The program was so successful that it was expanded to fourth through sixth grade with the generosity of the Wasserstrom Science and Technology Fund. “As science and technology continues to become a greater piece of our daily activity, it is even more important that our children learn these skills at a younger and younger age,” said Eric Wasserstrom, a CJDS parent.

Several years ago, I was introduced to Marina Bers of Tufts University, who served as a keynote speaker at a North American Jewish Day School conference. Marina is a professor in the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development and the Director of DevTech Research Group at Tufts, the 2005 recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers and the author

of *Blocks to Robots: Learning with Technology in the Early Childhood Classroom*. Bers’s presentation at the conference inspired me to learn more about robotics, and to investigate how it could be successfully implemented in early elementary grades.

We reached out to Bers and brought her together with Battelle, a global research and development organization based in Columbus, Ohio, to concretize a plan for CJDS. Parent volunteers and teachers underwent intensive training by Bers. Using her methods, students are using Lego blocks and laptop computers to engage in building and programming robots. Battelle’s commitment to science, technology and innovation made them a natural collaborator for this pilot program. Battelle saw us as a pilot school for this innovative pedagogy; in the words of Eric Fingerhut, vice president for education and

STEM learning at Battelle, “CJDS will serve as a demonstration site to scale this proven best practice in central Ohio and beyond.”

Battelle provides funding and support for a multitude of STEM educational programming in schools. With their generous financial backing CJDS was able to purchase robotics kits and laptops for Kindergarten through third grade. Battelle’s funding also paid for staff devel-



Judy Miller is the head of school at Columbus Jewish Day School in New Albany, Ohio. She can be reached at jmiller@cjds.org.

opment and parent volunteer training with Bers. Using her framework, our educators created units that integrated robotics into their established curriculum. Beginning with the engineering design process, students learn to build and program robots in conjunction with science, literature, social studies and Jewish studies.

Each grade at CJDS has an essential question that guides the year’s learning and activities. Exploration of the first

Examples of student’s designs include a robot programmed to turn its head away from distracters, a robot that takes a deep breath and rolls its head to relax and refocus, and a robot that rolls away from a negative situation and “drinks” from a water fountain made out of non-Lego materials.

grade essential question, “How do we build a community?” led the class to base their robotics unit on kibbutzim. Liat Shaked, our community shlichah, spent time with first graders teaching them about the structure of kibbutzim and the many activities that take place within the kibbutz community. Liat helped the students create maps of their own kibbutzim, which are on display outside their first grade classrooms.

As an extension of this unit on community, the first grade robotics unit challenges the students to build and program robots that would be elements of a kibbutz. Students are collaborating to create a piece of playground equipment using Legos, the first step to get a feel for the building materials. In their next robotics sessions first graders will refine how they will translate the ideas of community into functioning robots.

Third graders have already presented their final robotics projects to friends and family. The robotics unit is based on the social-emotional curriculum *Superflex*, created by Michelle Garcia Winner. The curriculum includes characters called the Unthinkables, who exhibit inappropriate behaviors that invade our brains and subvert healthy social behavior. The behaviors-characters include inattentiveness (Brain Eater), over-sensitivity (Glassman) and mean-spiritedness (Mean Jean). The hero, Superflex, is totally flexible and can think of many different solutions to one problem. CJDS has been using the *Superflex* curriculum to help students learn to identify and articulate destructive social behaviors and then role play to devise possible responses and solutions.

The third graders designed and programmed their Lego robots to respond appropriately to an Unthinkable by using one of the strategies developed in class. Examples of student’s designs include a robot programmed to turn its head away from distracters, a robot that takes a deep breath and rolls its head to relax and re-focus, and a robot that rolls away from a negative situation and “drinks” from a water fountain made out of non-Lego materials, a requirement of the robotics curriculum.



Sixth graders integrated their science research into engineering fields with their study of robotics. Students researched different types of engineering, including audio, mineral and environmental engineering. They looked at the kinds of work each type of engineer might do, the education required and other interesting aspects for each field. Then they presented their robotics unit at the science fair. They built a robot to illustrate a specific aspect of their research. For example, one student researched mining engineering and

built a drilling robot, which required him to figure out how to use the same motor to make the drill bit spin fast while the machine moves forward slowly.

This robotics curriculum enhances our goals of delivering academic excellence, promoting critical thinking and inspiring creativity all in an inquiry-based learning environment. This program is the kind of hands-on, next-level learning that will prepare our children for the 21st century. ■

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~Parent



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Digital Badge Learning: “Geeking Out” Across the Curriculum

■ by **SARAH BLATTNER**

Building upon the innovations of the Mozilla Foundation, Blattner demonstrates how schools can employ digital badges to accomplish a host of pedagogical aims, including motivation, assessment, curricular planning, problem solving, blended learning and more.

Technology revolutionizes how, where and when learning can happen. Learners today have access to more information in the palms of their hands than we could access in university libraries just a decade ago. More importantly, learning happens beyond the school calendar, beyond the classroom walls and with all sorts of people, including teachers, experts in the field, mentors, counselors, coaches and peers. Learning today is about collaborating, evaluating, synthesizing, creating, communicating and problem solving. The Internet amplifies the possibilities of John Dewey’s vision of progressive education, providing heightened opportunities to explore the world in a social context, to contribute content through a global platform, and to seek out solutions and experts to solve relevant and interesting challenges. The time has come for us to reimagine how we “do school” and how we can best meet our students’ educational needs for the future.

Numbers also tell a story: the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 95% of American teens ages 12-17 are online; 80% of teens participate in some sort of social network; and over 64% of teens post some kind of content online. We must listen to the numbers. It is a profound time—a time for transforming the learning landscape and for shifting how we assess what students

know and what they can do.

Digital badge learning is one innovative approach that invokes the spirit of Dewey and relies on the endless possibilities that the Internet and digital media afford students. Badge learning is passion-based, project-based and occurs within a social and participatory context. Students can earn badges for achievements that happen inside or outside of school. Students can demonstrate what they know through their badges as a transparent transcript of their learning, all while pursuing their interests.

In simplest terms, a digital badge signifies achievements and tells the story of the learner, capturing rich data about students’ knowledge, skills and pathways. Similar to badges earned in youth scouting programs, the badge as a graphic icon symbolizes a milestone or accomplishment. But a digital badge is so much more than just an icon.

