



Our Client is the Jewish Future

RAVSAK
רשת בתי ספר קהילתיים

הידועות

HaYidion

חורף תשע"ג • Winter 2012



The Whole Student

GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN **JUDAIC STUDIES**

Modern programs rooted in tradition.



Towson University, a leader in higher education in the mid-Atlantic region for 150 years, is proud to offer the graduate programs in Judaic Studies introduced by Baltimore Hebrew University more than 90 years ago. Our students benefit from a convenient campus location just ten minutes north of Baltimore, a flagship community of outstanding communal organizations and institutions of education that provides rich opportunities for internships and employment.



Jewish Studies M.A.

Immerse yourself in the Jewish classics and gain comprehension of the scope of the Jewish experience. Graduates apply their degree to prepare for doctoral-level work in Jewish Studies or to further their careers in the Jewish non-profit world.

Jewish Education M.A.

By integrating pedagogy and the best educational practices with classical and contemporary Judaic Studies, the Jewish Education program prepares graduates for careers as teachers or administrators in formal or informal Jewish educational settings.

Jewish Communal Service M.A.

Prepare for professional leadership in the Jewish community with a combination of leadership training, communal service and practical field experience. Graduates typically work in local and national non-profit, service-based organizations within the Jewish community.

Dual-Degree Offerings

MSW and Jewish Communal Service M.A.
Jewish Communal Service M.A. and Jewish Education M.A.

Post-Baccalaureate Certificates

Jewish Communal Service
Jewish Education

Generous need and merit-based scholarships

Towson University's Baltimore Hebrew Institute offers generous scholarships, and cultivates and supports a vibrant, cohesive community for Towson's Judaic Studies students.

For information contact:

Loryn Strauzer
University Admissions
410-704-4719
lstrauzer@towson.edu

www.towsonjudaicstudies.info



HaYidion: The RAVSAK Journal

is a publication of RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network. It is published quarterly for distribution to RAVSAK member schools, associate members, and other Jewish and general education organizations. No articles may be reproduced or distributed without express written permission of RAVSAK. All rights reserved. Subscriptions are \$36/year.

Executive Editor: Dr. Barbara Davis
Editor: Elliott Rabin, PhD
Design: Adam Shaw-Vardi

Editorial Board

Rabbi Matthew Bellas, *Vancouver Talmud Torah, Vancouver, BC*
Ilisa Cappell, *El Paso Jewish Academy, El Paso, TX*
Geoff Cohen, *United Herzlia Schools, Capetown, South Africa*
Rabbi Andrew Davids, *Beit Rabban, New York, NY*
Dean Goldfein, *Contra Costa Jewish Day School, Lafayette, CA*
Rabbi Eric Grossman, *Frankel Jewish Academy, West Bloomfield, MI*
Adina Kanefield, *Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital*
Dr. Raquel Katzkowicz, *Albert Einstein School, Quito, Ecuador*
Rabbi Jack Nahmod, *Abraham Joshua Heschel School, New York, NY*
Eric Petersiel, *Leo Baeck Day School, Toronto, ON*
Daniella Pressner, *Akiva School, Nashville, TN*
Alex Sagan, *JCDS, Boston's Community Day School, Watertown, MA*
Stacey Sweet, *The Brandeis School, Lawrence, NY*
Nina Wand, *Beth Tfiloh Dahan, Baltimore, MD*

Advisory Panel

Sandee Brawarsky, Jeremy Dauber, Eddie Harwitz,
Aron Hirt-Manheimer, Mark Joffe, Margot Lurie, Alana Newhouse,
Renee Rubin Ross, Daniel Septimus, Jonathan Woocher

RAVSAK Board of Directors

Arnee Winshall (Chair), Uri Benhamron, Lisa Breslau,
Dr. Barbara Davis, Rebekah Farber, Matt Heilicher, Dr. Marc N. Kramer,
Paul Levitch, Zipora Schorr, Joseph Steiner, Lesley Zafran

Advertising Information

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

The views expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect the positions of RAVSAK.

RAVSAK would like to thank our associate members:



in THIS ISSUE:

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS

Listening to Students' Voices

• by **Sivan Zakai**, page 10

The Jewish Religious Nature of the Child

• by **Michael J. Shire**, page 14

Jewish Differentiation: Serving Our Students' Jewish Differences

• by **Bryan Conyer**, page 18

The Value of Child Study for the Elementary Teacher

• by **Nili Pearlmutter**, page 20

Understanding and Working with Vulnerable Students

• by **Michael Ben-Avie**, page 24

Secure Attachment: A New Cornerstone for Learning

• by **Elana Katz**, page 26

Integration: Closing the Loop on Holistic Jewish Growth

• by **Jeffrey Kress**, page 28

STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOLS

• pages 32-35

ENGAGING STUDENTS

Four Steps to Building an Army of Student Advocates

• by **Jim Blankstein**, page 36

"I Have Chosen the Path of Emunah": Seeing the Whole Child

• by **Daniel Siegel**, page 40

The New "In Loco Parentis"

• by **Jonathan Levy**, page 42

Listening to Student Voice: The Batsheva-David Story

• by **Philip Dickstein**, page 44

Peer Mediation Strengthens Children and Community

• by **Debra Danilewitz**, page 48

Beyond the School House: Applying Jewish Values to Social Action

• by **Clara Gaba** and **Ilana Gaba-Maine**, page 50

Learning, Doing, Becoming: A Journey to Jewish Identity

• by **Juli Kramer** and **Naomi Lev**, page 52

Innovative Curriculum and Scheduling for Students' Benefit

• by **Shimshon Hamerman**, page 54

Teaching Halakhah: The Value of Learning Law Young

• by **Michael Brody** and **Ira Bedzow**, page 56

From the Editor, page 4 • From the Desk of Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK Chair, page 6 • Good & Welfare, page 7 • Dear Cooki, page 8 • Olami / Personal Essay, page 62

From the Editor

■ by **BARBARA DAVIS**

STUDENTS are our reason for being. Judaism includes the instruction to teach one's children in a prayer recited twice daily. Our forefathers declared that a city without a school should be destroyed. For the Jewish people, the transmission of our heritage across the generations is sacred. As educators and leaders of Jewish community day schools, we see the entire Jewish tradition reverberate in the interaction between teacher and student.

But how much do we really know about how students learn? How well do we understand why some students succeed and others fail? Have we progressed beyond the belief that “there are four types among those who sit in the presence of the sages: the sponge, the funnel, the strainer, and the sieve. ‘The sponge,’ who soaks up everything. ‘The funnel,’ who takes in at this end and lets out at the other. ‘The strainer,’ who lets out the wine and retains the dregs. ‘The sieve,’ who removes the coarse meal and collects the fine flour”?

With all the advances in technology, with the global interconnections possible through enhanced communications, with the visualization of brain function that the 21st century has brought, are we really much further ahead of the concept of the student as a tabula rasa upon which to inscribe all that we perceive to be worthy of knowing?

While it seems clear that education is a priority not only for individual families, but

for nations, there are many obstacles that stand in the way of making best practices common practices. As the larger educational community struggles with issues of financing, evaluation, MOOCs, gamification and common core standards, the Jewish education community must add on issues of values, relevance and tradition. Ours is not an easy burden.



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.

But the writers whose work appears within the page of this issue of *HaYidion* will do much to illuminate aspects of student learning that are of particular relevance to today's educational climate. They write about new and fascinating ways to bridge the span of centuries and generations to make Jewish learning exciting and relevant for those to whom we dedicate our life's work: our students. ■

חג אורים שמח

RAVSAK's Board and Staff wish you a happy Hanukkah



*"If you create an ideal learning environment,
you will create an ideal learner."*

-Aaron Green, Master Architect of the American Hebrew Academy and protege of Frank Lloyd Wright

That's exactly what we've done!

See for yourself - call our Admissions Office
or visit our web site to schedule a
personal tour and for more information.



American Hebrew Academy

An International Jewish College Prep Boarding School

Greensboro, NC • 336-217-7070 • 855-855-4334
www.americanhebrewacademy.org

From the Desk of Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK Chair

How many of you walk through your day schools and think, “I wish I could go back to school. I would have loved this environment: the hands-on learning, the singing in English and Hebrew, the community, the holiday celebrations, the art, the soccer games, the Israeli dancing, the projects, the field trips, being in an environment where I am valued, even celebrated, where I make lifelong friends”?

I recently spent a day at JCDS in Boston walking the halls with a film crew from Israel. The students were so curious and excited; they were proud and eager to talk to the visitors about what they were doing. The halls were filled with laughter and the classrooms were humming with the sounds of kids busily engaged. The visitors said exactly this to each other: “Doesn’t this make you wish you could go back to school again?”

What unites all of us in this holy work to ensure that our day schools thrive and succeed? It is the children, the students. We may disagree about *how* to do certain things, but when we get down to it we find ourselves nodding in unison, agreeing on the *what*. We all want to support the students in our communities, in our schools to become, as one JCDS alum said, “the best version of myself.”

But as Jewish *community* day schools, our focus goes beyond the individual. We know that the ultimate success of our schools, of our whole educational endeavor is to engage all of our constituents in being students. When school leaders join the SuLaM program, they become students. When a board member or head of school shares a *dvar Torah* at a board meeting, all those who are present engage in learning. When professional development opportunities are made available, staff engage in teaching and learning. And when we invite our parents into the classrooms or to adult study, they become students as well.

As part of our RAVSAK in-person board meetings, one of the most wonderful opportunities we have is to study text together, to reflect on our work in light of text and to benefit from the teaching and learning from each other that this time together affords us.

Our success as an organization, as a network and as a field is linked to the opportunities we have to be students, as we endeavor to promote the joy of lifelong learning.



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.

At a time when Israel is facing constant bombardment, and when many of our staff, families and schools have undergone hardship brought on by Hurricane Sandy, we come together as a community to offer our prayers for the State and people of Israel and to wish everyone good health, peace of mind and the strength to rebuild those aspects of your lives that have been disrupted or even destroyed.

As the Festival of Lights draws near, may each of us be blessed with the opportunity to *shep nachas* from seeing the spark of learning kindled in each of our children, and to rededicate ourselves and be renewed through the experience each of us has continuing to be students.

Wishing you all a Happy Hanukkah—חג אורים שמדו!

Arnee

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ravsak | Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/ravsak

RAVSAK strengthens and sustains the Jewish life, leadership and learning of community day schools, ensuring a vibrant Jewish future.

Please support RAVSAK.

Online: www.ravsak.org | **By mail:** RAVSAK, 120 West 97th Street, New York, NY 10025

Good & Welfare

Mazel Tov to **TEHIYAH DAY SCHOOL** in El Cerrito, CA, on being selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a 2012 National Blue Ribbon School. Tehiyah is only one of 50 private schools nationwide to be selected, and the only Jewish school to have been awarded this prestigious honor. Tehiyah was recognized in the category “Exemplary High Performing School.” Tehiyah is one of only two California schools to receive the award.

Yashar koach to the many RAVSAK schools that been collecting supplies and donations to help the Jewish day schools and synagogues that were affected by Hurricane Sandy. Among the schools are the **AKIVA SCHOOL** in Montreal, **NE MILES JEWISH DAY SCHOOL** in Birmingham, and the **SAN DIEGO JEWISH ACADEMY**, which raised over \$20,000 through a “mother of all garage sales.”

SHALOM MONTESSORI at McCormick Ranch in Scottsboro, AZ, recently moved to its new home and expanded its name. It is also planning to add a toddler class, become a “green” school and host a farmer’s market.



Jonah Kohn

Mazel Tov to freshman Jonah Kohn at **SAN DIEGO JEWISH ACADEMY**, who was awarded a \$25,000 scholarship at Google’s second annual Science Fair. Jonah’s device, which he dubbed “good vibrations,” filters sound into frequency ranges that are then applied to different parts of the user’s body — the fingers, the sternum and lower back of the neck — with various outputs.

Mazel Tov to Hyim Brandies, a Jewish studies teacher at **NEW COMMUNITY JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL** in West Hills, CA, and Sarah Blattner, technology integration specialist at **PORTLAND JEWISH ACADEMY** in Portland, Oregon, for being the Jewish Day School Fellows chosen for the Joshua Venture Group 2012-2014.

Barukh haba to RAVSAK’s newest member: **TALMUD TORAH SOCIETY** in Edmonton, Alberta. ■

Puzzled about your college choices? Let us help.



Grab a pen, find our academic programs*, and discover that AJU has more to offer than just Jewish Studies.

T I A J U S C R I H I E B C U C A J U E T
 N T I A L C S A J U N R A I T P E H C A R
 E C I N O I T A C I N U M M O C N U A C C
 M V A J U I B I S N E T Y T S E L S J U C
 N I I T T A U I I T T A A J U N T S U S A
 O A T H U J S S Y T S R A C N T L H W O J
 R C A E L U I T L T L E T H I E N M I N U
 I D J A R T N T A J U T R O D U O R O C E
 V I U T E E E U J E W I S H S T U D I E S
 N S U R N P S Y C H O L O G Y A J U M S I
 E C N E I C S L A C I T I L O P E H A J U

*Key: Bioethics; Business; Communication; Environment; Jewish Studies; Literature; Political Science; Psychology; Theatre

Surprised? Intrigued?
 Continue your search by contacting
 us at **310.440.1247** or
admissions@ajula.edu.

For more information about our
 undergraduate program, visit
college.ajula.edu.

**Look closer.
 Dig deeper.
 AJU.**

Dear Cooki

■ by **COOKI LEVY**

As the head of school, I am separated from direct interaction with students on a regular basis by two levels of administration, and the focus of much of my work is with institutional advancement, matters relating to the board of directors and community outreach. Yet I am also the chief education officer, and wish to have a direct impact on student learning, values and religious development.

How can I achieve this without encroaching on the “territory” of my deans and principals?

You raise a dilemma faced by many heads of school. The good news is that there are many ways that you can have the impact that you desire without adding too much to an already very full list of responsibilities and without offending other members of your administrative team.

The HOS greatly influences student learning and school culture through his or her decisions regarding use of resources and facilities. In determining your budget, how much money do you allocate for professional development for teachers? For acquiring the books, equipment and other materials to facilitate excellent teaching? How thoughtfully do you manage the schedule, allowing for maximal teaching and learning time? Is time set aside at staff meetings for learning and growth, for the discussion of new ideas and exposure to text? Have you set aside adequate revenue for your school library, for appropriate technology? In prioritizing the allocation of your financial and other resources, you, the HOS, are in a prime position to impact teaching and learning.

Policy-setting, while, again, not an area that brings you face-to-face with students, is nonetheless essential in establishing a culture of respect, religious practice and serious learning. This domain presents another opportunity for influencing the key mandate of academ-

Let the students see you be part of their world, and in so doing, you become someone they can seek out for guidance and look to as a model.

ic excellence and religious growth that heads of school value. What role do you play in setting policy regarding school dress, attendance at davening and classes, school discipline, school trips, parental involvement, etc.?

Beyond all of this, of course, the HOS must actively schedule and then protect time spent in the corridors, classrooms and assembly halls of the school. Stand at the door in the morning and greet the students—not every day, but often enough so that it is not a novelty. Daven with them, and be a role model of appropriate religious behavior. Attend sports competitions and other extracurricular programs as often as you can, even if you cannot stay for the entire event.

Let the students see you be part of their world and not an adjunct to it, and in so doing, you become someone they can seek out for guidance, invite to their programs and look to as a model. Work actively with the student leadership of your school, particularly at the high school level where student leaders have a vast influence on their peers. Meet with them, hear their ideas, seek out their opinions and be part of their conversations. Get them to understand the role you play in the success of their school.

Don't avoid the classroom! What better gift to a teacher than to be told that you will teach her class today so that she may attend a workshop or meeting. Or choose a unit of study of special interest to you that is important for the students, and ask teachers to offer you classroom

time to teach it. Expanding on holiday learning, for example, is an excellent way to influence students directly.

Often, the HOS is so burdened by the responsibilities of the job that she forgets who the key client is—the student. Protect time in your calendar weekly for “chief educator” type activities, and you will find yourself connected to your students in a meaningful and effective way. ■

Cooki Levy was the longtime head of the Akiva School in Westmount, Quebec, and is a mentor in the Day School Leadership Training Institute. Dear Cooki accepts questions from all school stakeholders. To submit a question, write to hayidion@ravsak.org, with “Dear Cooki” in the subject line.

Learn. Lead. Inspire.



“What’s happening in Jewish America is a renaissance. It’s inclusive, pluralistic, organic, and dynamic. The Spertus degree is fantastic, because it informs how I interact with this community.”

Tom Samuels
Membership and
Programming Director
for the Jewish
Reconstructionist
Congregation in
Evanston, IL

5000+ years of Jewish learning Fresh, contemporary relevance for you and your career

At Spertus Institute, our accredited graduate programs encourage future leaders to grapple with Jewish ideas in the service of personal, professional, and communal advancement.

Our Master of Arts in Jewish Professional Studies is offered in a cohort model, in Chicago and select other cities across North America.

Masters and Doctoral programs in Jewish Studies are offered onsite in Chicago and through distance learning.



610 S. Michigan Avenue | Chicago
312.322.1700 | spertus.edu



Spertus is a partner in serving our community,
supported by the JUF/Jewish Federation.

Listening to Students' Voices

■ by **SIVAN ZAKAI**

Zakai interviewed high school students to understand what they get out of their day school education. This article presents her discoveries and suggestions for how schools can tap into student motivation.

Meet Maya, Stephanie, and Alex. All three are actual high school students at Jewish community day schools. As they speak with me, an educational researcher and outsider to their school, they are attempting to articulate what about their Jewish day school education has value to them. These are their real words.

“I go to a Jewish school because I love feeling like every person is important and means something,” Maya explains. “When I’m here I feel like what I say matters to my teachers, to my peers. It gives me a feeling that when I wake up in the morning there’s a purpose for me going to school rather than trying to get good grades. Sometimes it scares me that my life could revolve so much around getting a good grade on a test, but at a Jewish school there is something more. There is an emphasis on grades, but at the same time there’s an emphasis on social action, on community, and that’s important to me that there is that something greater.” Finding meaning and purpose in quotidian life is of utmost importance to Maya, and she believes that her school helps her in this quest. By focusing on Jewish values—and not only academic excellence—her community day school helps her feel that her actions in the world matter to others.

For Stephanie, the true value of a Jewish education lies not in helping her connect to those around her, but in linking her to a rich and storied Jewish past. “What’s the point of all this Jewish education?” she wonders. “Ideally it is about learning you’re connected to your roots, you have a 2000 year old history.” She continues, “My own reason for getting a Jewish education has to do with my grandfather. When I was in 7th grade he was killed [in

a terrorist attack on Jews] and when he died, I felt I kind of owed it to him to learn more, to create a Jewish identity because I know how important Israel was to him and he was a very passionate Jew and I wanted to make him proud. So that is my big motivator.” Stephanie’s connection to the past is both communal, relating to the history of the entire Jewish people, and deeply personal, connecting her to her grandfather and carrying forth his legacy. Like Maya, Stephanie sees her Jewish learning as an opportunity to be part of something greater than herself.