The Mozilla Foundation is leading the badge learning movement and coined the term “open badges.” Open badges are hard coded with rich metadata that

reaches far beyond a traditional letter grade on a report card. When clicking on a badge, a user may see the issuing institution, the rubric for the learning and a description of the learning pathways to achievement. And depending upon the age of the student (adhering to the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act), learners may share out their badges to a variety of social media interfaces through their “Mozilla Open Badges Backpack.”



Sarah Blattner is the founder and executive director of Tamritz, a digital badge learning network for Jewish day school students and teachers, incubated as a Joshua Venture Group Dual Investment Program Fellowship and generously supported by the AVI CHAI Foundation. You can follow her on Twitter @tamritzlearning, and she can be reached at sarah@tamritz.org.

Badge-empowered learning capitalizes on many elements of good game design. A good video game, for instance, keeps the learner engaged through constant feedback. Throughout an experience, gamers visibly see milestones, levels, tokens and points that provide a sense of satisfying accomplishment. Similarly, badge learning relies on frequent feedback and rewards accomplishments at a granular level, where achievements and milestones are recognized along the learning journey, visible within an online community.

Good games maintain a pleasant challenge, where the learner is balanced on the edge of frustration, not overwhelmed or moving through obstacles with too much ease. Good games also

encourage risk and fun in failure, for in failing, we get to try again and again, seeking mastery. Like good games, badge learning creates a fun risk-taking environment and is supported by a community of peers and mentors.

Badge learning embraces the spirit of play and the benefits of “iterative prototyping,” both cornerstones from the design world. By creating a low-stakes environment where students feel free to take risks, muck around in the messiness of learning and test out models, we empower students to be more creative and innovative in their problem solving. Instead of attempting to arrive at a final completed project the first time around, multiple versions or prototypes evolve through formative feedback. The ending result is “sticky” learning and the kind of learning that reaches the full range of the new Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Additional gaming elements influence badge learning, including points tied to badges, leaderboards and the unlocking of privileges or “power ups” within the learning community. For instance, badges may recognize soft skill behaviors, like collaboration and posting comments on a discussion forum. Badges may confer community power ups, such as being promoted to peer reviewer status, where students who have earned a skill badge get promoted to that badge’s peer review or nomination team. Students may also unlock additional “superpowers,” like the freedom to design their own badge.

Steeped in current research, badge learning relies on the values and principles of “connected learning,” as well as data about how youth learn with new media. As explained by the Digital Media and Learning Research Hub, University of California, Irvine, which is supported by the MacArthur Foundation: “Connected learning seeks to harness and integrate the learning that young people pursue in the spheres of interest, peer relations and academics.” Lead researcher Mimi Ito explains that one way youth interact with digital media is they “geek out,” seeking deep understandings and skills around an academic interest. When

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 56]

TAMRITZ - BADGES SAMPLES & EXPLANATIONS

NAME	ICON	SIGNIFIES...
Tamritz Badge Learning Network		That a school is part of the Tamritz Badge Learning Network—more of a logo, not a badge to be earned
Digital Age Teaching		Certificate Level Badge: the completion of the 10-week professional development course; teachers demonstrate deep understanding of habits and tools of designing and leading teaching and learning in the digital age
Learner 2.0		Learning pathway within Digital Age Teaching course, focused on “how learning happens in the digital age”
PLN		Learning pathway Digital Age Teaching course, focused on “how professional and personal learning networks can support professional growth and student learning”
Digital Citizenship		Learning pathway within Digital Age Teaching course, focused on “how to integrate and model digital citizenship in classroom learning experiences”
Create 2.0		Learning pathway within Digital Age Teaching course, focused on “how to leverage new media to creatively share and publish learning”
Learning Design		Learning pathway within Digital Age Teaching course, focused on “how instructional design, badge learning and new media engage students in authentic learning and shift instructional practices”
Digger		A reward badge indicating habits of a lifelong learner by digging more deeply into content
10Tweets		A reward badge that recognizes the learner’s use of Twitter to share, discover and reflect
Social Light		A reward badge that indicates habits of a social and participatory learner

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55]

“geeking out,” adult mentors are welcome in the peer-connected culture to help coach, guide and evolve a student’s understandings.

Digital badge learning is a natural distillation of the principles of connected learning, helping students to “geek out.” Through intentional design, badging can transform Jewish day school learning into modern, connected experiences that integrate new media literacies and skills. Like all good curricular planning, badge learning begins with an essential question. By sparking a “need to know” within the students, “quests” or learning journeys are designed with relevant, project-based outcomes and provide students with choices or multiple learning pathways. This instructional design approach integrates the best of what we know about learning styles and differentiated instruction. Relevant to any content area or learning outcome, badge learning can engage learners in service learning programs, research projects, arts programs, STEM initiatives or Jewish studies electives.

The Epstein School in Atlanta is a Jewish day school trailblazer for badge learning. With training from New York’s Global Kids and support from The Covenant Foundation, Epstein is in its second year of implementation. Epstein designed a badge learning program around their original character education program called “Echoes,” which focuses on how Jewish role models demonstrate values we want children to emulate and how these qualities reverberate throughout time.

Their middle school faculty team structured the badge learning program around contemporary and living role models who demonstrate values that could be attached to attributes they want to see within their students as modern learners and Jews. For instance, teachers crafted rubrics around the hallmarks of project-based learning, including the “Eli Wiesel Acceptance Badge,” the “Ruth Messinger Collaboration Badge” and the “Steven Spielberg Communication Badge,” to name a few. A badge learning

ONLINE RESOURCES ON BADGING

Mozilla Open Badges
openbadges.org

Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act
coppa.org

Tamritz
tamritz.org

Digital Badges: An Annotated Research Bibliography
hastac.org/digital-badges-bibliography

Digital Badges: Curated Collection of Resources
hastac.org/collections/digital-badges

What is Connected Learning?
connectedlearning.tv/what-is-connected-learning

Connected Learning: An Agenda for Research and Design
dmlhub.net/publications/connected-learning-agenda-research-and-design

Digital Media and Learning Research Hub
dmlhub.net

“Toward an Ecology of Gaming,” by Katie Salen
http://d4tc.parsons.edu/week03/Sven2salen_ecology.pdf

Buck Institute: Project-Based Learning
bie.org

Bloom’s Taxonomy: Iowa State University Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
celt.iastate.edu/teaching/RevisedBlooms1.html

Vokis—talking media avatars
voki.com

Teachers crafted rubrics around the hallmarks of project-based learning, including the “Eli Wiesel Acceptance Badge,” the “Ruth Messinger Collaboration Badge” and the “Steven Spielberg Communication Badge,” to name a few.

scaffold or a “badging constellation” includes multiple learning pathways, where students first “recognize it,” “talk about it” and then “do it.” These multiple pathways afford students with opportunities to engage in deep learning with frequent feedback and coaching from Epstein’s badge learning faculty team.

The badging program was first introduced to Epstein’s 6th graders as an

optional program, where faculty sought input from the students on meaningful power ups for granting privileges within the middle school community for achievements, such as a day trip to Google for the “Information Literacy Badge,” or permission to work on a laptop without teacher supervision. Students were also engaged in researching the contemporary leaders for the badges and created Vokis, talking multimedia

avatars, that captured the essence of each Jewish leader and their attributes. Students continue to be recognized for their learning accomplishments through public recognition ceremonies at Epstein.

Epstein reflects trends in the secular

to mark milestones in their learning and demonstrate their understandings and skills.

K-12 digital learning tools and resources are also providing some badge learning features, such as the badges and achieve-

Tamritz, a national digital badge learning network for Jewish day schools, is a nonprofit project dedicated to supporting schools in shifting their learning landscapes. Tamritz, meaning “incentive” in Hebrew, seeks to give Jewish day schools an incentive to collaborate, network and learn together within a connected, online community. Taking a comprehensive approach to implementing badge learning, Tamritz focuses on professional development, student learning and collaboration.

For starters, teachers participate in a 10-week badge learning course, “Digital Age Teaching,” designed to build their skills sets in teaching and learning with new media. The course immerses educators in a badge learning experience, as well as in a community of practice. Following the course, school badging teams participate in face-to-face training, designing their own badge learning curriculum.

On the student learning front, Tamritz provides a badge learning course for middle schoolers, “Digital Media Literacy,” which focuses on connected learning hab-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 65]

The Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 95% of American teens ages 12-17 are online; 80% of teens participate in some sort of social network; and over 64% of teens post some kind of content online. We must listen to the numbers.

world, ranging from K-12 education to higher education and the business world. The New York City Department of Education’s Dig/It program engaged over 4,000 high school students this school year in badge learning. Students participate in a digital literacy course, engaging them in mastering real-world life skills and knowledge within a peer-supported online learning community. Ultimately, these high school students use the badges

ment levels within the Khan Academy and the social learning tool, Edmodo, where teachers can award badges within the online community. In higher education, Purdue University’s Passport badging program guides their college students through challenges that earn badges. And in the business world, forward-thinking companies like Deloitte are using badges, missions and leaderboards to engage and train their own employees and clients.



Israel: A lifetime of memories

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Cosmopolitan Jewish Education for the Jews Next Dor

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25]

than a monolithic response. For example, teaching the laws of kashrut by emphasizing their moral and ecological implications, in addition to their historical and religious significance, not only accounts for the question of relevance to today's students, but it also keeps attention on those components of local heritage that have direct links to the broader issues in the present world. In place of the passive learning that cultural transmission often entails, the inquiry learning required in this scheme would orient students toward habits of investigation and analysis.

In the next stage, which we will call *Menschlichkeit*, students would be encouraged to develop a healthy skepticism toward narrowly parochial Jewish concerns while still maintaining an appreciation for the importance of Jewish community, peoplehood and values in the continuity of Jewish life. Students would be exposed to the system of values that Jews classically have promoted among themselves and in relation to others, including humility, compassion, empathy, mindfulness, kinship, mutual responsibility, moral courage, justice, charity, and good deeds. They would consider the extent to which ideas, practices and episodes in the Jewish past and present reflect the inviolability of these values or their transgression.

They would adopt an analytic stance toward Jewish ways of living, with the hope of engendering critical reflection on what being a part of the ethical Jewish community implies and how it might be perceived by others—for example, why folks like Jacob Schiff were good while folks like Bernard Madoff were

bad, both for the world at large and for Jewish communal life in particular. The intended outcomes of this process are the cultivation of *menschlichkeit*: Jewish ethical integrity, and the ability to judge what is right and wrong in this world against a system of traditional Jewish values and ways of living.

The last stage of the Jewish cosmopolitan education program involves *tikkun*

Expose students to the system of values that Jews classically have promoted among themselves and in relation to others. Have them consider the extent to which ideas, practices and episodes in the Jewish past and present reflect the inviolability of these values or their transgression.

olam. *Tikkun olam* has long been elemental to the American Jewish education enterprise, and there is no shortage of resources to draw on for rationales and methods for doing *tikkun olam* in Jewish education settings. Abundant brick-and-mortar and cyberspace Jewish organizations, networks, initiatives and programs are now applying Jewish principles, personnel, and resources to critical matters on the global agenda such as poverty relief, workers' rights, health and welfare, environmentalism, civil rights, racial equality, and peace.

The aim here, above all, is for Jewish youth to develop positive dispositions toward understanding the backgrounds, yearnings, and needs of others, and to gain proclivities and skills that can be

utilized toward active involvement in repairing the world. Bringing this about requires the introduction of uncommon curriculum content, such as multicultural and critical consciousness materials, as well as instructional methods, such as intergroup relations, into the traditionally Jewish education context. It also involves making abundant space for introducing the work of the innovative Jewish organizations and programs in the class-

room, in order to encourage affiliation and participation.

Effectuating cosmopolitan Jewish education would require substantial investment of time and resources in program and curriculum development, teacher preparation, network formation, technology, and more. It would entail a re-configuration of how Jewish educational institutions are conceptualized and most importantly, would require buy-in. But the choice is to continue to bemoan the feared demise of the Jewish community while clinging to a defensive, survivalist Jewish education agenda, or to appeal to the forward-looking, cosmopolitan sensibilities of the rising generation and give them the tools necessary to be good Jewish citizens of the 21st century world. ■

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Open-Source Jewish Learning

■ by **BRETT LOCKSPEISER** and **JOSHUA FOER**

This open-source initiative captures the collaborative power of Wikipedia for the benefit of Jewish education. Sefaria has enormous potential for teachers as a resource for texts and lessons, and for students to contribute to a global project.