Alex, on the other hand, views his Jewish education as explicitly connected to the self. For him, Jewish education is not about learning to carry the torch of tradition, but about learning to navigate his own, uniquely personal Jewish path. He explains, “I think the great thing I find in Judaism is that you’re able to do whatever level that you’re comfortable with and that you find your own interpretations of it. So I guess I would say that for me getting a Jewish education is about deciding what Judaism means to me, like what I do that to me is Jewish, and why I don’t feel the need to go to services every Friday night. Jewish learning is getting more of an explanation for myself, and I’m committed to that.” His Jewish learning is intrinsically linked to what Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen call “the sovereign self,” a personal journey for Jewish meaning and practice. Alex cares about getting a Jewish education because he believes it can help him forge his own way in the world.

In reading the words of these articulate Jewish teens, it is easy to imagine them repurposed for admissions brochures or website blurbs touting the benefits of day school education. And yet, the reason these students shared their thoughts with me was not for the purpose of marketing or public relations. These students, quite simply, wanted to be heard. If we listen to their voices only as an opportunity to



Dr. Sivan Zakai is director of research and teacher education at the Graduate Center for Education at American Jewish University. She can be reached at szakai@ajula.edu.

showcase the successes of Jewish community high schools, then we miss the educational lessons that the Maya, Stephanie, and Alex’s words can teach.

Lesson One: Students Have Different “Big Motivators” for Learning; Cultivate Those Differences

Stephanie referred to her grandfather’s death as her “big motivator” for Jewish learning. Alex found motivation for his Jewish education in being able to make his own decisions about what aspects of Jewish practice to accept or reject. Maya was driven by her desire to find purpose and meaning in her life. That students differ is a basic truism of education. Schools provide a variety of course offerings and extracurricular activities for students to pick among. Teachers design differentiated lessons to tailor learning to the different styles and interests of students.

Yet many Jewish day schools have a *single* “portrait of a graduate” that details a uniform set of attributes that all students must possess. These portraits are useful for building positive school culture and guiding “backwards planning,” but they



gloss over very important differences among students that schools should be cultivating, not ignoring.

Rabbi Zusya, a chassidic master of the late 18th century, is known for telling his students, “When I get to the heavenly court, they will not fault me for not being Moses. They will not ask me, ‘Why weren’t you Moses?’ Instead, they will ask me, ‘Why weren’t you Zusya?’” The goal of Jewish education is not to help students become scholars like Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides), innovators like Moses Mendelssohn, or philanthropists like Moses Montefiore. The goal, rather, is to help Maya become her own scholar, Stephanie her own innovator, Alex his own philanthropist.

One way to honor and encourage differences among students would be to provide students an opportunity to develop a “self-portrait of a graduate.” A self-portrait, which could easily coexist with an existing schoolwide “portrait of a graduate,” could provide students an opportunity to reflect on their own “big motivators” for learning, and to use what drives

One way to honor and encourage differences among students would be to provide students an opportunity to develop a “self-portrait of a graduate.”

them to imagine the kinds of students and people they hope to become by the time they graduate. Like Maya, Alex and Stephanie, students who have an opportunity to think and talk about the reasons they care about Jewish learning (and the moments when they may not care about it) are better able to chart their own course to personal and communal meaning and responsibility.

Lesson Two: Don't Confuse Students' Motivations for Learning with Teachers' Motivations for Teaching

Just as students’ motivations for learning differ from one another, so too do they often differ from the motivations of teachers. Even as teachers and students come together to learn, their reasons for doing so are often surprisingly dissimilar.

Stephanie’s Jewish studies teacher, for example, frames the value of Jewish learning in terms that would not resonate with her. Rabbi Stein, a teacher with whom Stephanie has good rapport, explains what he thinks is of primary importance in his students’ learning. He says, “I’m really interested in seeing Jewish texts and traditions as a resource for people in the process of identity formation.” Stephanie wants to learn about Judaism because she believes it will help her carry forth her grandfather’s legacy, and she’s particularly interested in lessons focused on Jewish and Israeli history. Her teacher cares most about preparing his students to read and find meaning in the Jewish textual tradition. For him, “the multivocality of our texts around core questions [of Jewish identity]” is what is most appealing about

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 12]

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11]

Judaism, and therefore most important for his students to learn.

Problems arise not when teachers and their students differ—after all, recognizing differences among Jews is one of the hallmarks of the Jewish community day school—but when teachers don't *realize* that students' motivations for learning are often quite different from their own motivations for teaching. Teachers, even those committed to differentiated learning, cannot actually design student-centered or student-tailored lessons without understanding where students do (and do not) find their own motivations for learning.

It is possible to understand why and

when students are committed to Jewish learning, and to plan lessons and programs that help students develop their own ideas, passions and commitments, only by listening to students' authentic voices. It is their words (and not only

Problems arise when teachers don't realize that students' motivations for learning are often quite different from their own motivations for teaching.

those of the adults so committed to their learning and development) that can shape the Jewish leaders of the future and the schools that educate them today.

Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, editor of the

Mishnah, is known for saying, "I learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but most of all from my students." In order to truly learn from students, schools and the people who inhabit them—teachers, administrators,

students and parents—must make time and space for students to give voice to their thoughts, and to be honored for them. For, as once Maya said to me, true learning comes from "listening really carefully and intently." ■



RAVSAK Welcomes Cooki Levy

Cooki Levy, the new director of the Head of School Mentoring Project, will work with the RAVSAK team to develop, launch and lead an innovative program that will pair experienced, successful heads of Jewish day schools with younger, less experienced colleagues. Addressing the need for sustained, strong and successful leadership, this program will make a major contribution to the long-term growth and success of Jewish day schools.

Cooki served as head at The Akiva School in Montreal for 23 years before retiring in June 2012. During her 23-year tenure, Akiva doubled in size, underwent a major renovation, and was recognized by the Quebec government as a part of the Lead School Network. In 2004 Akiva School became the first Jewish day school in Canada to be accredited by the Canadian Accredited Independent Schools organization.

In addition to her work locally both at Akiva and within the Montreal educational community, Cooki is active in the educational field on the nation-



al and international levels. She spent many years teaching student teachers in the Faculty of Education of McGill

University, and she regularly serves as a part of a team of evaluators of independent schools in Canada seeking accreditation. From 2006 to 2012 Cooki served as a mentor to aspiring heads of school through the Day School Leadership Training Institute based in New York.

In 2007, Cooki received the first Manual Lazar Memorial Prize, recognizing her outstanding professional leadership and contributions to Montreal's Jewish day school system. In 2010 she was recognized once again with the Gewurz Prize for Excellence in Jewish Education, awarded by the Federation CJA of Montreal.

Cooki currently lives in Toronto and works as an educational consultant and coach. Married to Professor Barry Levy of McGill, Cooki is the proud mother of 3 sons and 3 daughters-in-law and 8 grandchildren. ■

Israel as your **classroom**

When you **travel** with
Israel Way
we tailor the trip to
match your curriculum:

- ✓ Travel the Land with an open Bible
- ✓ Hebrew Language and culture
- ✓ Jewish History and tradition



Israel Way

An Egged Tours Company

Let Israel Way be your way to experience Israel

Call us toll free at 1-800-281-1265
Info@JewishAdventures.com



The Jewish Religious Nature of the Child

■ by **MICHAEL J. SHIRE**

Why did God create childhood? Shire explores the ways that Jewish sources have answered this question. He conveys some of the repercussions for Jewish education.

A theological approach to understanding the nature of childhood might ask the following questions: What is God saying to us in the existence of childhood, in the necessity that life begins with childhood and that all peoples must enter into a time of formation and education? To whom do children belong and who should determine their future and growth? From this theological approach, childhood is not seen merely as a stage to pass through, as the developmentalists would have it, but as a state of being profoundly spiritual, “a part of our being before God.”

Theologians of childhood believe that there needs to be a fuller understanding of this state of being and how religion can contribute to the way childhood is shaped and formed. There has been very little theological speculation, especially in Judaism, on the nature of childhood, though thought has been given in the tradition to the moral and spiritual status of the child. The following offers an exploration of a Jewish theology of childhood, with a look at its implications for Jewish education.

The Blessing of Children and the Blessings Children Bestow

Children are considered a great gift in Judaism. Parents who produce children are considered to be blessed, and there are many and varied customs and ceremonies to introduce a child into the Jewish community. Just as children are received as a blessing, they, in turn, bless their own parents as well as the larger community as indicated in the concept of *zechut banim*—through the merits of

the children, the parents deserve honor.

The distinct essence of children in Judaism is therefore expressed as a purity of nature and a potential for the highest aspiration of holiness and goodness. Judaism values children and childhood as perhaps the most pure form of being created in God’s image (betzelem Elohim).

Talmudic aggadah gives emphasis to an understanding of childhood as of value in its own right, not merely as a path to adulthood, when stating that childhood is a garland of roses. One rabbi states that the very breath of children is free of sin (Shabbat 119a) while the Jerusalem Talmud pronounces, “Better are the late fruits we ate in our childhood than the peaches we ate in our old age” (Peah 87:4). Children are regarded as the hope for the future in that they have been entrusted to parents as a Divine gift.

From investigation of attitudes in the Midrash based on biblical narratives of the childhood experiences of Joseph, Samuel and David, we can see emerge a state of childhood being treasured for a special role. Childhood is seen as a condition of purity and deep spiritual connection, especially through awe and wonder of God’s Creation and Divine purpose. Biblical stories about children demonstrate their ability to see what others cannot, as in Joseph’s dreams or Samuel’s call in the Temple.

Childhood is a state treasured in the young and one to be fostered even into adulthood. Invoking the prophet Elijah, harbinger of the Messiah, at a boy’s circumcision demonstrates that each newborn has the potential to change the world and bring it to completion and perfection. The sublime notion of harmony and perfection as described by the prophet Isaiah incorporates a young



Rabbi Dr. Michael J. Shire is the dean of the Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education at Hebrew College in Newton Center, Massachusetts. He can be reached at mshire@hebrewcollege.edu.

child playing with a wolf and lamb, leopard and goat and lion and calf at the end of days.

Ritual and Moral Obligations of the Child

There is no single picture of childhood in Judaism, and the promotion of childhood to an elevated status in the aggadic (narrative) literature is balanced by the halakhic (legal) treatment of children as minors. Minors do not have obligations or responsibility, in contrast to adults. Halakhic restrictions are placed on what children can be obliged to do ritually; they are treated differently within Jewish law and practice from adults, particularly in regard to obligations in the public domain.

However, there is a strong understanding that the purpose of childhood is to carry out the commandments and learn to enter the world of duty and religious obligation. Maimonides viewed children



as unaware of the knowledge of good and evil so that parents are given a fundamental obligation to instill the values which will lead them to choose well while they are yet young.

Therefore, children cannot fulfill the commandments for which they have no sense of their moral rightness. These early years are precisely to set children on the right moral path of life based on knowledge of the unique nature of children and their innate qualities and character. Tradition then holds that only at the time of bar mitzvah does the “moral inclination”—yetzer hatov—enter the soul (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 69). Now the adolescent is able to make a positive choice in carrying out the commandments and becomes obligated to a greater or lesser extent depending on gender. The spiritual elements of the soul are now in place to carry out the Jewish task of learning and living as an adult.

Study and Learning as Quintessential Childhood Activities

The vital role of learning in fulfilling the

The Jerusalem Talmud pronounces, “Better are the late fruits we ate in our childhood than the peaches we ate in our old age.”

purpose of childhood and finally entering the adult world is richly described in Jewish literature. The elaborate ceremonies developed from early rabbinic times continue to this very day with influences from all the cultures and countries in which Jews have lived. The traditional approach to learning was to start with the study of Leviticus and its sacrificial order. The rationale for this priority was that just as sacrifices are pure, so are children: “Therefore let the pure learn about the pure” (Leviticus Rabbah 7:3). Children are seen as pure of heart and mind, and therefore regarded as potential for ultimate service to God through the priesthood.

This is echoed in the story of Samuel who is indentured to the High Priest in the Temple by Hannah, his mother, in thanksgiving for his long awaited birth. His innocence as a child is emphasized in

God’s call to him in the Temple, being the only one who can hear God’s voice. Only a child’s receptivity has the ability to perceive God’s presence and respond to a call for duty and lifetime of service. As he grows and develops, Samuel becomes the paradigm for the child’s potential as priest and prophet, teaching others through wisdom and moral conscience. This innate insight of the boy Samuel leads to the downfall of the High Priest’s dynasty and its replacement by prophecy. It is a challenging and potentially transformative state of being.

Childhood as Symbolic of God’s Relationship with the Children of Israel

The description of the covenanted people in Jewish literature as “the children of Israel” places these views of childhood on a

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 17]

Distinguished Panel Weighs in on *HaYidion*

Perhaps *HaYidion* should go all digital? What if the *HaYidion* website had none of the articles from the print issue, instead publishing provocative views evoking feedback? Or the website might become a giant archive for all topics concerning Jewish education? Should we change the name of the journal, or the logo? Make the articles shorter, longer, give it a punchier design or a more subdued highbrow look?

These and other suggestions were tossed around by the highly talented crew of editors, journalists and thinkers who contributed to the *HaYidion* Advisory Panel. The panel held its second annual luncheon this fall at a trendy kosher eatery on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Last year's conversation yielded a crop of practical suggestions that resulted in several new features

in the journal. This year's meeting tended toward more big-picture questions that will inform our thinking for how *HaYidion* can best carve out its identity and serve the field moving forward.

The *HaYidion* Advisory Panel was conceived of as a vehicle for gaining broader field input into the journal, which has quickly evolved from a newsletter for school heads into an industry-wide "must read" for day school leaders, supporters and educators. The Advisory Panel gathers experts in publishing, journalism, academia and Jewish education to explore ways that *HaYidion* can best serve RAVSAK as its primary communication instrument while serving the field as a publication that advances thinking, practice and networking. As the past and current rosters of Advisory Panel members attests, we are blessed by

the guidance of some of the most fascinating and thoughtful thinkers around.

We thank the extraordinary people who contributed their time and focused their expert guidance on our publication:

- Sandee Brawarsky, editor and writer, *Jewish Week*
- Jeremy Dauber, professor of Yiddish literature, Columbia, co-editor, *Prooftexts*
- Edward Harwitz, Director of Leadership and Innovation for Day Schools and Yeshivot, Jewish Education Project
- Aron Hirt-Manheimer, editor, *Reform Judaism* magazine
- Mark Joffe, Director of International Development, Harold Grinspoon Foundation
- Margot Lurie, editor, *Jewish Ideas Daily*
- Alana Newhouse, editor, *Tablet* magazine
- Renee Rubin Ross, Program Officer, Jim Joseph Foundation
- Daniel Septimus, CEO, myjewishlearning.com
- Jonathan Woocher, Chief Ideas Officer, JESNA



Perhaps *HaYidion* should go all digital? What if the *HaYidion* website had none of the articles from the print issue, instead publishing provocative views evoking feedback? Or the website might become a giant archive for all topics concerning Jewish education?

Jewish Differentiation

How Do Schools Serve Our Students' Jewish Differences?

■ by **BRYAN CONYER**

In some community day schools, a gap in expectations and mutual comprehension between teachers and students creates frustration and dissatisfaction for all. Conyer suggests strategies for changing this pivotal relationship.

After interviewing Judaic studies teachers and students in three high schools located in Australia and the Western United States, it became apparent that their worldviews about Judaism were built upon strong assumptions, often not shared by one another. The teachers did not recognise the Jewish worldview of their students and vice versa, bringing confusion and dissonance into a challenging teaching and learning environment. Such an observation does not negate the teachers' professionalism or the authentic engagement of students. However, the quality of this engagement appeared to be undermined by a key element: the teachers and students misunderstood one another's Jewish worldviews. While this small sample size makes this point hard to generalize, my experience tells me that it is not an uncommon experience either. I believe that teachers can do more to serve our students' emerging Jewish identities.

One of the great challenges that teachers confront when entering a classroom is how to include each individual student and the differences that they bring with them in a positive manner. A liberal ethic demands that we treat each student fairly and equally, yet our professional training demands that equal and fair are not always the same. Differentiation is one of the latest catchwords that compel us to adapt our instruction to facilitate the unique learning needs of each student. Fairness now requires us first to recog-

nise and acknowledge each student's difference, and then to differentiate our teaching to include them. Such a concept has also long been part of the multicultural education agenda.

I have often wondered how these ideas translate into Judaic studies classrooms. Our students often bring very different Jewish worldviews, patterns of participation and Jewish knowledge into our classrooms. What responsibility does a Judaic studies teacher have to recognise, understand and even validate or nurture this Jewish difference? Do we share the same responsibility towards Jewish differentiation as our other educational colleagues have to academic and cultural differentiation, or are we solely responsible for transforming the students' existing identity into something better or different? I have found four factors that complicate this challenge.

The first challenge is the impact of individualism upon contemporary Jewish identity. The major denominations once offered a collective identity against which individuals measured themselves. In turn, the formal values and philosophies of these denominations provided the lesson plans for teaching about them and explaining Jewish difference to our

students. How many websites can we still find that use the language of Conservative Jews do X while Reform do Y and Orthodox do Z? How many schools teach about Jewish difference in such a way?

In a world of individualism, however, the locus of authority has moved from external influences, such as denominations, to the "sovereign self." In a world



Dr. Bryan Conyer works as the deputy principal of Jewish life at the Emanuel School in Sydney, Australia. He can be reached at bconyer@emanuelschool.nsw.edu.au.

of individualism, individuals happily pick and choose from each denomination and outside sources in seemingly inconsistent ways, as denominational philosophies are not necessarily compelling. The 2000-01 NJPS already concluded that individuals who identify with a denomination do not necessarily belong to its institutions or subscribe "to the practices and beliefs as articulated by that denomination."

The second challenge is globalization. Today, many of our classrooms include Jews from Russian, Israeli, South African and other backgrounds. Jews raised in different countries demonstrate both distinctive and subtle patterns of Jewish identification and paradigms for understanding Judaism. For example, Australian Jews are highly influenced by Israel and the Shoah while American Jews are more readily inspired by creative innovations in synagogues.



*Synagogue in the village of Wolleka in Ethiopia
Photo by Marc Baronnet*

How well do our Judaic studies teachers and students understand or represent the Jewish understandings and experiences that these individuals, and their families, bring with them? Do we acknowledge and affirm these differences and use them as rich resources for Jewish learning, or do we require these students to acculturate into the majority Jewish identity of those already in the school?

The third challenge is “color blindness.” Motivated by the value of equality, teachers often choose to be “color blind,” meaning that they strive to treat all students, regardless of backgrounds, as equal. In turn, these teachers are unintentionally inconsiderate of their students’ distinctive backgrounds. Consequently, their presentation of knowledge seldom includes examples or contexts that reflect and affirm the actual lived experiences, values and priorities of these students. These teachers sometimes inadvertently alienate those students who do not share or understand the teacher’s preferred contexts. What does this mean for a Jewish education?

How many times do Jewish schools teach about Ethiopian or Ugandan Jewry with a heightened level of planning, excitement and curiosity?