Traditionally, homework and classroom assignments have been a kind of dead end: a student completes her work, a teacher grades it, maybe a parent looks it over too. But what if the Torah learning in your day school classroom had a clear, visible, and immediate impact for thousands of other Jews all over the world?

That is the goal of Sefaria (www.sefaria.org), a new digital project that aims to revolutionize how students and scholars read, explore and interact with our core texts online, and on the iPad. We are building a living library of all Jewish texts, fully interconnected, with parallel translations. Sefaria is completely free and open source, with a fun, easy-to-use interface. We call it a “living library” because we imagine it to be perpetually growing, but also because, like an exquisite garden, it requires an active community of caretakers to tend to and look after it.

This is a big vision, but how exactly does a Jewish day school class fit into it?

It turns out that the kinds of work that Sefaria needs to move forward—identifying connections between different texts, inputting traditional commentaries, and making translations—are all very close to what day school students are already doing as they learn. We want to capture the results of that work and share it with the world.

Rabbi Ariel Shalem at Southern Califor-

nia Yeshiva High School took a chance to try an early version of Sefaria in his Tanakh class. The class was learning the 15th chapter of Melachim Bet, and Rabbi Shalem tasked his students to work independently to find the most interesting classical commentaries on this chapter, translate them, and add them to Sefaria. After a few days they had com-



Brett Lockspeiser designs and launches web applications; he began as a product manager at Google and now works independently with startups and nonprofits in San Francisco. Joshua Foer is a science journalist, author of Moonwalking with Einstein and co-founder of Atlas Obscura, the user-generated online guide to the world's wonders and curiosities, and the Sukkah City design competition. They can be reached at blocks@gmail.com and joshuafoer@yahoo.com.

pleted a very rich set of commentaries on this chapter, including texts from the Radak and Metzudat David which had never been freely translated on the Internet before. The independent work of each student came together to create a wonderful whole (www.sefaria.org/II_Kings.15).

What's more, two of the students in the class enjoyed using Sefaria so much that they continued adding and translating texts from their Talmud class, outside of any assignment.

In our estimation, this was a serious accomplishment for Rabbi Shalem's class. They worked together and released into the world something valuable that did not exist before. Putting their work on

Sefaria means that it's now in a location where future students of Melachim Bet will find it. Of course, this is only one chapter of 930 in the Tanakh—but there also happen to be over 800 Jewish day schools in North America.

It should be noted that all activity on Sefaria, including adding new translations, is tracked, publicly visible, and reviewed by the community at large (unlike Wikipedia, we don't allow anonymous edits). If a day school student offers a new translation for a text that previously had none, this isn't necessarily the end of the process, but may function as a first draft for others to improve upon.

Translating medieval commentators requires an advanced class and isn't suitable for everyone. But we believe that anyone engaging with Jewish learning at any level can have something to offer. Something as mundane as proofreading for typos is valuable work. Imagine a chavruta—one with an iPad running Sefaria, and one with book—carefully reading a text together with an eye for discrepancies. If a problem is found, the student with the iPad can immediately correct it. If not, the two can record that they have reviewed the text without issue. This careful reading is what chavruta learners are already doing, but by capturing a bit of the output, they are now contributing a small piece to something much larger.

As users contribute to Sefaria, they score



points that help establish their credibility within the Sefaria community. Thanks to this active tracking, Sefaria can help teachers see and assess what each student is doing. It also makes it possible to “gamify” the learning process and add a helpful competitive spirit. Classes or schools as a whole could set up a challenge for, say, translating a book Mishnah, and watch in real time as their points rack up.

The feature of Sefaria which has been consistently getting the most enthusiastic reaction from Jewish educators has been our source sheet builder (www.sefaria.org/sheets).

Building on top of Sefaria’s open, structured database of Jewish texts, our online source sheet builder allows you to create beautifully formatted, bilingual source sheets without having to go through the trouble of copying and pasting. For classical texts, people simply write the citation (like “Genesis 6:4-8” or “Esther Rabbah 10:4”) to include it in Hebrew and English, then add their own commentary and notes.

These source sheets are easier for teachers to create, but what they really offer

The texts of the Jewish people deserve a new, living, interactive shape. The foundations of Jewish wisdom should be free and open to all.

students is connectedness: the ability to quickly explore in a deeper way what a teacher has explored only in part. From any selection of text in a source sheet, one can click to open the complete text—thus seeing the context of the quotation, but also opening up a world of additional commentaries and connections. A source sheet becomes a jumping off point for exploring the complete web of Jewish texts.

The process of creating source sheets also plays into the bigger vision of engaging people around the world in contributing to a shared library of Jewish texts. When creating a source sheet, educators are often very willing to create one small translation of this sugya of Talmud or that one Midrash if they can’t find it otherwise. Currently that result is all too often printed out once then lost to a single person’s hard drive. On Sefaria, each piece of work can be immediately shared into a global commons. Source sheets as a whole can also be made public to all Sefaria users

(though by default they are private to you and those you share them with), and we’re currently piloting a way for schools to create a special space to store the sheets created within their own community.

The Sefaria Project is just getting started. Though we’ve already built some critical tools and software and begun the arduous process of collecting the Jewish canon in one place, our real challenge is now just beginning. We must rally a critical mass of participants who believe, like we do, that the texts of the Jewish people deserve a new, living, interactive shape and that the foundations of Jewish wisdom should be free and open to all. We have a few small glimpses of how exactly Sefaria will be used in a Jewish day school setting, but we’re certain we have only seen the beginning. To those of you in a position to help us, we have one request: Participate! Try something that fits for your classroom, and please let us know how it turns out. ■

Life Insurance: Potent Tool for Day School Finance

■ by **DANIEL PERLA**

In his perch above the world of day school finance, Perla has considered proposals and sat in on conversations exploring the potential of insurance to support schools. Here is his critical survey and his tips on ideas that look promising.

Among the arrows in the quiver of most sophisticated development directors is the permanent (whole life or universal life) insurance policy. Fundraising professionals know that, when structured properly from both a legal and financial perspective, a donor-gifted permanent life insurance policy can help provide long term support for a nonprofit institution. The pitch to a prospective donor is relatively simple: by creating a legacy gift of life insurance and by funding the insurance through one or more annual premiums, a donor can provide meaningful funds to a nonprofit upon his or her death.