Finally, multicultural education teaches that most teachers, when part of the majority group, presume that their own backgrounds and experiences are normal and indistinctive. When teachers assume their own experiences as normal, they are not likely to present it as only one of many ways for understanding the world. When Judaic studies teachers regard their personal Jewish experience as unexceptional, they do not feel a need to carefully explore and objectively explain it.

Consequently, while Judaic studies teachers thoughtfully teach about other Jewish groups, there is often never an explicit acknowledgement that their own Jewish paradigm is only one of a spectrum of ways for thinking about and living Judaism. For example, how many times do Jewish schools teach about Ethiopian or Ugandan Jewry with a heightened level of planning, excitement and curiosity? How

thoughtfully and conscientiously do we teach about the minority Jewish identities present in our school community, or do we rather default to our majority Jewish identities?

My research demonstrated how these factors create a gap between the students and teachers in Judaic studies classrooms. The majority of teachers I interviewed shared a Jewish worldview that was grounded primarily in traditionalist understandings of Judaism built upon a hierarchy of “more Jewish” and “less Jewish.” The student who consistently attends synagogue, observes kashrut and Shabbat, was usually judged to be at the top of the hierarchy of “more Jewish.” If this student enthusiastically related to Jewish text as an authoritative and valid voice, then this student’s comments in class were highly valued. In the three schools of my research, only

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 61]

Looking Closely

The Value of Child Study for the Elementary Teacher

■ by **NILI PEARLMUTTER**

Pearlmutter describes a method developed for educators to see the “whole child” beyond the exigencies of classroom performance.

“She appears extraordinary to me, because I have truly taken the time to see her for who she is.” Janet Zucker (all quotations come from former Delet interns)

The prevailing currents in education today push us towards standards and testing, and the basic questions we ask ourselves about students stem from this trend: How does this child fall short of the benchmarks? What is missing? In this article I will describe an alternative way of looking at and learning about children, and suggest its potential for informing and developing our teaching.

“In a busy classroom, we as teachers naturally give individual attention to students for mainly negative reasons. ... Child Study gave me the opportunity to give [this child] the opportunity to be very carefully noticed at his best, worst, and everything in between.” Michelle Andler

Each year, the graduate students in my Fundamentals of Education course at Brandeis University engage in a process called “Child Study.” The students are enrolled in the Delet/MAT pre-service program for elementary Jewish day school teachers, which consists of two summers of study on campus and a year-long mentored internship, combined with study, during the school year. My course accompanies the internship.

Delet takes seriously the idea that children are whole people, with their own strengths, quirks, and ways of being in the world. Furthermore, we believe it is

necessary for teachers to develop a well rounded, respectful and empathic understanding of the children we teach. Child Study embodies this idea.

Each intern chooses one student as a focus. Over a period of several months, the intern observes that child closely, taking regular observational notes, even while doing the daily work of teaching. The framework we use was developed by Patricia Carini and her colleagues at the Prospect School in Bennington, Vermont, as a tool for observing, describing and understanding children in comprehensive ways. Interns seek to broaden their knowledge of the child by noticing the child’s physical presence and gestures, disposition and temperament, connections with other people, strong interests and preferences, and modes of thinking and learning.

Because Delet prepares teachers for Jewish day schools, we added another category: the child as a spiritual being and learner. Periodically, Delet students share their observations with their colleagues. Eventually, they write up a full description of their study child along with ideas about how to use what they have learned from their observations to inform their teaching. They also reflect on what they have learned about themselves as teachers.

“One lesson that I have learned is the importance and challenge of setting aside one’s assumptions and really observing a child. As adults, we make so many assumptions without even being aware that we are doing so. Yet, to really get to know our students we must set these aside and simply ‘notice’ and then keep noticing.”
Joanne Camann

A fundamental skill that teachers learn from engaging in Child Study is how to observe children. We might assume



Nili Pearlmutter, a former elementary school teacher, serves as a senior education specialist at the Delet/MAT Program at Brandeis University. She can be contacted at nilip@brandeis.edu.

that the process of observing children comes naturally to teachers; after all, the elementary teacher spends many hours each day with her class. However, it is human nature to rely on our assumptions and allow our attention to be drawn to the child who needs help or who is being disruptive. Child Study pushes teachers to discipline their observations, to focus intentionally on a child whose need is not obvious in the moment, to seek evidence that may contradict assumptions. This process also calls on the teacher to be open to the growth and change that is part of the child’s development.

“I had the opportunity to hear other perspectives and possible analyses of the observations I made. People held my assump-

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21]

sumptions and interpretations are just that, one is compelled to move beyond them. Looking for evidence to support assumptions becomes a habit, a way of being. This knowledge of individual children forms the root of the relationship between the teacher and student and also enables teachers to create strong relationships with parents, who are reassured when the teacher is able to describe their beloved child so carefully, honestly and accurately.

“I believe that it is in our relationships with our students... that we plant the seeds of learning. Without this environment of trust and respect, we cannot hope to create a space in which children can take risks and explore, feel free to make mistakes and grow.” Joanne Camann

Besides forming the basis for healthy, trusting relationships with children and their families, the knowledge gained from Child Study enables the teacher to create and teach powerful curriculum, grounded in an understanding of who the learners are, what engages them, and how they think. We know that teachers need deep knowledge of content. Child Study provides teachers with a way to develop deep knowledge of their learners so that we can bring the learners and the content together.

Child Study is not a practice reserved for teachers-in-training. Because it is challenging for classroom teachers to observe while teaching, it is all the more important that all teachers develop this capacity. It is astounding what teachers can notice when we take a breath after asking a question and really look at our students, pause and focus our attention while students work independently or spend five minutes noticing interactions at recess.

Teachers commonly use labels as shorthand and slip into the “deficit model” when talking about children. We are quick to say what David can’t do or needs to learn, it is convenient to label Sarah smart or slow, lazy or kind. The teachers’ room can be full of this kind of talk. The discipline of Child Study creates a different kind of discourse, one in which we

see children in their entirety, where we look for their capacities. In most Jewish day schools, multiple adults teach each child, but they rarely have the opportunity to engage in serious, sustained discussion about individual children. Sharing observations within a structure that is accountable to evidence allows new perspectives and possibilities to emerge from the various adults who work with a child.

“Much as I might like to think that I have a ‘picture’ of her now, I must not forget that it is only a picture. She, however, is a human being, constantly growing, changing and adapting.” Heather Greene

Teachers commonly slip into the “deficit model” when talking about children, saying what David can’t do or needs to learn, labeling Sarah smart or slow, lazy or kind. The discipline of Child Study creates a different kind of discourse.

Child Study has been embraced in educational circles as an effective tool for professional development. In the future, I hope that Jewish day schools will also reap the benefits from engaging in this child-centered process. If you are interested in bringing this practice to your school, here are some ways to get started.

- Learn more about the history of this practice through Patricia Carini’s work; I suggest the book *From Another Angle*.
- Share about Child Study with faculty at your school and suggest it as a possible activity during faculty meetings. Distribute Carini’s essay “A Letter to Teachers and Parents on Some Ways of Looking at and Reflecting on Children” (found in *From Another Angle*). Identify a facilitator (teacher or administrator) who is familiar with the process and gather a group of teachers interested in trying this practice. Ask them to commit to meeting at least three times so that they have an opportunity to learn the process.
- Teach those who are interested in par-

ticipating about the difference between description and interpretation. One way to do this is to pass a plant around a circle, asking each person to describe something he or she sees. The rest of the participants should ask for clarification or evidence if necessary. For example, if one person says, “The plant needs water,” others might ask, “What do you see that makes you think that?”

- Solicit a volunteer to present a child. Encourage that teacher to spend a few weeks taking notes about the focus child. If multiple teachers work with the same child, it is best if they all take

notes and share in the presentation. The teacher or teachers should also consider what questions they would like the group to focus on.

- Before the presentation, have the presenting teacher or teachers meet with the facilitator to discuss the child, review the protocol, and clarify the questions they may want to pose to the group.
- A simple protocol begins with the presenting teacher (or teachers) sharing descriptive information about the child, using the headings listed above to organize their presentation and posing one or two questions they have about the child. The participants probe for evidence, offer alternate interpretations, and discuss how the presenter could seek answers to her questions.
- At the end of the session, ask the presenter and participants to reflect on new learnings or questions about children or teaching. The presenter can share any next steps she will take to learn more about or support the child. ■



William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of The Jewish Theological Seminary

Strengthening the quality of Jewish life through the power of education
Serving multiple schools in the RAVSAK network

We prepare knowledgeable, committed, and skilled educators and educational leaders who are able to work in a range of Jewish day schools and other settings, through a variety of degree-granting and professional development programs.

Opportunities for Jewish Day Schools and Their Professionals:

- **Day School Leadership Training Institute (DSLTI)**
Preparation for aspiring heads of school
- **Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute (JECELI)***
Leadership learning for emerging directors of early childhood programs
- **Ivriyon Hebrew Immersion Program for Day School Teachers**
Hebrew immersion program for teachers of Judaic curriculum
- **MaToK Bible Curriculum****
Curriculum and training for teachers in grades 3 through 7
- **Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project**
Professional development toward a standards-based approach to Tanakh instruction

To learn more about these programs, opportunities for educators in other settings, and our degree-granting programs, contact us at

(212) 280-6018

www.jtsa.edu/davidson

The Jewish Theological Seminary • 3080 Broadway • New York, NY 10027



William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education

* JECELI is a joint program of JTS and Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion.

** The MaToK curriculum is jointly sponsored by JTS's Melton Research Center for Jewish Education and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

Understanding and Working with Vulnerable Students

■ by **MICHAEL BEN-AVIE**

Ben-Avie, a leading researcher of children, explains the causes and symptoms of vulnerability in children, and discusses methods for schools to help.

As part of research I conducted with a colleague to find out why teachers choose to leave day school, one finding we found particularly surprising: teachers say that they have seriously considered quitting the profession or leaving Jewish education because their schools were not effectively dealing with students who were not thriving either academically or socially and emotionally. How do students become vulnerable in this way?

Students are vulnerable when they have yet to develop a “who-ness” and a “wholeness.” A wholeness emerges when there is a balance among all the aspects or domains of development. When development is uneven, there is an over-emphasis on one aspect of development to the detriment of overall development in the present and possibly in the future. For example, if students’ cognitive development has been overemphasized to the detriment of their social development, they may be at grade level in their learning of math and science, but may be unable to successfully engage in teamwork and group problem-solving.

While all students experience some measure of imbalance in their development, the imbalance of vulnerable students is more acute. Students’ level of vulnerability is often categorized into three tiers. Students in tier I tend to benefit from attention to the quality of the climate of relationships in the school as well as a comprehensive system of social-emotional learning and behavioral supports. Tier II and III interventions ramp up the instructional or social/behavioral supports to the students. There are many causes why students may be in tier III,

including trauma, anxiety, terror, aggression towards others/suicidal ideation, obsessive thoughts, and so forth. In general, students in Jewish day schools who are not thriving will benefit from either a tier I or tier II intervention.

How do students in Jewish day schools become in need of intervention? Children and adolescents too often lack access to the appropriate adults and the communication skills necessary to engage with them about important issues they face. Thus, too often they derive from their experiences the wrong lessons about themselves and the world, developing limiting beliefs about themselves and their potential based on specific negative experiences in specific environments. For these students, expert support and guidance by adults makes the difference between perceiving a world filled with opportunities for mastery and satisfaction and perceiving a world filled with obstacles and frustration.

The who-ness of vulnerable students is characterized by beliefs that trigger or support hopelessness, helplessness and worthlessness. Robert Dilts, the author of “Thought Viruses, Mental Maps and Health,” offers the following examples:

Hopelessness: *“No matter what I do it won’t make a difference. What I want is not possible to get. It’s out of my control. I’m a victim.”*

Helplessness: *“It’s possible for others to achieve this goal but not for me. I’m not good enough or capable enough to accomplish it.”*

Worthlessness: *“I am a fake. I don’t belong. I don’t deserve to be happy and healthy. There is something basically and fundamentally wrong with me as a person and I deserve the pain and suffering that I am experiencing.”*

According to Trudy Rashkind Steinfeld, a former colleague at the Yale Child Study Center, students may also be experiencing a deep sense of unease about their life in school. For many of them, there’s not enough time to fully process concepts and skills, and just when they



Michael Ben-Avie PhD is a research affiliate of the Yale Child Study Center. He can be reached at Michael.ben-avie@yale.edu.

feel like they are learning the material, the topic changes. Many of them lack sufficient support for homework. Some fear being shamed or targeted by their classmates or even by their teachers. They may feel uncomfortable enough about being confused even when they are alone, so that their primary focus is on self-protection, rather than learning. To be successful, students need to shift these types of limiting beliefs to beliefs involving hope for the future, a sense of self-worth and belonging, and a sense of capability and responsibility.

Jewish day schools can help students who are vulnerable by promoting their self-regulation, which underlines healthy



development. Self-regulation includes the monitoring, appraising and expression of emotions. Robert Sternberg, former president of the American Psychological Association, explains that self-regulation is “being aware of what matters to you and having the discipline to avoid temptations and see it through.”

As child and adolescent research conducted at the National Institute for Mental Health has demonstrated, promoting students’ self-regulation is critical to help prevent mild aggression among young children from escalating into serious behavior problems and violence later on. Our research of Connecticut public school children determined that the most important predictor of students’ academic achievement (GPA) was the students’ scores on the scale that measures self-regulation.

Within the classroom, the more teachers know what specifically “triggers” the lower levels of self-regulation among vulnerable students, the more they are able to figure out how to help them. There are many reasons why students may not demonstrate self-regulation, and on our self-assessments students are asked to indicate their level of agreement with the

Helplessness: “It’s possible for others to achieve this goal but not for me. I’m not good enough or capable enough to accomplish it.”

following sample items:

When I don’t behave in class, it’s because

- something in the environment “triggers” me (it’s too hot, I can’t see the board, there’s too much noise in the hall, etc.).
- someone else in the class “triggers” me (they are joking around, pushing, etc.), and I defend myself.
- someone else in the class “triggers” me (they are joking around, pushing, etc.), and I join in the fun.
- something inside me “triggers” me (e.g., I don’t know the answer to a question the teacher asked, I’m bored, the subject we’re learning makes me feel anxious).
- that’s just the kind of person I am.
- I’m just not able to control myself.

- I feel that it’s important to behave the way I want to, not necessarily the way someone else tells me to behave.
- if I start following the rules, I’ll get bullied or targeted by others.
- I don’t like something about the teacher.

Fortunately, students’ levels of self-regulation and vulnerability are amenable to change in a way that family background or previous educational experiences are not. To change the lifepaths of students who are vulnerable, an effective strategy is stretching their orientation to the future. Students who demonstrate self-regulation are able to engage in goal-oriented behavior. Consider the following example of a goal-setting program: At bimonthly meetings, students are welcomed with a short presentation (on learning styles, skill sets, etc.) and a piece of paper on

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 29]

Secure Attachment: A New Cornerstone for Learning

■ by **ELANA KATZ**

The author offers a tool from the field of therapy to help schools grasp the relation between students' emotional needs and their success as learners.

The field of neuroscience has offered the important finding that *emotion is the on-off switch for learning*. In practical terms, this means that the emotional brain has control precedence, so when faced with a choice to reflect/analyze/study, or the perception of psychological or physical distress, the brain will respond to the distress or danger cue every time. That very wiring in the brain could be a key to survival. This is the same wiring that rushes a child out of the way if, while thinking about their school work, a bicycle—or a car—is racing toward her. We *want* that wiring. At the same time, it means that if there is emotional distress, the brain is preoccupied, and it will be very hard to engage the thoughtful and analytical skills that the child needs for learning.

Given how much stress exists in today's world, this could read like an excuse for many kids to get a pass on their assignments. It is in fact intended as an opportunity to highlight an important resource to help children focus on their work. There is a "secret weapon" to calm the emotional right brain and engage the thinking left brain, known as *secure attachment*. Each child needs at least one relationship that functions as a safe haven and a secure base in order to optimize his or her capacity to learn. Secure attachment means that in distress we can turn to a trusted other, signal our need, and receive an attuned, caring response. Whereas we used to relegate attachment needs to the mother-infant dyad, we now understand this to be a basic, life-long need, one that we experience from cradle to grave.

Any number of children going through

school will have multiple relationships that reflect this kind of security: loving parents or stepparents, grandparents and extended family, and positive relationships with multiple teachers and coaches, not to mention a number of good friends. For other students their lives, both at home and at school, are much more challenging, and they long for, but do not have this experience. Emotional distress at home or difficulty with peers makes it harder to focus in the classroom, they may well get into trouble (behavioral or academic) at school, and if an academic or behavioral focus prevails, a negative report to the

home or principal may become a source of scolding or punishment, rather than an exploration of the distress.

If this occurs, the child's problems are compounded. They either retreat from the negative report/experience at school and the reprimand at home, or they come back swinging in some fashion, all the while their sense of selves and their



Elana Katz LCSW is on the senior faculty of the Ackerman Institute for the Family, and serves as board secretary of the New York Center for Emotionally Focused Therapy. She can be reached at elanakatz@gmail.com.

own capacities are ever more in question. This self-doubt leaving them more preoccupied and less responsive, less able to learn, yielding more negative feedback



or reprimands, and the cycle continues and often escalates.

So what is this “secure attachment” about and what can an educator do to help? Most importantly, a first response to a child whose work is incomplete or inaccurate, or who has caused some disruption, would be one that is *curious*, supportive, and offers room for the child to tell her or his story of what is going on. How can the relevant adults team up to find out how they can support this child, and find out what may be interfering with his learning?

A strength-based, humanistic approach to human behavior presumes that children want to do well, to finish their homework, and that they (like adults) may hit impasses, that they get stuck, rather than viewing them as characterologically flawed in some way. A teacher can be a safe haven who can engage the child and also help broker an effective conversation with a parent so that everyone can work together to get the learning on track, or back on track, as soon as possible. A child who feels that the adults do not want to blame or shame, but would rather understand and support, will remember and internalize those helpful voices for years to come, and increase his or her sense of self-worth in the process.

Even at the most extreme end of the spectrum, I often hear very moving stories from adults who reflect back on a profoundly problematic childhood and remember *one adult* who was there, who believed in them, and the impact that presence had over time. Decades before teachers served as mandatory reporters, and long before abuse was recognized as being of concern, a patient of mine had an elementary school teacher who would help her with her ponytail each morning so that her hair could look like the other girls. While (sadly) she was never asked why no one at home could help her with her grooming, that small, unspoken act of kindness was something that she held on to and remembered more than twenty-five years later as part of what pulled her through a very troubled, and at times dangerous, family situation.

A patient of mine had an elementary school teacher who would help her with her ponytail each morning so that her hair could look like the other girls.

A yoga teacher once told me that when two children get into a fight on the playground and one is bullying the other, the one who has been picked on needs a hug, and the bully needs an even bigger hug. Seeing children as “troubled” vs. “trouble” and finding ways to generate a safe and concerned presence for them is an enormous gift that allows them to open up, to experience the world as safe and caring, and once they are reassured, helps them turn on that switch and focus on all they need to learn. ■



PARDES IS GROWING...