The appeal to both donor and nonprofit is fairly straightforward. For the donor, the total sum of the annual premiums will be far less than the death benefit. For example, a \$1 million policy might cost the donor \$20,000-\$30,000 annually. When structured properly, the premiums may even be tax deductible. From the perspective of the nonprofit, there is the guarantee of a large gift at some point in the future.

Local federations such as UJA Federation of New York and Federation of Greater Washington have received hundreds of donor-sponsored life insurance policies over the years and view such policies as important tools in their endowment building efforts. Notwithstanding the potential appeal of such insurance policies, it appears that very few of the more than 300 Jewish day

schools in the AVI CHAI universe have secured donor gifts of life insurance. For instance, of the nearly two dozen legacy gifts that have arisen as a result of PEJE's Generations program (www.peje.org/index.php/endowment-a-legacy-institute/generations), not a single one involves or utilizes life insurance. Possible reasons for this may include a preference among most Jewish day schools for cash gifts over gifts of insurance as well as a preference among donors to use insurance for their own estate planning rather than as a vehicle for charitable giving.

Despite the low utilization of life insurance policies among day schools donors currently, interesting conversations are taking place around new uses for life insurance. In two noteworthy proposals, it is the day school parents themselves that would be asked to take out such insurance for the benefit of their children's day school. Rabbi Jay Kelman (www.torahinmotion.org/discussions-and-blogs/tuition-plan) suggests that Toronto day schools can cut their tuitions in half through the use of life insurance. With a lower tuition, each day school family could apply a small portion of the tuition savings toward the purchase of life insurance, over approximately a 15 year period. Leading

philanthropists and foundations would need to provide an interest-free loan to fund the annual (school) budget shortfall. When the death benefits are realized, the philanthropists and foundations would receive their money back and the schools would be flush with cash.

Rabbi Kelman's novel idea bears some resemblance to an idea first outlined by Jewish philanthropist Charles Kushner in 2010 (www.jta.org/news/article/2010/04/18/1011634/oped-funding-jewish-education-a-self-sustaining-solution). Kushner proposed a program under which



Daniel Perla is a program officer in day school finance at the AVI CHAI Foundation in New York. He can be reached at dperla@avichaina.org.

all day school parents would agree to be insured for a modest sum of money, with a group of wealthy donors paying the premiums. Both proposals are ambitious and make at least some sense on paper. Unfortunately, there are significant obstacles in bringing the programs to fruition. Beyond the administrative difficulties of such programs, both proposals assume that day schools have an insurable interest¹ in all of their parents. This may be a faulty assumption.

Another obstacle is the difficulty in getting an insurance carrier to agree to

¹ In dealing with life insurance, a person (or institution) is deemed to have insurable interest when the purchaser has a reasonable expectation of profit or benefit from the continued life of the insured.



such a program. I am told by insurance experts that the time and effort required to research and document a small insurance policy is equal to the time and effort it takes to underwrite a large policy. In short, it might be difficult to find an insurance company willing to underwrite thousands of relatively small insurance policies. The final difficulty related to timing. Most day school parents are in their 30s and 40s. With an average life expectancy of 80+, death benefits would not be realized for decades. That's a long time for schools to wait for money and for donors and foundations to continue funding a program without seeing any payback.

Sometimes the path to success in archery consists not of buying a new arrow, but in sharpening the existing arrows in the quiver. The metaphor might hold true for life insurance as well. We may not need entirely new programs but rather

Despite the low utilization of life insurance policies among day schools donors currently, interesting conversations are taking place around new uses for life insurance.

nanced and more impactful versions of existing ones. One nuance to the traditional approach of soliciting life insurance gifts employed by the two local federations mentioned above is the creation of an insurance premium matching program. Many federations have existing endowment funds or savings accounts and are in a good position to do this. After all, those monies need to be invested in a conservative fashion anyway. What better product to invest those monies in than a life insurance policy. Whole life or universal policies typically have long term expected rates of return in excess of 5% and are triple A-rated. The local Federation may therefore be in a good

position to co-fund, or “match,” the insurance premiums which the donor is making.

Let's take an actual example from the Federation of Greater Washington. One of this federation's donors was interested in creating a legacy gift using universal life insurance. The donor agreed to a \$1 million policy on the donor's and his wife's lives (these are called “second to die” policies). The donor agreed to fund an annual premium of \$35,000 for three years subject to a match from the federation itself. In other words, the donor contributed \$17,500 per year to-

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ward the premiums and the federation contributed \$17,500 per year toward the premiums. The donor's premiums amounted to \$52,500 and were tax deductible. The federation's total premiums also amounted to \$52,500. The donor is now considered a \$1 million donor to the Federation of Greater Washington and is feted as such.

A number of Jewish day schools have existing endowment funds and are in a good position to do the same thing. There are at least 50 Jewish day schools across the country with endowments of \$1 million or more. A fair number of these schools could realistically offer to co-fund, or match, the insurance premiums which the donor is making. Not necessarily but few schools would want to commit the majority of their endowment funds to insurance policies.

I've recently been part of discussion about the opportunities in what is called insurance premium finance. Under such a program, an individual donor or a school with sufficient endowment funds could borrow the money necessary to fund the life insurance premiums from a bank. The bank would get its principal and (very modest) interest back upon the death of the insured. I am told that there are even banks that view premium finance as a loss leader and are willing to offer what are effectively interest free loans in order to establish a relationship with wealthy clients.

Here's an actual example. A West coast-based insurance brokerage firm recently secured a \$20 million life insurance policy for a wealthy male client in his 50s. The premiums are \$7 million over three years (\$3mm, \$3mm \$1mm) and will be financed by a large European

bank at virtually no cost to the client. What's in it for the bank? Firstly, the bank acquires a new client. The client in our illustration agreed to deposit \$2 million in an asset management program with the bank. Asset management programs generate significant fees for banks and brokerage firms. The client also agreed to leave another \$1 million of collateral with the bank. Furthermore, the insurance policy itself is valuable and is viewed by the bank as part of its loan collateral. As the policy amasses cash value² over time, the cash goes to the bank to (at least partially) satisfy its loan. When the client dies, part of the \$20 million will go to his heirs through a life insurance trust. Part will also go to variety of charities.