PARDES CENTER FOR JEWISH EDUCATORS

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators offers a variety of new and established programs in Israel and North America to train, support and inspire day school Jewish Studies teachers and experiential educators serving the wider Jewish community.

TRAINING PROGRAMS IN ISRAEL

- **Pardes Educators Program:** Vibrant, innovative and highly selective two-year teacher training program that combines intensive text study at Pardes with an MEd from Hebrew College. For those pursuing day school education as a definite career path. **One-year Accelerated Track also available.**
- **Masters in Jewish Education Plus Pardes (MAPP):** One-year program for formal or experiential Jewish educators entering or pursuing a Masters in Jewish Education (or related field) looking to upgrade their academic degree with a vital layer of classical Jewish text study.
- **Pardes Experiential Educators Program:** One-year program designed to enrich the careers of Jewish experiential educators through the study of Jewish text, professional seminars and active participation in the vibrant, diverse community of Pardes in Israel.
- **Teachers for Jewish America:** One-year program designed for participants interested in exploring Jewish education and teaching for one or two years in a Jewish day school in a smaller North American Jewish community, without a long-term career commitment.

Applications now being accepted for Fall 2013.

SEMINARS IN NORTH AMERICA

- Customized and creative in-service seminars for teachers and experiential educators, designed and run by Pardes in conjunction with communities, day schools, synagogues, JCCs, Hillels and camps.
- Offering educators practical pedagogical tools to tackle subjects including prayer and spirituality, havruta study, Israel engagement, conflict resolution and character education.
- Includes in-house workshops, regional seminars, curriculum development and educational consultation.

MORE INFORMATION & APPLICATIONS

Programs in Israel:

Gail Kirschner
gail@pardes.org.il

Seminars in North America:

Dr. Susan Wall
susan@pardes.org.il

WWW.PARDES.ORG.IL

Integration: Closing the Loop on Holistic Jewish Growth

■ by **JEFFREY KRESS**

Kress argues that day schools should structure time in their busy schedules for students to reflect upon the diverse strands of their learning and integrate them into their emerging sense of Jewish identity.

As a field, we have made significant progress in breaking down some unhelpful barriers. To a large degree, we no longer define *Jewish learning* as purely cognitive and knowledge-based, nor do we equate *Jewish identity* with warm fuzzy feelings devoid of depth. We can do more, however, to strengthen the bridge on an ongoing basis. As we have learned from recent work in neuroscience as well as decades of work in social and emotional learning, the cognitive and socioaffective elements of learning and development are inseparable. While we have embraced the idea that “experiential” education can take place in schools, or that schools provide activities other than book learning, we still have progress to make in embracing the role of all educators as equal partners in promoting holistic growth, and in helping youth to synthesize the array of developmental inputs that they face.

While we do not know all there is about promoting holistic growth, we are far from starting at square one. The scholarly literature reveals basic principles of promoting the broad identity outcomes that encompass what we know, believe, do and feel with regard to Judaism. We should incorporate some of these principles into day school pedagogy; here are three:

- *The power of relationships* in the learning process, and the potential for the learning process to help us develop interpersonal skills.
- *The centrality of emotions* in focusing our attention and facilitating learning, and learners’ capacity to develop emotional awareness and self-control.

- *The importance of meaningful goals and personal connections* in motivating learning, and the power of educators in connecting learning to matters of personal growth.

In my work with Jewish high schools, I have been struck by how many programs and activities are planned to address social and emotional elements of education. A glance at a school calendar reveals an array of assemblies, trips, shabbatonim, tefillah activities, arts, sports and discussion based seminars or advisories. There is an array of input around social action, Jewish values, moral education, ethics, developmental issues, conflict resolution, and so on. Students have opportunities to share their ideas, opinions, points of view, doubts, concerns. A student will encounter a myriad of messages and experiences—in and out of school—related to who they are and whom they should, or could, become.

For these messages and experiences to be most impactful, learners (particularly adolescents) must integrate them into an ongoing sense of self over time. To create a coherent life narrative, students need opportunities to digest these messages and experiences, to break them down in their minds and to think about how they relate to who they are, to contemplate discrepant messages, and to compare new ideas or actions against previously held beliefs about the world, about Judaism, and about themselves.

The rich environments of day schools hold great developmental potential, but also come with a challenge. As students think about their school experiences, will they picture a rich tapestry or just a bunch of colorful, but disconnected, threads?

The potential for fragmentation of the “message,” the educational opportunities relevant to Jewish identity development, along with the idiosyncratic nature of the process (students bring different experiences with them into the school, and have differing experiences while there) leave the “recipient” (the student) with the task of connecting experiences into a cohesive whole. Weaving together experiences is a complicated task to begin with. Students receive many devel-

opmental inputs and some, such as many of the increasingly ubiquitous messages from social and digital media, are inconsistent with those of the school.

Educators’ developmental efforts are complicated by the realities of contemporary schooling. The emotionally moving assembly about genocide in Africa, for example, is scheduled immediately after a drama-filled lunch period and right before a big math mid-term. Or, the innovative moral education program ran for the first three months of freshman year, but no one has ever mentioned it again.

From this perspective, the challenge of *integration* is one of scaffolding connec-



Dr. Jeffrey Kress is an associate professor and the academic director of the Experiential Learning Initiative at the Davidson School of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He can be reached at jekress@jtsa.edu.

tion-making on the part of the students, so that they are best able to integrate the disparate elements of their experience in and out of school into their perceptions of their developing selves. Mediated self-reflection can be an important element in achieving such a synthesis. Self-reflection may be facilitated by opportunities for introspection, for the consideration of the personal meaning of events once time has passed. This internal process can be shared with, or related to, others in writing (such as a journal), in conversation, or in artistic expressions. These “others” may play a role in clarifying ideas by “actively listening,” or they may simply share reflections in turn.

Students would benefit from sustained opportunities to process, with peers and with adults, the wealth of educational messages received in class, at home, at shabbatonim, at camp, on the Internet, and so on; to consider, in multiple ways and on an ongoing basis, one’s identity and the impact of experiences—including discussions in classrooms about content areas—on this identity. The question “What does it mean to you as a developing person and Jew?” has the potential to become the in-

tegrating connector for the diverse experiences, both in and out of classrooms, in which a student participates.

Whereas curriculum-based or theme-based approaches to integration focus on the message to be delivered in consistent ways by the messengers (the educators), integration through self-reflection focuses on the *recipient*, namely, the student, and the mediation of his or her ability to make connections among educational experiences and with the evolving self. The “theme” here *is* the recipient or the recipient’s holding up his or her self-schema in the light of new experiences. The goal would be an integrated outcome that would be idiosyncratic, not monolithic.

An area for further development is how schools can offer more opportunities for ongoing, guided, personal reflection aimed at drawing connections among what is learned in subject-matter classes, what one experiences in out-of-classroom events, and how one sees one’s self as a Jew. Schools have experimented with advisories, deans responsible for particular grades, and other forums for this. The

challenges, though, remain formidable.

While some might scoff at the futility of “getting students to talk” about important issues, I along with many educators have found that given attention to the three ideas above (strong relationships, emotional depth and sensitivity, and authentic respect for the students’ goals and ideas), students, and adolescents in particular, will embrace such opportunities.

A first step might be to start chipping away at the mindset that maintains the classroom vs. out-of-classroom developmental distinctions and to add a Jewish developmental lens to all school activities. A mapping exercise can help bring this to life. Where during the school day are intentional efforts being made to work with the three elements listed above? Where are the lost opportunities? How can we best connect our efforts one to another and how can we help our learners reflect on their own developmental journeys? And, how can students come to see a school as a comprehensive developmental whole which is larger than the sum of its parts? ■

Understanding and Working with Vulnerable Students

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25]

which were written “weekly goals” and “long-term goals.” Students are given 20 minutes to write what they want to accomplish that week (to earn a B in a math class, to pass a science test), activities to complete in order to reach the goals, an assessment of time needed, and the specific days on which they would commit to completing the listed activities. Then they share aloud what they had written.

In this way, students help each other think through how to achieve their goals. By seeing each other’s goals, the likelihood is increased that this process will raise the bar for many of them. Over time, they will learn that achieving their goals is something that they can do—that it is not overwhelming. By subdividing their goals into manageable chunks, they will learn that achieving them does not need to be too daunting.

The most effective strategy for helping students to reduce their vulnerability and to increase their self-regulation is getting to know them well and becoming an important person in their lives. In our studies of students in Jewish schools, youth movements and camps, we ask students to indicate about how many adults in their lives (at home, at school, in the community) care about what happens to them. Students who indicated “zero adults” had significantly lower scores on overall learning and development than students who indicated a number greater than zero. Fifty-four percent indicated that between 11 and 30 adults care about what happens to them. An additional 18 percent indicated a number greater than 30 adults. Students who indicated either 13-25 adults or more than 25 adults had the highest levels of learning and development, significantly differing from the other students, and the fewest challenges

with interpersonal relationships.

In schools that effectively work with students who are vulnerable, the typical students also benefit. Typical students quickly learn that how they interact with vulnerable students matters to teachers. I observed a teacher respond to a negative interaction that occurred between a typical student and a vulnerable student while they were working in a small group. Instead of focusing only on the two students, she stopped the work of all the groups. She told them, “I can see that you are engaged in your group projects, but the whole fabric of the community that we are creating in this classroom has been torn asunder. We cannot continue until this has been addressed.” This teacher embodies a core principle of Jewish tradition: the health of society depends upon the way that we treat the most vulnerable in our midst. ■



LEARNING TO LEAD - LEADING TO

TONY WAGNER, KEYNOTE SPEAKER
CREATING INNOVATORS

DR. PAT MASLIN OSTROWSKI
THE WOUNDED LEADER

TOM ADAMS
SUCCESSION PLANNING



Innovative networking led by **WEAVE THE PEOPLE**

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Hyatt Regency Crystal City

Sunday – Tuesday, February 3-5, 2013

WWW.JEWISHDAYSCHO



Yeshiva University
INSTITUTE FOR
UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Register Now!
3-5 February 2013
Washington, D.C.

DO LEARN



Plan now to be part of this important fieldwide day school conference focusing on leadership and learning that will strengthen your school and the entire field of day school education.

Participants will choose from a wide array of skills-based workshops designed to meet their needs as day school professionals or lay leaders. An innovative new process of weaving professionals and lay leaders from across the entire Jewish day school field will enhance the impact of your learning and networking at the conference. Save the date now to participate in this exciting exploration of how successful leadership impacts learning in classrooms, boardrooms, on our campuses and, ultimately, the communities in which we live.

SCHOOLCONFERENCE.ORG



Students in our Schools

“The pursuit of truth and beauty is a sphere of activity in which we are permitted to remain children all our lives.”

Albert Einstein

In this issue about students, we decided to dedicate our school feature to the work of students. We invited students to show us the school as they see it. What do they find special in their schools and want to tell people in other schools about? Here are their pictures and words.



Beit Rabban, New York, New York

We did a moving physics project. We split up into different groups and studied different moving objects. One of them was spinning. The spinning group made spin art, spun babe blades, and also spun dreidels around. Gabriella Y., 3rd grade



Donna Klein Jewish Academy, Boca Raton, Florida

6th graders Chad F., Akiva G. and Jonathan L. experience the Shomrei HaAdama Garden. The school made the garden so that students could learn about plants and the environment. The students helped set up the earth pots and planted the seeds.



Golba Och Academy, West Orange, New Jersey

We are Rose S., Rafaella S., Tal B. and Carmelle B., the executive board of the High School Israel Club, and are responsible for planning activities, assemblies, presentations, and fundraisers to support and foster the connection each student builds with Israel. The club meets once a week and usually attracts upwards of 20 students. In this picture, we are standing next to our Israel club bulletin board displaying images from last year's successful efforts. This year alone, we've run activities about Gilad Shalit and Yitzhak Rabin, begun challot sales on Fridays, met Israeli basketball star Tal Brody, run a car wash to raise money for our Israel trips, and much more.

Students are connected by a unique student "family." In this student-driven program, children, one from each grade, kindergarten through 12, are placed in mixed age groups that meet at least once a week. Students "grow" with the same family through their years at HBHA. These close knit groups within the school allow younger students to become more comfortable with the school and to develop friendships spanning age levels. While celebrating Jewish and American holidays with special programs, HBHA student families learn together, with the Upper School students taking on the role of teachers and mentors to their young peers. Sam A. (text) and Michael A. (photo), 12th grade



Haman Branch Hebrew Academy, Overland Park, Kansas

Students in our Schools



N. E. Miles Jewish Day School, Birmingham, Alabama

We have a guinea pig named Dots who goes out to recess with us every day! Dots lives in the science lab. Lilli, 4th grade



N. E. Miles Jewish Day School, Birmingham, Alabama

My friends and I decorated a table full of items based on the month of Cheshvan. For example, we put out an umbrella to represent that we pray for rain. Talia, 4th grade



The Jewish Academy of Suffolk County, East Northport, New York

Look at our little Shabbes table. You can see how our students experience our Jewish traditions and rituals. To them, this is life. L'Chaim! Guri H., 6th grade



The Jewish Academy of Suffolk County, East Northport, New York

This picture shows everyday life at The JA. We learn new life lessons from the Torah every day. The Torah opens up a new world for us. Learning here is fun and meaningful for children of all ages. Ariel S., 6th grade



The Jewish Academy of Suffolk County, East Northport, New York

The students here at The JA develop the skill of patience and learn to reach beyond their imagination. This picture shows our students MAP (Measure of Academic Performance) testing. We do this this three times a year to show how we soar. Shelly D., 6th grade

Four Steps to Building an Army of Student Advocates

■ by **JIM BLANKSTEIN**

A school has no more effective advocate than a thoughtful, well spoken, passionate student. Blankstein encourages schools to plan ways to reap the benefits of student advocacy.

I recently attended an event for major donors of a large Jewish day school in the Boston area. I know the school and many people there quite well, but what transpired made a big impression on me. A donor of significant means stood up and said that he and his wife had looked into parochial schools for their child. During their search, they decided to include a Jewish day school as well.

The first two schools they visited had excellent reputations for the quality of their academics and each was situated on a beautiful campus. Each one offered an informative tour led by a senior administrator. It was all very impressive, and the donor said they would have been happy to have their child attend either school.

Then they visited the Jewish day school. It, too, was an excellent school with a carefully manicured campus. But at the JDS, they weren't subjected to an administrator's spiel; instead, they had the opportunity to speak with a current student. At the end of that conversation, their decision was clear. They knew that they wanted their child to attend the Jewish day school.

What made the parents respond this way? What was it that sold them not just on the school but also, very likely, on future support? I'd suggest it was the power and credibility of the student's testimony. Student advocates are a superb resource for Jewish day schools seeking to ensure their long-term sustainability by boosting recruitment and creating relationships with donors.

What Are Student Advocates and Why Are They so Credible?

I define an "advocate" as someone who is passionate about a brand, product, or service and is willing and eager to share his or her passion with others in a heartfelt way. An administrator or admissions officer can serve as an advocate, but such professionals are typically paid to perform that function, which can undermine their credibility. Student advocates, alternatively, are more credible because they have a very different function: to be the best students possible. They are about learning and growing, not selling or persuading.

Over the last several years, PEJE has conducted a parents' survey in conjunction with Measuring Success, gathering data from more than 22,000 respondents. The group comprised Jewish day school parents as well as families considering a Jewish day school. Across the board, the leading factor that parents said influenced their decision to look at day schools was a referral from a current student, friend or family member who has a child attending a Jewish day school. As the donor I referenced at the start of this article demonstrates, the influence of a personal network can be transferred to a more general setting—one key is the student.

This shouldn't be that surprising. After all, one reason why so many people still

prefer shopping in stores to shopping online is because they want the opportunity to hold and inspect the product. A fresh-baked pie in a bakery display case sells itself better than the person behind the counter ever could. You know your friend's gardener is good by looking at his azalea bushes. It all comes down to a simple premise: in the world of Jewish day schools, the proof of the pedagogical pudding is the students themselves.

This is good news for schools, once they recognize they have, on campus, credible, living examples of their educational effectiveness. Transforming students into advocates for your day school can be a critical recruitment strategy. Who



Jim Blankstein is the senior marketing strategist at the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) and a seasoned multi-channel marketing professional with a passion for building relationships between brands and consumers. He can be reached at jim@peje.org.

better to talk about your school than a mature, well spoken, well rounded student with a strong Jewish identity and an engaging spirit? A parent can look at such a student and say, "I want my kid to be like that."

An Advocate Army of One's Own

The idea of student advocates might concern some school administrators. They might ask if it is appropriate or ethical to employ students in such an activity. Would they be able to convey the key selling points of the school? Would it be easy to recruit students to serve as ambassadors?

The answer to all these questions is, Yes!

To the first question, I'd respond that day schools have a responsibility to do everything in their power to both survive and thrive in an uncertain economic landscape; this includes promoting their product, assuming they are confident they have truly impressive students. To the second question, I would say that surely top-notch students can learn anything they are taught. And to the third question, I would say that, with the proper positioning and incentives, schools should have no trouble recruiting students who are passionate about their school to become active advocates.

How, then, does a school implement a student advocacy program? Here is a four-step plan, and while it is not difficult or costly to implement, it does require commitment and cooperation from the school leadership, who must be willing to dedicate the resources, time and human capital to make it happen. Involving the admissions office, the faculty, guidance counselors, and coaches is critical to the process.

Step One: Choose Them

Create a set of criteria for selecting students. Those with strong academic re-

Other Ways to Get Students Involved

- Start a classroom advocacy program in which each classroom selects one or two students whose role it is to welcome classroom visitors. This also could involve the entire class on a rotating weekly basis.
- Invite students to attend open houses and orientation nights for recently accepted families. Consider giving them a specific role other than just representing the student population.
- Students who are old enough can call prospective families to answer their questions.
- With the help of your admissions team, have your students engage in social media for the school, talking about what is happening at school. It's best to give them access to the school's official Twitter and Facebook accounts, rather than post in their personal accounts. If your school website has a blog, include posts from students.

cords are ideal, of course, but they needn't represent the very top performers. Aside from kids with stellar academic qualifications, you want students who are engaging, are outgoing, have good presentation skills, and are comfortable speaking one on one with adults. Students involved in extracurricular activities are strong candidates because they experience different

facets of the school's overall program.

At the same time, you should explain to students how the program is important to the school's future, and stress that it is an honor to be selected to serve as an advocate. Tell them that this is an opportunity for them to speak about their passion for the school. One student advocate I spoke with said, "Because I love my school so much, it is easy for me to talk about it with passion and excitement. I want to share my experience with new families because I want to help my school grow."

Alumni Are Effective Advocates, too

Alumni—both recent graduates currently in college and older graduates in the working world—can also be recruited as advocates. By engaging them, you maintain strong ties between the alumni and the school, which could inspire additional monetary gifts. Here are some ways to engage them:

- Invite alumni to attend open houses.
- Coordinate alumni visits to families moving into your community from areas where the alumni attend college.
- Feature alumni in promotional materials, with testimonials about how your school helped prepare them for college and/or a career.
- Have alumni engage in social media activities on behalf of the school.
- Have alumni share college and career achievements with your community by including alumni news in your emails and on your website, and honor them at special events.