While structuring a day school-based program around premium finance might also be somewhat complex, the potential benefit to Jewish day schools is significant. According to PEJE, the top 100 Jewish day schools possess a cumulative endowment of at least \$250 million. If half of it were invested with a group of banks offering similar premium finance programs, it would enable a group of individuals to purchase hundreds of millions of dollars of insurance, all for the benefit of their day schools. In the case of day schools without significant endowments, any one or more individual(s) could make the bank investment and the insurance policy could be written on any number of individuals, including parents, donors, a school head, key teachers etc. (anyone with whom the school has an insurable interest). To be clear, the hundreds of millions of dollars would only be realized when the insured individuals died and that might not occur for two decades or more. Still, this seems like a compelling use of a school endowment funds.

While neither of these programs is as new or bold as the Kellman and Kushner proposals, they may be more realistic. After all, sometimes the best way to hit a target is to simply use a sharper arrow. ■

2 Permanent life insurance policies typically accumulate value during the policyholder's lifetime.

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“Geeking Out” Across the Curriculum

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 57]

its and etiquette, digital citizenship, research and media tools for collaboration, communication and creative productivity. Ultimately, schools will implement their own badge-empowered, connected learning programs, supported by a community of practice. Currently, Tamritz concentrates on middle schools, where developmentally students are expected to take an increased ownership of their learning.

When determining if your school is ready for a badge learning program, a few key elements must be in place to support the success of the faculty and students. First, reliable technology infrastructure and ample access to digital learning equipment is a must. Equally important is tech support staff for troubleshooting and technology integration. In addition, schools should be prepared to dedicate a small team of faculty to the badging initiative, serving as a “badge learning advisory team.” This academic team will help create the vision, build the program, coach students through the learning and train others into the future. Most importantly, schools must be ready and committed to shifting the learning landscape towards new media literacies and project-based learning.

John Dewey said, “If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow.” We are living in a time of infinite information and possibilities for learning, collaborating and creating. We must teach and learn for tomorrow.

John Dewey said, “If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow.” We are living in a time of infinite information and possibilities for learning, collaborating and creating. We must teach and learn for tomorrow. As the authors of the Mozilla Foundation’s whitepaper, “Open Badges for Lifelong Learning,” explain:

Learning is not just “seat time” within schools, but extends across multiple contexts, experiences and interactions. It is no longer just an isolated or individual concept, but is inclusive, social, informal, participatory, creative and lifelong. And it is not sufficient to think of learning simply as consumption, but instead learners are active participants and producers in an interest-driven, lifelong learning process.

Digital badge learning has the potential to place Jewish day schools on the leading edge of pedagogy and new media literacies and skills sets, supporting students in “geeking out” across the curriculum. Badge learning is one innovative approach to digital age teaching and learning that harnesses the power of the Internet and digital media in a relevant and engaging way for both students and teachers. ■



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Everything Old is New Again: Using Genealogy in Jewish Day Schools

■ by **JEFFREY SCHRAGER**

In Schrager's view, genealogy has potential that goes far beyond the limited uses schools make of it today. It has the power to motivate and guide student learning in numerous subjects across the curriculum.

For many, the Jewish year climaxes when families around the world, as throughout history, gather for the seder. I fondly remember the sedarim of my own youth, recalling stories, food, and family customs that bind each year's seder to its predecessors. In particular, I remember my uncle stopping the proceedings and asking for quiet as we were about to read the paragraph *Bechol dor vador*, in which we state our obligation to envision ourselves as if we had personally departed Egypt. Each year, he paused to emphasize this particular point as the central message of the entire seder.

With time and careful contemplation of Jewish education, I have become convinced that *Bechol dor vador* may, in fact, be the central message of Judaism as a whole. To be Jewish is to exist simultaneously in the past, present and future. We reflect on a cherished past, understand its implications for the present, and commit to boldly propelling the Jewish story into the future.

Many educators bemoan the difficulty of fostering a connection to the past in students who often seem rootless. Ironically, at a time when the availability of information exceeds that of any previous era, many students seem uninterested in exploring the past. The introduction of large-scale genealogical research projects to our curricula offers one solution to this dilemma by personalizing each individual's Jewish experience. This type of project can light the fires of Jewish students regardless of denomination and background.

A detailed family history project goes far beyond what currently takes place in schools. By the time they reach middle school most students have, at one point or another, been asked to create a family tree, generally going back two or three generations. We are suggesting much more. Students should undertake intensive research of their family's history using every available resource including computer programs and websites, online records indexes, oral family histories, and documents both online and off, mining the nuggets of information that prove so crucial to constructing a detailed family tree.

Simultaneously, they should study the experiences of their ancestors in Jewish and world history, explore their cultures and customs in courses on social studies or Jewish law, and discuss the implications of their findings on their lives. In presenting their findings, schools or students may choose to "zoom in" on one particular ancestor or "zoom out" and broadly describe their family experience.

Any amateur genealogist can attest to the patience and perseverance genealogical investigation demands. Genealogists come into contact with a variety of sources and documents and must extract details applicable elsewhere. They must develop and test hypotheses, think creatively, and

sometimes experience the frustration of running into a dead end. As a result, our student-genealogists will learn patience, analytical skills, and most importantly the mental toughness required for any real research or intellectual endeavor. Success in family history projects is directly correlated with a willingness to perceive a topic from multiple angles and approaches.



Rabbi Jeffrey Schrager teaches middle school Judaic studies at the Akiba Academy of Dallas and is the founder of L'dor Vador, geared towards promoting the use of Jewish genealogy in Jewish education. He can be contacted at jschrager@ldor-vador.org.

Another strength of genealogical research lies in its versatility. Many classes can be adapted to play a role in such a long term project. History classes, both Jewish and general, gain from the students' realization that their ancestors lived the events in their books. Indeed, the further back students can trace their roots, the more meaningful history becomes. Understanding an ancestor's proximity to important figures and places in Jewish history grants a vibrancy otherwise lost.

Other subjects similarly benefit from genealogical discussions. Genetic genealogy, the newest frontier in the field, demands understandings of cells, DNA and heredity. Students are fascinated by a study of common Jewish genetic diseases. They can read books or poems depicting their ancestral areas, research relevant art or Judaica, experiment with Yiddish or Ladino, cook traditional foods and more. Using sheet music that may be found online, musical students can even play or sing melodies their ancestors

heard in synagogue on Shabbat or holidays. Possibilities for cross-curricular and interdisciplinary projects are practically endless.

Perhaps the classes with the most potential benefit from genealogical research are technology and computer classes. Many technology classes focus on skills in computing such as programming, keyboarding and use of basic programs. Day schools can offer students a completely different set of skills by teaching them how to think critically when their information comes from a screen. Researching genealogy requires carefully scanning a variety of sources: records databases, document images, indexes and a myriad of other documentation. We can use genealogy to teach the larger challenges our students will face, namely sifting through information online. Students will experience the exhilaration of discovery while simultaneously learning the importance of patience, even when looking at a screen.

Yet for all the educational benefits genealogical research can offer, its potential as a meaningful Jewish experience most strongly advocates for its inclusion in our schools. Implicit in both Judaism and family research is the value placed on tradition. Learning about our roots speaks to some unconscious sensitivity within us and awakens a connection with the past our fast paced world often lacks. We don't just study Shabbat or holidays, we connect with how our ancestors celebrated and identified with them. We can celebrate the

concept of minhag and take pride in those customs native to our ancestral homes.

Even a seemingly ordinary activity, preparing a cholent for example, becomes replete with meaning when we awaken a consciousness of and connection to our ancestors who did the same. Additionally, discussions of tradition will yield a contextualization of practice our students are searching for, and a heightened understanding of the "whys" behind Jewish life. They become aware of family customs, their source and significance, and simultaneously develop a newfound respect for tradition in its broader Jewish sense.

But rather than discussing these issues in broad strokes, students personalize the struggle and its implications. "Jews had to decide whether to stay in Europe or journey to America" transforms into "your grandfather had to decide." Some students are lucky enough to have an opportunity to discuss previous generations' challenges with grandparents or great-grandparents. Our students rarely seize such an opportunity and fail to ask the questions they may wish answered later in life. This intergenerational dialogue, so crucial in Judaism, anchors our students in their grandparents' experiences and nurtures an awareness of the value in looking back to answer contemporary questions and dilemmas.

Conducting organized family history research opens a discussion of perhaps the most important questions we and our students face: Why am I Jewish? Inevitably, as students climb further along their family tree, they will find relatives who no longer identify as Jews. Some may even be strongly identifying members of oth-

er faith groups without an inkling of their Jewish roots. We can and should ask our students why their family identifies with Judaism, emphasizing the aspects of Judaism their ancestors found compelling.

We must encourage the continuation of that conversation when our students return home. So often, we neglect discussing these larger issues as a result of curricular demands and a never ending shortage of class time. In this context, the single question "why am I Jewish?" hovers above the classroom, demanding each student find a uniquely personal answer.

Initially, I was nervous about teaching students from families with non-Jewish ancestry. I have been pleasantly surprised, however, with how enthusiastically they have embraced their projects. They enjoy learning about their own families, and they approach discussions of Jewish experiences with interest comparable to students with exclusively Jewish roots. Themes like identity and tradition resonate with every student, and each student confronts similar questions regarding their relationship with Judaism. Personally, as half of my family tree is not Jewish, I have found meaning in every generation while tracing the story of how I came to be the Jew and person I am today.

Fittingly, the tree serves almost exclusively as the visual metaphor for genealogical research. We who concern ourselves primarily with instruction of the next generation of Jews play a critical role in nurturing the Jewish family tree. A tree's survival inherently depends on the depth and complexity of its root system. Connecting the Jewish future to its past reinvigorates a bond that may otherwise atrophy or, God forbid, disappear altogether. We can begin the process and watch as our students blossom, finding their unique story within the Jewish people, fortifying themselves to write the next chapter. ■



Lights, Camera, Action: Bringing Jewish Studies to Life on the Screen

■ by **YOSSI KASTAN**

How many students dream of making their own movie? When he was a Judaics teacher in LA, Kastan created a movie company enabling his students to fulfill their fantasy, bringing their Jewish study to life on screen.

Through several years of teaching Judaic classes, I often found myself thinking, *this subject would make a great movie*. Not only would film evoke the type of emotional response I would like to see from my students, but it would also engage them in a way that would bring the Judaic content alive for their understanding, analysis and evaluation.

Film is not a new tool in day schools. Many of us use it in our classrooms when we want to show the students a visual representation of a Judaic subject or topic. The main problem with this method is that watching films is a passive experience. I wanted students to be fully engaged. So I set out to create a program wherein students became the producers of the film, actively grappling with the Judaic content and values and then applying the information learned in real world situations and characters.

My search led me to two filmmakers, Darrin Fletcher and Chet Thomas, who were implementing the same concepts of film in classrooms with at-risk teens. We came together to discuss the need in Jewish day schools. The result is Student Impact Films (www.studentimpactfilms.com), an online curriculum and software enabling students to research, write and produce their own short films, all with the goal of engaging them in Judaic studies. Darrin and Chet had the expertise to develop the curriculum and tutorials that are on the site. Through their professional circles and contacts, they also provided us access to many of their Hollywood peers.

Their connections enabled us to populate the website with exclusive interviews with Hollywood professionals, access to professionally composed music and many more features that make the software a fully engaging experience. Students have access to a robust library of produced screenplays, a music library of professionally composed music by genre, as well as a sound effects library to add the appropriate effects to their films. The software also offers virtual tutorials to reinforce skills that are taught in the curriculum pages of the website. If students miss a day of school for any reason, they can access the software and catch up on what they missed.

The program started in Los Angeles in 2011 at the Shalhevet School, where my class helped produce *One Last Shot*, a film about bullying, which was accepted and screened at five film festivals and can now be viewed on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/b5u94lr>. The film itself took two days to film and a couple of months to edit. The students' pride in their work has far surpassed what they learned during production time. The program was then implemented at the Jewish Day School of the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania, where to date, students have worked on films with topics ranging from tzedakah to leshon hara, which were screened at the end-of-year arts festival.