Step Two: Train Them

Consistency in messaging is essential to building and effectively promoting a brand. Students may think they have the "inside story" on their JDS, but that's not necessarily the information you want a prospective family to know. Your ambassadors must have a strong understanding of your school's mission statement, core strengths and values. You can't just show them a brochure; you must actively train them.

I suggest convening small groups of three or four students with an administrator to practice dialogue, ask questions, and role-play. Make sure students understand

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 38]

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37]

the criteria the admissions office uses to identify prospective students who could be successful at the school. The more they internalize the qualities the school is looking for, the better they will be able to effectively advocate for the school.

Students also should be given a range of icebreakers to help them begin conversations, such as, “Is this your first time visiting this school?” or “Where do you live? How did you like the schools there?”

Step Three: Deploy Them

Student advocates can be deployed during school day visits and shadowing days (days where prospective students “shadow” a current student for a day), as well as at open houses and recruitment events. It can be helpful to make them identification badges so visitors can identify them by name and their class year.

I know of two schools, the Rashi School

in Dedham, Massachusetts, and the Hillel School in Detroit, Michigan, that have assigned advocates in each classroom. When a visitor arrives, the advocate gets up, greets the visitor, and provides a summary of what is being taught in the class. They always finish their dia-

ing visitors to people they meet along the way, such as head teachers, coaches, and, of course, the admissions director. When student advocates are required to be present at afterschool and evening events, there should be an understanding that they may require more flexible

What students think is their school’s “inside story” is not necessarily the information you want a prospective family to know. Your ambassadors must truly understand your school’s mission statement, core strengths and values.

log with, “Do you have any questions?”

For more general events, it can be helpful to match a student advocate with a prospective student who has similar interests and background. Student advocates should be able to give informative tours following a prescribed route through the school. They should be comfortable and proactive in introduc-

deadlines for homework assignments. In this way, teachers can support the school’s student advocate program and help fill seats for the next academic year.

Step Four: Reward Them

Being a student advocate isn’t always easy or comfortable. Therefore, it’s crit-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 46]



Teams of Sulamites Gather to Study Jewish Peoplehood

Members of Project SuLaM’s fourth cohort convened in November for a shabbaton of learning and growth in Plantation, Florida. Original participants from last year’s program, a cohort of school heads and administrators, brought on board a team of lay and professional colleagues to continue their studies. These teams will be collaborating all year on a project designed to create significant and lasting Jewish impact on their schools.

The theme of the shabbaton was Jewish Peoplehood. Participants studied with peers and learned from their mentors; topics included Words and Peoples, Jewish Law/Jewish Thought, Thinking about Israel

and Contemporary Challenges. The program gave 35 day school leaders the opportunity to undertake their own Jewish enrichment, thus modeling the core mission of Jewish day schools. Simultaneously, the opportunity to network and explore the key features of day school education through the lens of Jewish texts was invaluable.

During this year, the program mentors are visiting the participants’ schools and participants visit the schools of their mentors. These visits enable mentors to work closely with school teams on their projects, while both participants and mentors gain a larger perspective to frame the SuLaM intervention within the entire

Jewish context of the school.

The teams will come together one more time in April for a Spring shabbaton on Israel—a topic even more relevant now than ever.

Mazel tov to participating schools: Adlestone Hebrew Academy (Charleston), Beit Breira (Miami), Beit Rabban (New York City), B’nai Israel Community Day School (Gainesville), Donna Klein Jewish Academy (Boca Raton), Emery / Weiner School (Houston), Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation’s Capitol, MetroWest Jewish Day School (Framingham, MA), N. E. Miles Jewish Day School (Birmingham), Tucson Hebrew Academy. ■

SUBSCRIBE
TO THE COMPLETE SET

Talmud isn't **just** black & white



SPECIAL SCHOOL OFFERS AVAILABLE
For more info, email sales@korenpub.com

KOREN'S
Innovative design

RABBI STEINSALTZ'S
Brilliant commentary

- Clear, concise English translation
- Original, uncensored text
- Text divisions
- Color maps, illustrations & photographs
- Explanations of terminology & grammar
- Historical & scientific background

KOREN PUBLISHERS JERUSALEM
www.korenpub.com



הודיעות • Ha-



“I Have Chosen the Path of Emunah”: Seeing the Whole Child

■ by **DANIEL SIEGEL**

By studying Jewish teachings about emunah, teachers can nourish student faith in themselves and their own faith in their students.

In considering how we might serve our students by attending to the whole child, I would like to share some reflections on emunah, faith, within our Jewish tradition. Emunah, as will be discussed here, draws our attention to the “whole child” in terms of seeing not only the student before us but that individual who has yet to be fully realized. In seeing within the child the possibility of that which is yet to be, we teachers, as well, may be awakened to and realize a greater sense of self and purpose.

When first engaged as an educator at King David High School in Vancouver, I was asked to teach a class entitled Emunah, Faith, to our students and “students at risk” from a school in Saskatchewan. I later was given the gift of a book, inscribed: “Maintain your faith in our youth.”

For our tradition, hope is born of faith. This, I believe, is a central message of the following story, attributed to the Baal Shem Tov, with which I began our emunah class.

A student devised a clever plan to illustrate that, indeed, he was wiser than his teacher. He caught a small bird and brought it before his teacher. Holding the bird between his two hands, so that it could not be seen, the student addressed his teacher: “I have a question that you cannot answer. Between my hands I am holding a tiny bird. Tell me, is the bird living or dead?” The student smiled; as he was sure the teacher could not correctly answer this question. For he had a clever plan indeed. If the teacher answered “the bird is dead,” the student would open his hands and the

bird would fly away. And, if the teacher answered “the bird is alive,” the student would quickly crush the tiny bird with his palms, then open his hands and reveal a dead bird.

The teacher was silent, then he looked directly into the eyes of the student and said...

I did not provide the students with the conclusion of this story. We discussed possible responses by the teacher; what they thought the teacher should respond and did respond, and how they would respond. We then read the teacher’s response, which concluded the story:

“My child, in your hands you hold a precious life, choose well what you will do with it.”

The teacher’s words elicited surprise, a pregnant pause and then a birth of understanding.

To outwit the clever student, the teacher should have said the bird is dead, even if he knew it must be alive, thus leading the student to release the live bird. Upon further reflection and shared discussion, however, the students understood that it was not the bird alone that was at risk. The student was holding his very life in his hands. The truly wise teacher, seeing the hurting child beyond the clever student, speaks of a precious life, though presently confined in uncertainty

and pain, assuredly still alive rather than dead, and able to take flight if he were to see in himself what others see.

We do not know what the student elects to do. But we know the teacher’s response allows for a beginning rather than an end. Placing trust in his student preserving the life in his hands, our teacher demonstrates faith in the child before him, instilling hope and possibility for the future. I asked the students if this story was intended for students or teachers, and they answered, “Both.”



Rabbi Daniel Siegel, most recently Judaic studies coordinator and teacher at King David High School in Vancouver, is currently enjoying a sabbatical of Jewish study, volunteerism and activism. He can be reached at hsdgsr@hotmail.com.

As educators, the future of our students is in our hands, even as it is in theirs. Perhaps the clever student was wise, as well, in asking his teacher to see this. What our tradition emphasizes, however, is that it is faith above all, made possible in seeing the whole child, that will make this future a promising one.

The critical nature of faith is portrayed by our Torah in the relationship of Moses, our teacher, with the people of Israel. Focusing on the word *az*, “then,” as noting the meaningful juxtaposition of the two biblical statements (Shemot 14:31-15:1) “And they (Israel) had faith (va-ya’aminu) in the Lord and Moses his servant. Then (az) Moses and the children of Israel sang (yashir),” some chasidic commentators explain that only after Israel demonstrated faith in him was Moses (who had difficulty speaking) able to sing. Others within this same tra-

dition, reading yashir as a causative verb, pointedly remark that Israel, by means of their faith in him, brought out the song in Moses. Indeed, the Berditchever Rebbe adds: God too, in experiencing Israel's faith in Him, was made to sing.

As teachers, we are asked to have faith in our students so that we may hear their voice, so they may sing their unsung song. The faith demanded of us, as exemplified by both Israel and Moses in this biblical episode, includes but goes beyond successfully encouraging our students to complete a difficult task. Faith means that, against every remonstrance they may offer, we sensitively but determinedly challenge our students, to their very core, that we may help birth their song. No student, then, if we are to empower him or her to sing, may remain invisible to us.

Truly seeing each of our students, our tradition reminds us, requires vision that is envisioning. Being present for the child before us requires glimpsing a wholeness not fully visible. Significantly, the verse which ends in describing the people's faith (va-ya'aminu) in God and Moses begins by noting Israel's seeing (va-yar) the powerful capabilities and promise exhibited by those—both Moses and God—whom they empower to sing. Only in holistically seeing the same in our children can we engender a faith that will give rise to their individual voices.

To midwife our students' songs we must nurture faith. When we can no longer do so, we are faced with an important truth. After prolonged patience, through many years, an exasperated Moses gives expression to his "burned out" condition:

And Moses said to the Lord: "Why have you afflicted your servant...to place this burden...upon me? Did I conceive...this people, did I give birth to them, that you would say to me "carry them in your bosom) as a nurseomein) carries a suckling"?" (Bemidbar 11:12)

As their common root letters (אמן) indicate, faith (אמונה/emunah) can only be generated and developed through continuous nurturing (אומן/omein).

When speaking of Moses' loss of faith in the



The students understood that it was not the bird alone that was at risk. The student was holding his very life in his hands.

people, the Sefat Emet (late 19th century Gerrer Rebbe, Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter) notes, "One must maintain faith in the children of Israel even when encountering their apparent dark side." As with the student who would test us with/as a troubled bird, we, like Moses, are asked to discern that present before us is a reason and impetus to foster a more abiding faith. After these many years, the Moses who championed his people, before God, at Sinai (during the Golden Calf incident), linking his future with theirs, has lost sight of their promise.

When not long thereafter, Moses strikes the rock, God declares: "Because you did not have faith in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, you shall not bring this congregation into the land that I have given them." The Sefat Emet adds that it was Moses' (and Aaron's) lack of faith in Israel, with whom he had lost all patience, that prevented him from sanctifying God among them. As educators, we create faith in God through our faith in our students. When we become embittered, seeing but recalcitrant charges ("Listen you rebels," in the words Moses), we lose sight of the promise of, and our ability to be positive transformative agents in, the lives of our students.

Relieving him of what has become a burden, God, tellingly, does not forsake Mo-

ses, whom he singularly describes as the "faithful one (neeman) in all My house." Faithful to his servant, God appoints Joshua as one through whom Moses can continue his dedicated work. As a tried and true educator asked to assume the role of mentor, Moses is now challenged to find renewed conviction in preparing a teacher and leader to faithfully take his children into the Promised Land.

Beyond the weary individual before Him, God sees in Moses what he asked his leader to see in His people: a whole self, whose past and present provides, rather than precludes, understanding and hope for a promising future.

The Talmud describes us as being "believers, the children of believers" (Tractate Shabbat 97a). We can be neither, unless we are both. We cannot truly be children of believers without ourselves becoming believers. Yet becoming believers is not possible without our being children of believers. Looking upon the whole child before us, may we remember that every believer is born of one who fosters faith in him/her, having been so blessed ourselves.

This article is dedicated to the students of KDHS with whom I have been blessed to explore and experience the meaning of emunah. ■

The New “In Loco Parentis”

■ by **JONATHAN LEVY**

Changes in family dynamics are affecting the way students need, and parents expect, schools to attend to them. Levy proposes ways that schools should consider student needs beyond the curriculum.

Some years ago, a parent phoned me in a panic. “Please,” he said, “tell my daughter she cannot wear that outfit to school! She is ignoring me—she will listen to you.” As I hung up the phone I reflected that this caller—a successful, well-educated professional, one who dealt with complex issues—could not get his daughter to change her skirt. An unusual situation? Not at all, and this call served for me as a metaphor for the sea change in parent-child-school relationships that has emerged in recent years.

Schools and parents need to work together to model, promote, and instill certain key values that give the intangible skills needed to successfully navigate the modern and rapidly changing world. With increasingly complicated family dynamics, the evolving Jewish family, and shifting parental roles, families are looking more and more to schools to promote healthy social behavior. These values (or “apps” in today’s lingo) include modeling social skills, knowing what you can and cannot control, fostering resiliency, and knowing how triggers and rewards contribute to behavior.

Few would disagree that the last quarter century has seen a drastic increase in the numbers and types of issues with which schools need to deal on a regular basis. No longer does the relationship between school and student begin and end in the classroom and recess playground. Changes in family dynamics including greater numbers of double income families, financial stresses, lack of parenting skills and hectic schedules prevent many parents from adequately imparting all of the social-emotional guidance and skills that they would like their children to receive. Areas as diverse as modeling re-

ligious practice, teaching appropriate social behavior, enforcing safe Internet use, offering opportunities to perform acts of chesed, and identifying students’ deficits and delays have moved from the arena of the home to the arena of the school, and parents’ demands seem comprehensive and constantly evolving.

How can schools position themselves to be able to meet these demands and promote a collaborative partnership between the home and school, while keeping the focus on their mandate to promote academic growth and learning? And what are the key messages that the schools must convey to parents? Below are some reflections to help focus the attention of school leaders on the diverse needs of students and families.

1. All of us, school leaders, parents, teachers, even students must know what they can control and what they cannot. When my eldest son was a baby a power struggle arose at the end of his bath. I asked him to pull the plug and he would refuse, trying to keep me from letting the water out as well. Finally I stopped arguing and asked him who was going to pull the plug, him or me. Immediately, he pulled it, thinking he had maintained control over the situation. I had given him a choice where I did not care which option he selected, but I could control the outcome. And that was ok because as the adult I understood that we had both “won.”

Similarly, school personnel need to re-

mind themselves of the areas over which they have control and what is beyond their control. While in the past teachers could take for granted that children would be closely supervised at home with respect to homework completion and preparing for tests, classroom expectations must be modified to allow for the fact that parental involvement in out of school work is not always a given. Home-



Jonathan Levy is campus principal at TanenbaumCHAT Kimel Family Education Centre, located in Vaughan, Ontario. He can be reached at jlevy@tanenbaumchat.org.

work instructions must be clear and easy to follow, and test material should be thoroughly reviewed in school. When communication with parents is necessary, use of multiple modalities including notes home or email communications should be utilized.

With respect to students’ personal responsibility, this must be modified according to the age and maturity level of the student. While sophomores in high school can be expected to take full responsibility for their workload, third graders will need to have their responsibilities stated to them explicitly and might require additional tools (checklists on their desks, straightforward review sheets, reminders on the board) to help them meet their teacher’s expectations. Additionally, work that goes home should be able to be completed independently without the thought that there will be parental involvement.

2. Model the behavior and interpersonal relationships that promote collaborative classroom and school function. The image of the stern teacher at the front of the classroom facing children with rapt

attention is a relic. No longer are children (if they ever were) raised with the idea that the “teacher is always right.” The teacher must establish a classroom environment that promotes respect both between the teacher and student as well as amongst the students. School personnel are ambassadors of the school 24 hours a day. In this age when everyone can follow you on Twitter or friend you on Facebook there is no “off” time. Students are still learning about the ramifications of online posts. Educators must model appropriate behavior through all potential contact with students.

3. Promote resiliency. As parents have less time to spend with their children, the idea of a “happy child” has supplanted the image of a hard working and sometimes disappointed child. The difficulty in this model is that children are not put into situations where they might fail, and thus they don’t learn the skills necessary to recover from failure. As a school community, there are several ways to promote resiliency. In the classroom environment, the students must feel free to take chances, go outside of their comfort zones and give answers that might be wrong.

If the milieu of mutual respect has been established, students will not feel embarrassed to try for fear of repercussions from their classmates. Setting academic challenges, like crossword puzzles with increasing levels of difficulty or online math competitions, allow students to see their efforts pay off after continued involvement and work without the immediate gratification of instant success. Another way to promote resiliency is to establish programs such as an arts venture, student leadership forum or a chesed project that encourage children to take on new skills. For most people, new skills are not acquired easily but come only through hard work and, possibly, failure.

4. Know triggers/rewards. As school educators and administrators, we often get frustrated at our inability to get our students to change their behaviors. Implementing behavior change is probably among the most difficult things people face, as anyone who has tried to lose weight or quit smoking can tell you. The



For the student who is habitually disorganized, changing the way they manage their locker time, the number of shelves or types of binders they use might go a long way to reorganize them.

key factor in promoting change is to understand the environment in which the behavior is occurring and the purpose these behaviors serve. For the student who is habitually disorganized, changing the way they manage their locker time, the number of shelves or types of binders they use might go a long way to reorganize them. For the student who continually acts out in class, understanding the secondary gain they receive for their behavior can help the school to redirect the student to an activity where they can receive positive attention for their energy and efforts.

The teacher is not alone in dealing with these challenges. Depending on the type of school, a multitude of professionals may be available to assist. Many schools

have part-time social workers contracted to meet with students or families. Elementary schools may have someone specializing in group dynamics and who assists with conflict resolution. High schools may have guidance counselors, deans and administrators who deal with discipline and other complex issues.

Communication among staff is crucial. A set time during the week for the various non-teaching staff to meet is essential in treating the whole child. In schools where it is possible to include a teacher in the discussion this is preferable; otherwise, another way should be found to solicit teacher input. In our school, weekly meetings take place between guidance (academic and respon-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 46]

Listening to Student Voice: The Batsheva-David Story

■ by PHILIP DICKSTEIN

Dickstein, an experienced Jewish studies teacher and administrator, describes a method for using the exploration of challenging biblical stories to cultivate students' Jewish identity.

Student voice is crucial in any effort to raise our students from passive, on-the-sidelines observers to active, engaged participants in the ongoing conversation of teaching and learning. Indeed, we need to welcome student voice to center stage. We must solicit student voice in every aspect of our work, from student participation in teacher evaluation (who better to identify teacher success?) to helping achieve a deep understanding of text—after all, they are the next, essential link in the chain. I am suggesting that we need our students to bring us their voices—raising them loud and strong!

Giving priority to student voice immeasurably enhances the students' learning experience, helps create more fully democratic schools and gives purpose to their learning. Opening our classroom doors to student voice empowers students when they construct meaning and solve real problems. It gives truth to the cliché “putting students first.” No longer is the education about the teacher teaching; it's about the student learning.

When encouraging students to use their voice, we legitimize their insights and validate their opinions. We make students *the* essential element in the learning process; we give students the capacity to create meaning and effect change. Student voice is the active expression of student ideas and beliefs, and the listening to them. Student contributions make the difference, all the difference. How right are those who say that *teaching occurs only when students learn!*

In teaching the David-Batsheva story

(II Samuel 11, 12) to middle school students recently, I welcomed student voice to inform all the commonplaces, to help us arrive at a point of understanding and appreciation when studying this difficult text. Student voice, I came to learn, identified the “big questions” and was essential in offering some tentative answers. Challenges arrived very quickly. How “open” should we be? Is any negative criticism of the bibli-

cal hero allowed? Should it, in fact, be encouraged? And, whose voice would be central in this journey? The choices were many—My voice? The rabbis of the Talmud? The commentators? Present-day historians? The students?

It is the hope of all middle school teachers that they might somehow make a difference in the lives of the children they teach. To meet the challenge of adolescence is to wrestle with the essential questions of “Who am I?” and “What do I believe?” “What is my voice?” Particularly in this volatile, unpredictable stage of life, a time of struggle and bewilderment, a teacher needs to listen carefully to student voice. Combining this biblical text with my stated desire to listen carefully to adolescent student voice certainly posed its challenges.

During the beginning weeks of my teaching, my students and I briefly explored some of the archeological evidence for the existence of King David,

eventually leading to one student's question, the raising of his voice, “Did King David really exist?” To which, I added, “And, does it even make any difference?” We discussed the discoveries of the Israeli archeologist Eilat Mazar who, using a careful reading of the biblical text, claimed she found remnants of David's royal palace. The students offered a wide range of opinion about the historicity of her claim. For those



Philip Dickstein has served in leadership positions in different day schools for over thirty years. He can be reached at pdickstein@aol.com.

who think students today simply accept all they see and hear as truth, rest assured—they don't. When considering the truth of the story, they carefully weighed the evidence and added their own cynicism.

As we explored the story together, I reflectively asked myself many questions, each of which originated in the students' voices and rely on student voice for an answer. How could we read the text in a way that insists on intellectual integrity and, *at the same time*, nourishes sacred reverence? How might I consider the influence a biblical text has on its reader and how the reader's perspectives influence the text? In other words, whose voice will, in the end, speak and which will be heard?

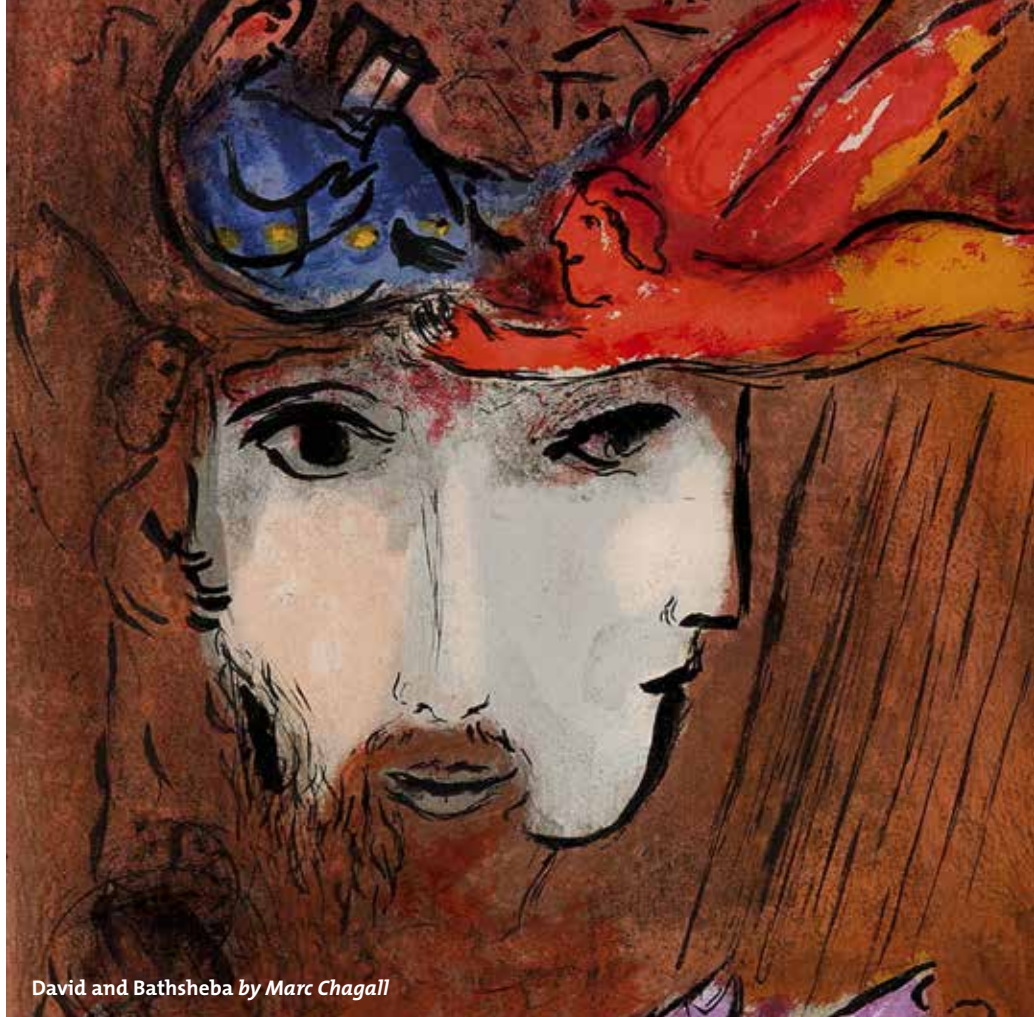
Alongside the evident sexual challenges posed by the story, we spoke about issues of moral culpability—most significantly in the subsequent cover-up that culminated in Uriah's death in battle. The

students all had something important to say; they freely added their voices to the conversation. The moral challenges that occupied the story's author still occupy us today. The Tanakh shares our dilemmas and wrestles with our quandaries, as it also helps us resolve them.

I wanted the students to learn from the story, to appreciate their responsibility for their own conduct and choices. I wanted their voice to be heard, both in understanding the story and in their attempts to fashion standards for their own conduct. One girl, commenting on David's relationship with Batsheva, emphatically announced to the class that no one, David included, has the right to take advantage of another. Another girl wrote, with both a style and maturity that belies her age, "Though it was rather suspect for Batsheva to be bathing naked in public, she probably felt she couldn't possibly refuse the advances of a King without causing harm to herself."

An outspoken student wrote, "Of all the guilty people in this story, I think that David is the most guilty. I believe so because he knew she was a married woman, and knowingly committed adultery. He also abused his power as king, because he knew Bat-Sheva could not refuse the king without punishment." A quote from one girl's homework: "In my opinion, Batsheva is an absolute victim. She probably slept with David only to preserve her own safety. She should not have been punished for the terrible deeds of the King. To call her a villain in this story would be truly ridiculous." These voices, the voices of strong, young women and men, rang out loud and clear.

The school's administration was hesitant when I expressed interest in exploring the consequences of the student voice in accusing David of unacceptable conduct. I wanted to compare Yoav's willingness to follow David's orders in battle to the agonizing, irresolvable moral choices forced on Israel's soldiers today, and, in a much smaller, much less significant, way, to the relationships they form every day. I wanted the students to know—and to believe—in Israel's doctrine of *tohar neshek* (purity of arms).



David and Batsheba by Marc Chagall

An outspoken student wrote, "I think that David is the most guilty. He abused his power as king, because he knew Bat-Sheva could not refuse the king without punishment."

Yet I also wanted to teach with what I, a lover of Israel from the comfort and distance of galut, felt was moral integrity. Was I but one more victim of the current thinking that if we teach an unreal, idealized picture of Israel today, they will run away from Israel tomorrow? Could student voices sing out in love for Israel and, at the same time, be true to their internal moral compass? Which were more important: honesty and integrity or faith and innocence?

Returning to the cover-up initiated by David, almost all students felt that Yoav should not have "simply followed orders." Their voices rose in indignant criticism. A representative response from one student: "I believe that Yoav is the person who is to blame in this story... [He] knew what David was going to do, but he never

made any motion to stop him from killing Uriah." Another student comments, "Of David, Yoav, and Batsheva, I believe that David is by far the most guilty for Uriah's death. ... As for Yoav, while what he did was atrocious, to a man accustomed to seeing his men die on a regular basis, one more dead soldier must not have meant a lot. David, with his shady, cruel, and selfish deed, is the most guilty." No equivocation or hesitation in these voices!

We spoke about making "good" choices in their relationships, at least better than David's choices. And, here, yet again, the same dilemma, phrased a bit differently, returned to haunt me. How could I expect these students to joyfully sing David's psalms, and yet, later in the day, use their same voice when reading that David

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 46]

Four Steps to Building an Army of Student Advocates

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38]

ical to recognize and reward advocates for their efforts. A “reward” does not need to be a material or financial gift; it just needs to express appreciation from the school leadership.

School logo merchandise is an easy material reward. You also can ask parents who may be in a position to offer summer internships or jobs at their companies or organizations with which they are affiliated. Such opportunities will enhance a student advocate’s secondary school or college application and resume.

Student advocates also can be recognized in the school newspaper, on a

school’s social media channels, or at an assembly or open house. Administrators could even reserve prime-location lockers for student advocates. Consideration should be given to ensure rewards are age-appropriate and do not create schisms among the student body between those who are chosen and those who are not.

A Most Potent Weapon

If yours is a strong, high-performing school, it will be apparent in the quality of your students. A student advocate program can provide an enriching experience to deserving kids, one that might turn out to be the most potent weapon in your school’s marketing arsenal.

If you’re not leveraging students to aid in your recruitment efforts, launching a full-fledged program may seem like a giant step. If it feels unrealistic to implement such a program all at once, at least attempt a trial with a couple of students at a specific event. Once you score your first success, you then can expand the program to fit your needs.

If your school currently runs a student advocate program, or if you have alternative strategies that work or additional ideas, please view this article online and post any comments you have. The more good ideas we can generate and test, the better. You also can view the sidebar for ways to enlist student advocates on a smaller scale. ■

The New “In Loco Parentis”

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43]

sible for obtaining teacher input), social worker (social-emotional), deans (discipline). This team approach ensures that all angles are covered and one cohesive plan is in place. Another benefit of this meeting is that trends and larger issues can be discussed and schoolwide initiatives can be thought through, planned,

implemented and evaluated. In this increasingly complex world of children, many heads are certainly better than one.

To be successful, schools must recognize that the old model of the school as the impartor of knowledge, of “reading, writing, and ‘rithmetic,” is no longer suf-

ficient. The complexities of the world today, the change in parents and parenting, and the challenges that confront students each day from a myriad of external forces have led to a sea of change in the demands placed on schools. We must work towards creating the climate, adding the resources and providing the opportunities to meet these challenges. ■

Listening to Student Voice: The Batsheva-David Story

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45]

“took” a married woman and then had her husband killed to cover his guilt? How would they connect the *tehillah leDavid* of the Ashrei to “our” David? Could their voices somehow combine both “songs”?

One of the central challenges of teaching this text is, of course, to confront the reality of David as he is portrayed in the text and yet yearn for his eternal kingship, realized eventually in the messiah. When faced with this challenge, the students themselves pointed to two answers,

both similar to our tradition’s response; their voices seemed to echo across time. First, they saw that the text itself makes clear that David repented, he realized he had sinned. David responds to Natan, “*Chatati—I sinned.*” Truth does speak to power. Unlike Amnon’s rejection of Tamar after his crime, David continues to love Batsheva, indeed, to comfort her. Second, the students saw in David’s multifaceted portrayal a realism that makes David a hero. They appreciated and loved David in, perhaps even because of, his complexity and his humanity. Might this complexity and ambiguity mirror their

own lives? Might this story give their own voices comfort and reassurance?

I would like to end this brief reflection by sharing one student’s voice, the voice of *David melech Yisrael, chai, chai vekayam!*—David King of Israel lives! She wrote, “I personally have no problem combining David of the Psalms with David of the Bible, because people of the Bible are multifaceted and I doubt there is anyone alive who is all good or all bad. I appreciate that the ‘stars’ of Jewish history are real people, in all their greatness and their awfulness.” ■

Reshet JD: A New Professional Network for Judaic Studies Leaders

RAVSAK's Hebrew acronym is not well known. The letters (רבסק) stand for: רשת בתי ספר קהילתיים (Reshet Batei Sefer Kehilatiim), meaning the network of Jewish community day schools. That first Hebrew word, *reshet*, means network. And now the overarching reshet of RAVSAK is creating networks within that greater one, connecting colleagues from multiple schools to facilitate learning from one another, and to further our growth as professionals.

In creating Reshet Judaic Directors, we have identified a deep and serious need to nurture the educators who are providing Jewish leadership in our schools. These are the individuals who spend their time thinking about Jewish life and learning and what it might look like as we move into the world of twenty-first century education. Beginning with an online forum of a small core of Judaic directors, we have identified common interests and needs. The next step is to

expand the core group with ever-widening circles of colleagues who share a focus on Jewish life and learning in RAVSAK schools.

We have identified several topics that the Reshet may explore in the future:

- How to align the Jewish studies director's vision as a community school with those of the faculty
- How to bring staff on a journey to understand and implement the Judaic program
- How to promote cooperation and understanding within a Jewishly diverse staff
- How to grow the next generation of Jewish studies leaders
- How to demonstrate the Jewish studies director's value to the board and to the community
- How to articulate the nature of a community day school, as opposed to an independent school with Jewish students

- How to supervise and evaluate Judaic staff when there are often unique relationships
- How to help parents understand and appreciate the value of the Judaic program

One thing is very clear: Judaic directors are eager to work together to benefit from shared wisdom and experience, and to identify colleagues who will become great new "chevruta" professional study partners.

Beshalom from the co-chairs,

- Sharon Freundel (Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capitol)
- Tzivia Garfinkel (Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago)
- Rabbi Stuart Light (Jewish Day School of Metropolitan Seattle)
- Rabbi Jack Nahmod (Abraham Joshua Heschel School, New York)

To join Reshet JD, contact Dr. Marc Kramer at mkramer@ravsak.org. ■



Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHSI) works closely with Jewish day schools and community organizations to customize an Israel experience that meets the school's and organization's educational philosophy and goals. AMHSI offers campus-based programs, travel programs, creative itineraries and committed educators who bring Israel's history to life. Through AMHSI, teens discover, explore and embrace their connection to Judaism as well as the people and culture of Israel.

Israel: A lifetime of memories



To learn more, contact:
 Jordana Wachtel, Director of Communications
 212.472.9300 x-182 / jwachtel@amhsi.org
www.amhsi.org

Peer Mediation Strengthens Children and Community

■ by **DEBRA DANILEWITZ**

The author examines the ways that her school's programs in peer mediation have a powerful influence in developing student responsibility and self-esteem.

Peer mediation is a leadership program that teaches children communication and conflict resolution skills. Its philosophy is that conflict is a natural process, and through mediation peaceful solutions to problems can be sought. By helping others through their sanctioned roles, students increase their sense of self-worth and feel engaged and worthwhile. An effective peer mediation program can set the tone for a school's culture.

Peacemaker Program

At Bialik Hebrew Day School, Toronto, Grade 5 classes with 25 students in each class receive 3 months of training to be peacemakers; 100 students a year are trained. The program has been successfully run for the past 20 years. Training manuals have been developed to educate students with many of the prosocial skills necessary. A preparation book, *Two Sides to Every Story*, is read to first grade students to introduce them to the peacemaker process. The peacemakers take their responsibilities seriously and are positive role models. Younger students look forward to becoming peacemakers.

Peer mediators establish ground rules to try and achieve agreement between disputants in order to resolve conflict. Each student has the opportunity to state his or her perspective in the conflict situation. Both sides then brainstorm and offer possible solutions to the conflict. They learn to talk it out. Finally both have to agree on an acceptable resolution; alternatively, they can agree to disagree and stay away from each other for a while.

This process is beneficial to the school, staff and students on various levels. A real long-term benefit is that large numbers of students have been taught skills in conflict resolution and problem-solving skills. There are fewer physical altercations among senior students, as students are able to "talk out" their differences and reach mutually acceptable resolutions, as they have all been exposed to this training.

Peacemakers are trained and feel competent and responsible to help others. There is a reduction in the number of teacher, guidance counselor and admin-

istrative interventions as well as the need for disciplinary consequences as peer mediators are intervening as conflicts arise.

Peacemakers have an additional responsibility by being Recess Buddies to grade 1-2 students. Twice a week at lunch, peacemakers organize and teach cooper-



Debra Danilewitz is school counselor at the Bialik Hebrew School in Toronto. She can be reached at DDanilewitz@bialik.ca.

ative games to children. This proactive program is supervised by parent volunteers under the auspices of the guidance counselor. This program is beneficial for children who have difficulty playing in an unstructured situation; it helps them



negotiate with each other the rules of the games by having the older students model and teach appropriate play. This gives the Grade 5 students an opportunity to exercise leadership in the school.

Peer Helpers Lead to Succeed

Peer Helping is a personal growth leadership training program at Bialik Hebrew Day School for Grade 8 students. Peer helpers are selected after volunteering to participate in this program and are committed to do their job for the full academic year. This program has been running effectively in the school for the past ten years. Participating students meet the criteria of caring about others and giving up some of their recess to support other students in need.

Peer helpers undergo a training program with the guidance counselor, in which they are taught mediation skills and relationship-building skills. They are taught how to help develop empathy and compassion and to support a student with emotional needs. Peer helpers learn listening skills, how to respond to others, build self-confidence in themselves and others, develop leadership skills, communicate effectively and model positive social interactions. They create a schoolwide support system that helps children adjust to school. Peer helpers make an impact on the school culture and make a difference in the students' lives.

Peer helpers work with students assigned to them by the guidance counselor, students with academic, social or emotional issues. They enable students to develop a more positive experience at recess by learning to play cooperatively with friends. New students are always matched with a peer helper. Peer helpers also present topics of interest to classes in the elementary grades on bullying, appropriate play, Internet safety and peer pressure.

The students work in a collaborative way on tikkun olam projects. Children's books were collected and donated to another school in Toronto for children with special needs, and the peer helpers had the opportunity of interacting with these students reading them stories. Another project involved the peer helpers being taught to make jewelry to sell and raise funds for The Koby Mandel Foundation.

The peer helpers created canvas paintings about tikkun olam for their fundraiser event. They wrote a play based on Itah Sadu's book *Name Calling*, performed for the whole school and parents. Peer helpers led the discussion on how students deal with name calling and bullying. They adapted Madonna's book *Mr. Peabody's Apples* into a play, performed it for students and conducted a discussion about the power of words after the performance, highlighting the lessons from the play. They educate children about character development and compassion for others.

Passion for Compassion

Mature and socially adept students are able to transfer what

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 60]

William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education

- Deepen your knowledge
- Enhance your credentials
- Expand your network

Study with one of the most outstanding Jewish Education faculties in North America.

The Master's Program in Jewish Education

offers a variety of options:

- Day School Teaching
- Experiential Education
- Educational Leadership in Synagogues and Communal Settings
- Distance Learning Program

The Doctoral Program for aspiring scholars and professionals working in the field offers three different schedules:

- Full-Time
- Part-Time
- Executive Doctoral Program

Tuition fellowships are available.

For more information about The Davidson School, please contact Abby Eisenberg at (212) 678-8022 or edschool@jtsa.edu.



William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education
www.jtsa.edu/davidson



Beyond the School House: Applying Jewish Values to Social Action

■ by **CLARA GABA** and **ILANA GABA-MAINE**

A mother and daughter who both teach in Jewish day schools show how social action can enlist student passion for causes that exemplify their Jewish values.