The key to the success of a filmmaking program such as ours is putting students in charge, enabling them to become the writers and producers. Filmmaking offers a cross-curricular experience where the students learn language arts (reading and writing scripts), math (budgeting), art (set design) and much more. The experience also teaches them life skills such as teamwork, collaboration, scheduling and time management, and leadership. Most importantly, filmmaking forces students to learn the subject matter well



Yossi Kastan is the incoming head of school of the Brauser Maimonides Academy in Hollywood, Florida, and can be reached at jkastan5@gmail.com.

and then demonstrate their understanding by grappling with the emotional struggles of the characters in their film. This process enables us to assess the student's cognitive understanding of the material in a tangible way, and draws out and showcases their emotional responses to that topic.

All too often when we teach Judaic classes we push content and skills, subconsciously imparting to students what we want them to think and feel about the subject. Filmmaking allows students to evaluate material cognitively and respond to it emotionally with their own sentiments expressed through characters and storylines.

Through film, we develop minds and hearts, we promote a Jewish identity, and with that, we produce magic. ■

RAVSAK Teams Up with Chai Mitzvah on New Adult Education Initiative

RAVSAK is pleased to announce a new collaboration to support Jewish adult education in day schools.

We are partnering with Chai Mitzvah, a proven program that enables adult learners to explore Judaism according to their own interests and passions. Originally developed for synagogues, the program is being adapted for day schools with RAVSAK's guidance.

Participating schools receive **at no cost**:

- A 9-month program for parents, with monthly study sessions
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- Training and ongoing support from staff at Chai Mitzvah
- \$1000 for support of the school teacher

Chai Mitzvah is designed as an immersive program for Jewish adults who may not have ever received a strong Jewish education, or for those who want to reinvigorate their experience of Judaism. As we know, this can be especially valuable for families whose young children are learning about Judaism and practicing it much more than their parents ever did.

With the guidance of a teacher-mentor, participants create their own program in order to

- Learn about their heritage
- Participate in a new ritual
- Engage in social action with Jewish lenses
- Join a community discussion
- Celebrate their achievement

RAVSAK envisions that the program might be used for recruiting new families, geared perhaps toward parents of children who will be entering kindergarten. Alternatively, it could be a tool to



encourage parents whose children are already in the school to keep their kids enrolled for middle school—hence, aimed at parents of 4th or 5th graders. Schools are free to determine where the program makes the most sense for them.

Training begins this spring, and the program starts in September. To learn more or enroll your school, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at erabin@ravsak.org. ■

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Going Out with a ~~Bang~~ Beat!

■ by LIANNA REISMAN

The Shoshana S. Cardin Jewish Community High School in Baltimore has been the center of our family's universe since 2006. We moved from Columbia, Maryland, to Baltimore so that my older sister, and later I, could attend this school. At Cardin, students flourish in small classes while developing meaningful relationships with an outstanding faculty. Each student is nurtured in a pluralistic, Jewish environment, where Jewish values, history, and traditions are infused throughout the curriculum, and opportunities for civ-

petrified. My long-time dream was shattered. My friends and I went through the process of denial, grief and finally acceptance of this harsh reality. The atmosphere in our school became gloomy and depressing, with students sulking through the hall with heads hanging low.

Watching this sadness take over the mood of the school brought to my mind the Maccabeats song "Gotta Keep Your Head Up." With these words running through my head, I decided to take action. On February 10, I sent an email to the Maccabeats, asking if the group could perform for our school to celebrate its amazing history at the end of the year. I thought that having something exciting to look forward to would boost the energy and morale of the school community.

An hour later, I received a response from the group's booking manager, extending her sympathy regarding the closing of the school, and ready to talk

about dates and technical requirements. Suddenly, I found myself in the concert planning business! We quickly agreed on a date.

Then I remembered I hadn't actually mentioned this idea to any adults yet. Admittedly, I needed to involve my parents, but I wanted to maintain as much control as I could over "my" event. My mother and I approached the head of school with my idea. Concerned about the school's lack of finances, he was unable to provide financial support for this event, but offered his blessing if we wanted to move forward. Next, my mother and I approached the executive director of the temple where we wanted to host the concert, and he agreed to let us use

the facility at no cost. My family and I brainstormed ways to raise the money to pay the performance fee. We developed a plan for approaching businesses in the community to seek sponsorships. I wanted to make sure this event would be free for Cardin students and faculty.

I met with my grandmother and her friend, a professional fundraiser, and we talked about raising money, budgeting and advertising the concert. We fleshed out the idea of including a celebratory dinner for the Cardin School families after the concert, and how to approach local kosher restaurants and caterers for their help. The wheels were moving faster and faster!

My mother had an idea to approach the school's board of trustees for financial support. To our joyous surprise, individual board members volunteered to fund the concert fee. The tasks left for us were advertising and ticketing logistics, and obtaining donations of food for the celebratory dinner.

Now we are in the final stages of contract completion. I wish I could say that the mood is so full of concert excitement that everyone has forgotten that the school is closing, but that wouldn't be true. Yet the anticipation of this concert has definitely lightened the mood of everyone in the school, and students' heads are definitely up much more than they were a month ago.

As for me, I'm focusing on the excitement of planning this event. The concert is set for June 9. I'm petitioning to move my birthday to June 9 this year, because it will be such a memorable day! ■

Do you have a special story to tell about your experience in day schools? Share it with the field! Send an essay of 600 words to Haydion@ravsak.org. Submissions from all stakeholders welcome.



The Maccabeats,
"The Book of Good Life"

ic and social involvement abound. My sister arrived as an introverted freshman in 2006, and graduated four years later with a level of confidence no one expected, a resume full of social action projects, and sincere recommendations from her teachers that won her scholarships to all of the colleges of her choice.

I was looking forward to having similar experiences and graduating from Cardin just like my sister. In 2011 I learned that I had been accepted to Cardin, and I saw my exciting future unfolding. When the official word went out on February 5th that the Cardin School would be closing—with the school's closing date coinciding with my 17th birthday!—I felt shocked, confused, disappointed, even

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Separate competitions for elementary, middle and high school. Stay tuned for details!

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Empower your students to create richly meaningful work of Jewish art and to present their work on an international stage! Participating artists study a curriculum of sacred Jewish sources prepared by the Global Day of Jewish Learning. Then they produce art that responds to one of the texts. Along with an image of their artwork, students submit a short artist's statement explaining the connection of their work to the theme. Works selected by a panel of judges will be shown in a virtual gallery, and top winners will receive special prizes.

Separate competitions for middle school and high school. Stay tuned for details!