“Bowe *who?*”

The English words, transliterated into Hebrew, were the headline of a mainstream Israeli newspaper article and caught our attention. Thus began a journey that would not only impact us but would also mark a special moment of change for our community.

The article noted the great number of Americans unfamiliar with the name Bowe Bergdahl. The year was 2010, the first anniversary of an event that changed the lives of an Idaho family forever. In June 2009, Bergdahl, serving in the United States Army in Afghanistan, was kidnapped. At the time of his capture he held the rank of private first class, and he has since been promoted to sergeant. Several videos of Bergdahl were released, and it appeared that his captors were from the Haqqani Network, an insurgent group affiliated with the Taliban. He is still being held by his kidnappers; his true condition and his whereabouts are unknown.

Across the world from Bowe’s hometown, another soldier was being held captive. On the streets of his country, one would never hear the words, “Gilad *who?*”

The newspaper article questioned why Gilad Shalit, held captive at that point by Hamas, was a household name in Israel, yet relatively few Americans knew of Bowe’s plight. During the years of his captivity, Shalit became everyone’s

son, a part of the Israeli collective identity. Bergdahl, on the other hand, rarely moved beyond the local news of his hometown.

Both of us, a mother and daughter who are teachers at Jewish day schools in Detroit, recognized the importance of sharing this article with our students. We took the story of Bowe to our students, fifth graders at Hillel Day School



Clara Gaba teaches at Hillel Day School of Metropolitan Detroit (cgaba@hillelday.org) and Ilana Gaba-Maine teaches at Frankel Jewish Academy (igabamaine@frankelja.org).

and ninth graders at Frankel Jewish Academy. This was an opportunity to look at a real situation that could elicit conversations about multiple core values of our schools. In schools we focus on our teaching practice but we must also remember to educate. We must present the youth with junctures in their learning to put the tools that they have acquired to good use.

In this situation, we analyzed the Jewish perspective on redemption of hostages and we compared Bergdahl to Shalit. We compared the policies of the United States and Israel in cases such as these. We considered the cultural factors at play in both countries. The goal here was not

political nor intended towards any end other than to familiarize students with Bowe’s story. His story, it must be mentioned, is not entirely clear. While there is speculation over where Bowe was when he was captured (some suggest that he may have left his post), this possibility only adds to the moral dilemma of the situation. Our hope was to raise awareness, but today’s generation of youth is far more ambitious than ever before.

Students in both schools took on Bowe’s cause as their own. On their own initiative, they created hallway displays about Bowe, noting the number of days he

had spent in captivity. They educated the school communities on a weekly basis and were determined to educate the local community as well. They acquired and distributed “Bowe packages” to the student body. Besides a pocket sized flyer telling Bowe’s story, the packages contained a yellow “Bowe bracelet,” a yellow ribbon in order to participate in the national campaign “Bows for Bowe.”

Student leaders guided their peers to participate in “Bowe Tuesdays,” an international campaign encouraging Facebook members to change their profile picture each Tuesday to one that would draw attention to Bowe’s cause (he was taken hostage on a Tuesday). The stu-

dents, themselves too young to be registered voters, participated in a national petition aimed at raising governmental awareness by soliciting signatures from adults in their lives. Through their connections, the students made the names of their schools and their efforts known to Jani and Bob Bergdahl, Bowe's parents.

What is most amazing to us as teachers is the long-term commitment that our students have forged with Bowe's cause. We often lament that the rapid pace of the world, coupled with technology, has made for a generation of youth that lacks commitment. We complain that they seek instant gratification, that they lack perseverance. The Bowe Kids, as we have affectionately nicknamed them, demonstrate just the opposite.

One young boy learned of Bowe as he transitioned from elementary to middle school. This year he has committed his bar mitzvah project to Bowe; he is raising awareness for Bowe's cause during his own moment to shine. Another student has single-handedly been responsible for keeping tabs on the daily count of Bowe's days in captivity for the last three years.

A young woman in the 12th grade was just a high school freshman when she learned of Bowe. Bowe's story touched her so deeply as a 9th grader that as she applies to universities, Bowe is the subject of her application essays. This young woman recently was asked during school minyan to describe a holy object that she possesses. She pointed to her yellow "Bowe bracelet" and shared with her peers how her commitment to Bowe has brought holiness to her life. Minyan is often described by facilitators as the most difficult part of a school day, as it takes a tremendous amount of energy and talent to engage many of today's youth in a meaningful way. How interesting that Bowe's story has infiltrated into daily minyan.

At day schools we teach big ideas: tikkun olam, gemilut chasadim, compassion and responsibility. We encourage students to take these lessons to heart, to be tomorrow's leaders. We pray that they will internalize lessons of character and step up



The story of Bowe was an opportunity to look at a real situation that could elicit conversations about multiple core values of our schools.

when their time comes. We forget, occasionally, that we must show the students how to find these opportunities beyond the realm of the classroom or the hallways of the school. Jewish values must be taught as the lens through which we view the world, and the world does not have a distinct division between Judaic studies

and "everything else."

The individual elements of our school mission statements often bear tension when viewed together; we have multiple national allegiances, we celebrate the individual and the community, we hold to Jewish

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 60]

Learning, Doing, Becoming: A Journey to Jewish Identity

■ by **JULI KRAMER** and **NAOMI LEV**

Kramer and Lev, pioneers in Jewish project-based learning, describe initiatives in different subject areas that help students integrate Jewish teachings into their lives.

What does it mean to be Jewish, for one to have a fully integrated Jewish identity? This question has no easy answer when looking at the plurality of Jews living in the United States and world today. We propose that engaging in Jewish rituals and routines beyond schools walls helps strengthen and shape Jewish identity. The article provides a model of how to inspire and give students the skills to live Jewishly wherever they may find themselves in the world. The aim is to help students embrace and maintain Jewish beliefs, rituals and practices as a given within their daily lives and express an understanding of and a sense of comfort with who they are as Jews.

Jewish Leadership

Leadership is one area of curriculum content addressed by a significant number of Jewish day schools, whether taught in Tanakh, Jewish history, or leadership development classes. When making decisions about which leaders to include and what to emphasize from their experiences, teachers need to keep in mind the goal of Jewish identity development. A first step towards giving the curriculum real-world context could be to bring in Jewish leaders from the community to speak about their experiences and how Judaism influences what they do. Whether the leaders support Jewish causes or address needs of the broader community, they should share how being Jewish shapes their thinking and actions, which can help bring the curriculum to life.

Empowering students to practice what they learn from the texts about leader-

ship enhances the learning potential. For example, if teachers taught that strong leaders in Tanakh and history build consensus, when students disagree with each other, the teachers could ask them how



Dr. Juli Kramer is principal of Denver Academy of Torah High School and an adjunct professor in the teacher education program at the University of Denver. She can be reached at jkramer@datcampus.org.

Naomi Lev is assistant principal and director of post-secondary guidance at Denver Academy of Torah High School. She can be reached at nlev@datcampus.org.

the leaders they studied overcame this challenge and guide them in applying the lessons. Students could even shadow a mediator. Teachers can create time and support systems to help students use what they've learned to speak out against child soldiers, collect cans for a local food bank, or strengthen the school community. Again, the goal is to use curricular content to encourage action.

Embedding a Culture of Tikkun Olam

Tikkun olam is another example of how to inspire students through curricular and pedagogical choices. Whether a student identifies strongly with science, history or Talmud, examples abound of Jews and non-Jews repairing the world. In science, they could learn about ways people use data to help endangered species or ensure access to clean water. In history, students could study how Theodor Herzl fought for a Jewish homeland. And in Talmud they might study texts that focus on social

justice issues, such as caring for the poor. Teachers may not always think to include these ideas and therefore miss opportunities to connect students to an amazingly powerful aspect of Judaism.

Embedding cultural and spiritual teachings about tikkun olam in actions beyond the classroom allows teachers to shape how students see themselves as Jews. Whether helping students care for others by feeding

people who are homeless, or working with needy children at afterschool programs, or focusing on repairing nature by tending to forests, rivers and animals, teachers can shape students' perceptions of self. Choosing to use school time for such work tells students that helping the world is at least as important as English, Tanakh, math or Halakhah. It also allows them to be around role models that encourage them and stimulate their thinking about what it means to be a Jew and care for others. The adults with whom students interact when working at various organizations inspire them through their commitment and passion, solidifying the impact of this curricular and pedagogical choice as a method by which to bolster Jewish identity.

Implementing these ideas in trips to Israel provides rich opportunities for Jewish identity development. A large number of schools take their students to Israel, sometimes with a "touristy" focus. It is important to help students go beyond just seeing what Israel has to offer and

connect them with the land, people, and spirit of Israel to have a lasting impact. Facilitating student identification with stories from Tanakh while at Ir David, Tel Be'er Sheva, or the middle of the desert; inspiring students as they pray at the top of Masada at sunrise, at a bus stop en route to the next location, or of course at the Kotel; or engaging them in tikkun olam projects across the country such as picking potatoes, building a wall in Tzfat, or clearing underbrush in the Carmel forest enables teachers to link curricular content with lived experiences.

Enlivening Jewish Texts

Curricular and pedagogical choices in the teaching of Jewish studies need to take students beyond textbooks, computers and ancient texts. A sample subject to elucidate this idea is kashrut. Although not all schools include kashrut in their curriculum, hopefully the model presented here will stimulate thinking about how to enliven other content areas. As teachers develop the content for a Halakhah course on kashrut, they need to make clear to students that what they're learning applies to their lives.

Pedagogically, teachers can set up activities that bring the lessons to life. Engaging students in simulations in the classroom, where they act out scenarios, serves as a first step beyond theory, requiring them to work more deeply with the material and utilize critical thinking skills. Providing students an opportunity to kasher a home for someone takes it to the next level because they are helping and educating the homeowner, and by doing so they realize

Just as we would not expect students to display proficiency in a sport or academic subject without practice, we should not expect the same of feeling, identifying or acting as a Jew.

that their knowledge and skills make a difference in the life of another person. Conversations with the homeowner about the decision to keep kosher crystallize the students' understanding of what it means to make choices to live Jewishly as an adult.

Going one step further, taking students

on trips where they have to learn how to cook in a non-kosher facility gives them an opportunity to practice what they learn in authentically challenging situations. Barriers, excuses that a situation proves too difficult, disappear through a sense of purpose and empowerment. The students' grasp of "how to" emerges through the practices in which they engage. The "why" develops

Kashering a home for someone enables students to help and educate the homeowner, and to realize that their knowledge and skills make a difference in the life of another person.

as a result of conversations with teachers, other adults, and their peers that help them see how the textual and hands-on lessons learned fit into their vision of life as a Jew.

Working with faculty members who teach with passion, commitment and enthusiasm (pedagogical dimension) makes the learning that much more powerful. The students feel the "can do" mentality of their teachers and integrate that energy into their actions. The challenge for Jewish educators is to identify areas of their curriculum that can come to life through action within and beyond the classroom.

Developing Spirituality in Real Time

Another example to show what we mean by putting content into action to build Jewish identity relates to spirituality. When tefillah occurs as part of a regular school schedule, it is as routine as any other class. Students and teachers don't have

to choose whether to pray or struggle to find time to pray; it's a given, and everyone around them is Jewish and praying along with them. Nevertheless, schools often struggle to instill a sense of both commitment to and spirituality in tefillah, moving it beyond a perfunctory task and inspiring students to connect with God.

Helping students feel what it's like to pray outside school walls emerges as an opportunity to build Jewish identity rooted in spirituality. Out of the building, students and faculty must be mindful of tefillah in the midst of busy schedules and understand the halakhic hours of the day in order to determine proper times for prayer, a practical skill that students can take

with them. Although not all students will choose to follow this path, for those who do, being able to calculate when to pray or know which apps to reference allows them to more effortlessly incorporate tefillah as part of their identity.

Perhaps more importantly, teachers can leave students inspired to integrate prayer into their lives. Whether they are on top of the Great Sand Dunes, in the middle of a city, or driving from one destination to another, making time to pray, even around strangers, provides a chance for students to practice incorporating prayer in their lives. Doing so empowers students, strengthens their Jewish identity and enables them to make tefillah an integral part of who they are, regardless of where they are.

Just as we would not expect students to display proficiency in a sport or academic subject without practice, we should not expect the same of feeling, identifying or acting as a Jew. The more hands-on opportunities, time for reflection and open discussions teachers provide for students, the more likely they are to identify with being Jewish. By incorporating textual, spiritual and cultural learning into curricular and pedagogical dimensions, teachers increase the likelihood of helping students connect to at least one aspect of Jewish life to begin building their identities. Having the privilege to help students shape their unique Jewish identities is a responsibility and opportunity Jewish educators must maximize to their fullest potential. ■

Innovative Curriculum and Scheduling for Students' Benefit

■ by **SHIMSHON HAMERMAN**

A senior day school administrator encourages schools to design schedules that not only impart a range of content but address student needs with balance and creativity.

The Jewish day school experience is not an easy one for students. It is obvious that by enrolling a child in a day school, that child is going to add another tier of disciplines to his or her course of studies. Montreal Jewish day school students have the additional challenge of a trilingual curriculum, with French language study and instruction making up, by law, between 14 and 20.5 hours per week. Even the two periods of physical education must be offered in French. Day school students are in class for some 34 hours a week. The school day is long (8:00 AM to 4:05 PM), and in the winter months, students are dismissed when it is already dark outside.

As a result of recent Ministry of Education mandates, most Montreal day schools were compelled to reduce their Judaic studies programs. Solomon Schechter had to cut Jewish studies from 11:15 to 10 hours per week, a 10% reduction. While it may seem like “just” one hour, to many, the concept of reducing Judaic studies is a slippery slope and a dangerous precedent. Should the cuts be in Hebrew language? Bible? Experiential activities? These are almost existential questions that will generate deep reflection and debate.

We decided to use the challenge as an opportunity to reassess our curriculum from the students' perspective, and consequently, we adjusted our Judaic studies contents to make them more creative and more fun. While the innovative response of Solomon Schechter Academy is one that works for its students, the paradigm shift is one that others may wish to consider.

The Innovative Program

Rather than merely reduce Judaics hours and eliminate some aspect of limmudei kodesh, we decided to rethink the school's schedule in a way that takes account of the students' stress at the burden of requirements.

A new early childhood education construction project in the school allowed the re-configuration of some classrooms for special programs. The new SMAART floor was retrofitted for S—science; M—instrumental music; A—art; A—computer animation; R—robotics; T—technology. Courses were divided to two pairs, animation with music and art with robotics. The pair would be offered at the same time, so in mid-year the teachers would switch but the class schedule would remain unchanged.

Of the 75 minutes reduced from Ju-

daic studies, 45 were set aside for the SMAART programs while the remaining 30 minutes were added to physical education. The total phys ed time was divided to three weekly periods.

Because the time for the new courses came from Judaic studies, there was an attempt to retain Jewish content even if it was not classical texts. The art class is taught by the Judaic studies director and



Dr. Shimshon Hamerman is the head of school at the Solomon Schechter Academy in Montreal. He can be reached at shammerman@solomonschechter.ca.

is based on Jewish arts: papercuts, illuminated manuscripts, copper embossing, etc. The music program is using Hebrew songs for instrumental practice. Animation and robotics will attempt to use some Jewish content once the technique and assembly will be completed.

The Benefit For Students

The introduction of a third period of physical education per week, a class in



one pair of the components of music, art, animation or robotics, and a class in computer studies allow students to have a period per day in a non-classical or non-academic format. This has turned out to be a huge emotional gain for students. It is equivalent to one daily free period where students can talk to a neighbor in class, walk around and have a period with no homework, no grade and no exams. Students have described the program in their language: cool, awesome, you rock!

Then there is the covert curriculum taught during those classes that cannot be overlooked. The same students who have no difficulty with iPhones, iPods and iPads found the assembly of the robot quite a challenge even if they were created from such children's favorites like Lego. The comparison to a parent would be the assembly of a piece of furniture from IKEA. Students found the sequential following of directions challenging, and the assembly that was expected to be completed in two sessions took 4-5 sessions to most students. That challenge is more than compensated when the student sees the inanimate object (the golem) following directions—moving in the direction instructed and even making sounds or music as requested. The robotics also make math concepts much more real when students need to calculate such concepts as radius, circumference and distance.

Depending on the evolution of the program, parents will be invited to an exhibition of the accomplishments of each of the SMAART rooms in the school. The PR dimension with the possibilities for recruitment cannot be overlooked.

Costs

The reduction of hours compensated for the additional costs of instructors for the new programs. However, the displeasure of the Judaic studies teachers needs to be reckoned with. Teachers teaching two classes lost a little over two weekly hours or approximately 10% of their income with little possibility of gaining hours elsewhere. The reduction of hours also had a direct impact on the pension plan of each Judaic studies teacher. Other than the cost of the retrofitting the rooms, the added cost was in the equipment needed for each of the rooms: robots, computers, musical instruments and art supplies.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 60]

Earn a Certificate, M.A. or Ed.D.



Call Today!

in Jewish Education

Spring Classes start in January

Gratz

COLLEGE

Education Grounded in Jewish Values



admissions@gratz.edu

800-465-4735x140

gratz.edu/programs/jewish-education

Learning Law Young: What Happens When Schools Teach (Jewish) Law

■ by **MICHAEL BROYDE** and **IRA BEDZOW**

Broyde and Bedzow argue for the continued relevance of teaching Halakhah as a core subject in day schools to students of all ages, albeit for novel reasons.

One who studies the Law as a child, to what can he be compared? To ink written on fresh paper. And one who studies the Law as an old man, to what can he be compared? To ink written on smudged paper. Mishnah Avot 4:25

Jewish schools, like all schools, provide children with the tools that they will need in the real world. Students learn a number of subjects, as well as the means to interact socially through sports teams, drama and other clubs. Yet Jewish schools also include a tool in their curriculum that other schools do not, which gives them a unique value proposition: the methodology of Jewish law. For Jewish school students who desire to learn a skill that can help them in many different areas of life, the study of Jewish law allows them to develop a way of thinking that could help them excel in various business and academic situations long after they graduate from high school.

Unlike the study of other Jewish subjects, the study of Jewish law provides this benefit because it teaches not only content but a way of thinking. Though the development of this skill corresponds to the level of depth and breadth that students learn, this skill can be developed through the study of the Mishnah and Talmud, as long as students are learning how to think about the law and not only what the law says.

Is There Really a Difference Between Jewish and Secular Schools?

Though many people consider Jewish and secular educations as distinct, even if complementary, the two curricula have more similarities than differences. The same methods used in Jewish classes are used in secular classes. While learning Hebrew provides students with the means for cognitive development that comes with learning a foreign language, any foreign language would provide this skill.



Rabbi Michael Broyde is a law professor at Emory University and a member (dayan) in the Beth Din of America, where he has served as the director. He can be reached at mbroyde@law.emory.edu.

Rabbi Ira Bedzow is a PhD candidate from Emory, and the author of *Halakhic Man*, *Authentic Jew*, a comparative study of Rabbis Soloveitchik and Berkovits. He can be reached at ijbedzow@gmail.com.

This is not to say that Jewish subjects are not important; they are extremely important in terms of content. They give students the ability to understand Jewish texts and perform Jewish practices in a way that imbues a strong Jewish identity. Jewish education also provides a Jewish socializing environment that teaches students how to live as Jews in Jewish communities. However, in terms of functional skills which help students to live in the broader world, Jewish education

duplicates the skills learned through its secular counterpart.

Nonetheless, there is one subject which is part of the curriculum of a Jewish education that provides a unique functional benefit. When students learn Jewish law, they encounter “legal thinking,” which is not just rule obedience. They are provided with insight into how law functions generally as a thinking discipline.

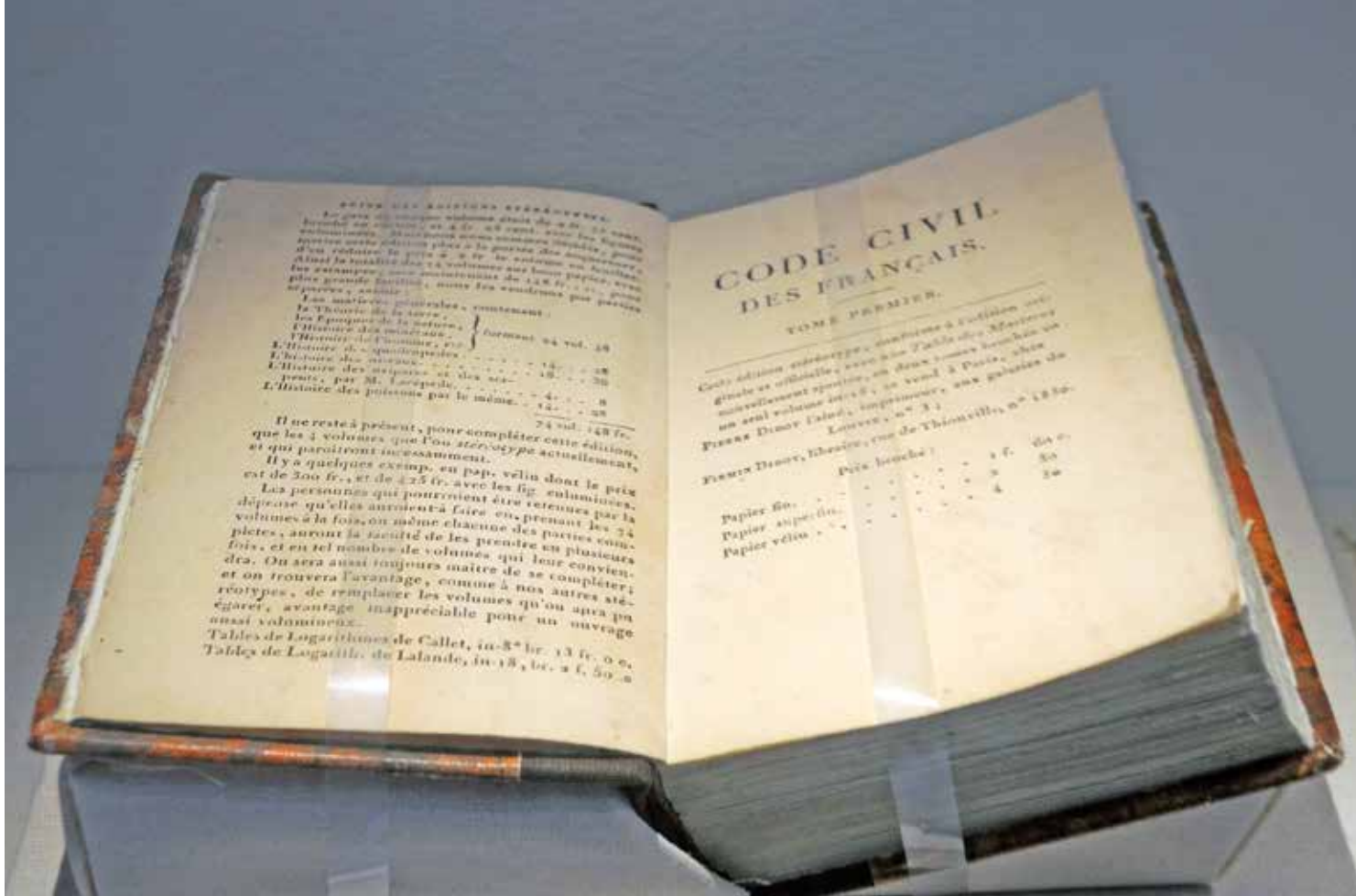
Tools of Legal Thinking

The law is never black or white. A legal education is not about learning how to directly apply a rule to a situation or how to find a conclusion given certain premises. Moreover, the law is messy, since it

is about determining norms from experience.

In the real world, people need to do more than just identify correct answers or justify their opinions. In fact, the real world is seldom so clear and linear to allow for a “correct” answer. More often than not, decisions are the result of nuance and the negotiating between opposing, or even contradictory, views. There is hardly ever just one right answer

This article is an expansion of an ELI talk given by Michael Broyde entitled “Learning Law Young: What Happens When Elementary Schools Teach (Jewish) Law.” The talk can be found at <http://elitalks.org/video/michael-broyde/>.



or one perspective to consider.

The ability to think dialectically is key to achieving success in the world, and it is this skill that students learn through the study of Jewish law. Two major tools which “legal thinking” provides is the ability to produce incompletely theorized agreements and analogical reasoning.

Incompletely Theorized Agreements

Incompletely theorized agreements allow people to agree upon a particular outcome without demanding that they agree as to why that outcome is best. A broader range of people can come together with a shared sense of commitment and purpose, even though they may disagree as to the reason to pursue the shared goal.

The technique of trying to find incompletely theorized agreements also allows for questions to be localized to a specific context, without needing the answer to fit into a more general, abstract theory. This makes decision-making more effective

Outside of school, people most often have to learn the “rules of the game” as they are playing it; seldom do people get a rulebook in advance.

and productive, while at the same time more applicable to the particular situation.

Analogical Reasoning

Analogical reasoning allows people to check their intuitions against another, similar situation, rather than against a rule that covers all situations. Also, when learning a new concept, the use of analogies can give students a firmer grasp of what the teacher is trying to convey through its comparison to what they already know. Analogical reasoning differs from deductive reasoning, in which the governing rule is given first, and the student derives particularities from the rule.

In analogical reasoning, reasoning itself helps a person to identify the rule. Outside of school, people most often have to

learn the “rules of the game” as they are playing it; seldom do people get a rulebook in advance. Analogical reasoning helps a person identify the rules of the game by comparing situations as he or she experiences them.

Legal Thinking Leads to Cooperation

Because of these two aspects of legal thinking, discussions of cases will also be exercises in considering others’ perspectives and learning to appreciate that there may be more than one answer to a question. This in turn will help students develop intellectual humility and honesty and will make them open to others’ opinions, both inside and outside the classroom. Students may also become more comfortable with ambiguity and compromise, thereby allowing them to approach the

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 58]

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 57]

outside world with self-assurance even when their surroundings are different from what they know.

Students are able to attain these characteristics through learning Jewish law because legal reasoning is applicable to any problem. It is not just a tool to examine a specific subject, like what to do when your friend's ox damages your own. It is a tool that one can use when deliberating about life.

Learning "Legal Thinking," not Rules

One may challenge our premise by saying that all schools have rules which students are expected to follow, and teaching students to obey school rules is part of the education process. One could even think to argue that in reviewing classroom rules and through their enforcement, students learn "legal thinking," since they appreciate the rules as being reasonable, rather than being based solely on the teacher's or school's authority. In response, we would say that students may learn some form of "legal thinking" through their interaction with school rules. Yet the manner in which they develop this skill is ad hoc, since they learn it primarily on their own and informally. The difference between Jewish schools and others is that students in Jewish schools learn legal reasoning as part of the official curriculum. They are therefore given the guidance and pedagogical support to develop the skill most effectively.

The uniqueness of a Jewish legal education is that it teaches a person to think about problems in a different way than is currently taught in other schools. That is not to say that legal thinking should be seen in contrast to other ways of thinking. On the contrary, legal thinking incorporates many of the skills that other subjects also impart, such as reading comprehension and critical reading, deductive and inductive logic, and even the scientific method. However, in addition, it also provides students with a "law way" to think about problems, which builds on these other skills and applies them in different ways.

The fact that the subjects which Talmud classes usually cover tend to be irrelevant to today is actually more beneficial to students than studying more contemporary topics. By learning about subjects whose details have no relation to day-to-day life, students are able to concentrate on the Talmudic process and not jump straight to the conclusion. If the topics were more relevant, students would have a greater inclination to skip to the end in order to find out "what to do." They would then be sacrificing the ability to think for the opportunity to have the correct answer. By teaching subjects with only theoretical interest and not practical consequences, students become interested in the thinking process itself and not with how the process ultimately tells them what to do.

Law Obedience not Avoiding Punishment

Another aspect to a Jewish legal education that benefits students outside of the classroom is that learning about the law leads to greater law obedience. Learning Jewish law not only provides the means for students to formally learn how to think about school rules, it also gives them the tools to similarly interpret and reflect on the laws of the communities in which they live. Instead of falling into blind compliance and potential disdain for the law, they may become active participants in democratic society due to the healthy respect for the law that they gained in school. Obedience to the law corresponds to their appreciation and participation in it.

Improved Test Scores

Recently, Sam Favate wrote a piece in *The Wall Street Journal* ("Study Shows Why Lawyers Are So Smart," August 28, 2012) about a new research study which showed that studying for the law school entrance exam alters a person's brain structure - and could make him or her smarter. The study focused on fluid reasoning, which is the ability to tackle a novel problem. It is also the major component of what IQ tests measure, as well as being a measure for

predicting academic performance and the potential for success in a demanding career. That is how LSAT tests, in general, are able to assess how well a person may succeed in law school. If Jewish schools are providing this tool to students from an early age, it would seem that Jewish schools have the ability to make their students smarter than their secular counterparts.

Conclusion

Learning "legal thinking" is an underappreciated virtue of Jewish education. It provides an important thinking skill set that students will carry with them their whole lives. Most importantly, it is a skill that benefits its owner both within Judaism and outside of it; it changes how one practices medicine, lives in one's marriage, argues with friends, analyzes business deals, and generally solves complicated problems.

Jewish schools are training students in an analytic skill that they get nowhere else. Yet rather than recognizing the benefits of learning Jewish law for the future success of our children, there is currently a deep sentiment in Jewish education, both in Israel and in America, against the teaching of Talmud. There is a similar disdain for the study of Mishnah or Halakhah in a manner that seeks to build skills rather than simply learn content. The shared sense of frustration is driven by the popular notion that most students do not acquire self-sufficient learning skills, or retain any useful knowledge, and as a result they do not experience the deep spiritual uplift or joy which we might believe makes it worth learning Talmud.

Due to this concern, many Jewish schools are modifying their curriculum to give greater focus to the teaching of relevant, practical Halakhah and to the study of Bible, while the vestige of Talmud study is relegated to focusing on language skills rather than conceptual analysis. We hope that Jewish education will not give away its key and primary tool for raising independent and responsible Jewish adults who are prepared for success in the real world. ■



Families can conveniently pay incidental fees for lunches and field trips.

Payments for band and other activities, including sports, can also be made in a secure, online system.



A family can pay tuition monthly, by semester, or in full.



All Payments. One System.

Your school invoices families for many things such as tuition, lunches, field trips, and more. Now you can streamline all of your invoicing and receivables through a single, secure system with Tuition Management & Payment Processing from FACTS.

All invoices and account balances can be tracked by student or by family, providing your school with a better way to keep track of all of its receivables. [Attend a free webinar at factsmgt.com.](https://factsmgt.com)

- ▶ **Tuition Management**
- Grant & Aid Assessment
- Donor Services

Peer Mediation Strengthens Children and Community

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 49]

they have learned socially by working with other children, enabling them to improve their social skill development. The peer helpers develop empathy for others through their interactions. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to learn how to help others in their school environment.

Imagine not feeling comfortable leaving your parents to go to school, having difficulty making friends, and simply not enjoying school. This was my life before I had a peer helper. Having a peer helper made me want to go to school and enjoy school. She talked to me about how to make friends and feel comfortable in the school

environment. I am very thankful for all the dedication and time she put in to coming to play with me every week. Every time she was there for me it felt like the greatest day of my life, until of course she came again the next week. I wanted to peer helper myself. I have watched my peer buddy grow throughout the year and become such a social and wonderful girl. I am so proud of her and I hope when she is in grade 8 she too will look back at her experience and want to help another child like I helped her.—Taryn, eighth grade

Service learning teaches students to respect themselves and others. They give up their own recess time to help others, and by doing so contribute to

the school in a meaningful way and develop leadership skills. In turn, the students in these helping positions learn about social responsibility, compassion and are empowered by helping others. Younger students in the school look up to the peer helpers and look forward to it being their time to volunteer for these positions. Students teach and model effective social skills by engaging in a relationship with another child. These are teachable moments for students to cherish and learn from in a school environment. Educating the whole child involves so much more than the curriculum; it is also teaching students about developing a passion for compassion. ■

Beyond the School House: Applying Jewish Values to Social Action

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 51]

identity and values of the Western world. When given this message, that these tensions are healthy and beg for discussion, young minds can allow the divisions between these elements to blur. Our historic traditions should not be learned only as a part of the past, they are more needed now than ever before, even as the world progresses before our eyes. Ancient Jewish

values can guide us in a modern, technology-based world and allow students to view Bowe Bergdahl not only as an American hostage but as a human being in crisis.

Armed with the astonishing powers of connectivity in modern technology, the youth of today has literally a world of opportunity ahead of them. Through their iPads and tablets, students have the abili-

ty not to just learn of great Jewish values but to act on them quickly and effectively. Their classroom is virtually the world, and their power to change it should not be underestimated.

Our students have already made marks on our nation's map and in the Bergdahl home. We can't wait to see how their future unfolds. ■

Innovative Curriculum and Scheduling for Students' Benefit

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55]

Making Lemonade from Lemons

A reduction of time allocated to Judaic studies is always unfortunate. While more is not better, in this particular case the loss was translated to a benefit for students creating some needed down time in an oversaturated day. At the same time, it exposed students to some new and important disciplines. Our experience might reinforce the old saying that we teach students and not subjects. As such, we have

obligations and opportunities to make the life of our students much more pleasant while opening new horizons.

In view of our experience, we must be honest and ask ourselves some questions: What is the essential Judaic studies curriculum, and how many hours do we really need to transmit it? Is Jewish studies only a matter of hours, or is quality of instruction equally important? Can and should some time from an exceedingly overcharged curriculum be altered to of-

fer innovative programs to students?

Our school was presented with a challenge by our Ministry of Education. We decided to use this challenge as an opportunity to reassess our curriculum from the students' perspective. We made the curriculum more innovative and more fun, and we reduced some of the stress of the day for our students. The nature of school is that we all have challenges. Perhaps we should consider the students as we attempt to find a solution. ■

Jewish Differentiation: How Do Schools Serve Our Students' Jewish Differences?

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19]

a minority of students measured up to these criteria.

The majority of students described themselves with a strong individuated sense of self, where personal Jewish choices express themselves more in social and cultural terms, rather than religious terms. The students may have been confused about Israel, active in Jewish youth groups, loved shopping on “Saturdays” with their “mostly Jewish” friends and eating sushi (but not the shell fish) at local nonkosher restaurants. Many loved Jewish camps or shabbatonim but could do without tefillah.

This gap in Jewish understanding caused the teachers and students to usually describe the student’s experience of Jewishness with negative attribution, describing what the students did not do: how they did not keep kosher or Shabbat. Many of the students expressed pride in being Jewish, but felt lost for words when trying to articulate positively why or how being Jewish matters and how they express it. The students often expressed appreciation for their Jewish education, reiterating their ability to now make autonomous and informed choices, while rejecting being told what to do or how to do it.

Thus, one student commented that her Jewish education allowed her “to make educated decisions on why I keep kosher, [or] why I don’t want to keep kosher.” This particular student was active in the Jewish community and did not subscribe to a traditional kashrut. She evaluated herself as a good student, but not as a “good Jew.”

The students also believe that their Judaic studies teachers were judgmental and disappointed in them. Reflecting the perception of many, a student commented: “I think it’s hard for the Judaica teachers to teach something and feel maybe that it’s not being practiced as much as they want it to...because some of the Judaica teachers are very religious, and the students might not be as religious.”

Consistently, the teachers generally judged their students’ Jewish behaviors negatively due to a perceived low level of participation in Jewish ritual. One teacher went so far as to describe his students’ relationship to Judaism as “uniform homogeneous apathy,” reflecting the sentiment of many of his colleagues who take it personally when a student learns about kashrut and still chooses to reject it. In short, the teachers could only see deficiencies in the students’ Jewish lifestyles, as their students’ choices did not live up to the choices that the teachers make for themselves. They could not find positive language to describe or make sense of the choices the students made to affirm their Jewish engagement.

The more traditionalist Jewish mindset of the teachers did not provide the students with the vocabulary or concepts to recognize or affirm the manifold Jewish expressions and identification of their student body in a positive manner. The teachers misunderstood and/or struggled to affirm the newly emerging Jewish identity built upon the “sovereign self.” In turn, the students never really learned to understand themselves. Instead, they learned about a Judaism that at times resonated and at other times reflected the type of Jew they did not wish to become.

To overcome this gap, part of the Judaic studies curriculum needs to provide students and teachers with a safe enough environment to honestly explore and then share their personal Jewish stories. They should be encouraged to interview their families to better appreciate why certain decisions are part of their family’s heritage and share those with their classmates. They should be encouraged to ask questions of clarification about one another, without judging the answers or being required to agree.

They should be encouraged to visit one another’s shuls, share artifacts that reflect their family’s Jewish stories and to explore world Jewish communities that connect to their personal histories. And each of

these experiences should be informed by traditional Jewish teachings, to serve as frames of reference for reflection and understanding, rather than judgment about whether each family was right or wrong. The students should seek out commonalities between them, identify differences and be encouraged to inquire deeply about the reasons why.

When I observe teachers referencing Jewish practices or norms that are significantly different from their own, they often present interesting pictures of clothing and discuss the language, music, food, beliefs, customs and distinctive rituals of those communities. If Judaic studies teachers presented their own Jewish experiences in this same way, the students would have a model for understanding and contrasting their teacher’s experiences of being Jewish with that of other Jews in their lives, including themselves. This approach helps students to identify their own assumptions about living a Jewish life and permits the Jewish assumptions of both the teachers and students to be open to the same level of honest scrutiny, questioning and wondering that teachers hope to generate in the rest of their Jewish teaching. Teachers and students are living examples of the contemporary Jewish world and offer a rich source for Jewish learning.

Underlying this dissonance in Judaic studies classrooms is an undecided element in our Jewish educational process—that is, whether we are to affirm the students’ pre-existing identities or solely to transform, assimilate or acculturate them into the teacher’s perceived ideals. If we, as Judaic studies teachers, are to expect that students value our Jewish choices, it is incumbent upon us to recognize, understand and acknowledge theirs on equal terms. Teachers and students bring very different ways of identifying and relating to Judaism into our learning spaces. Our challenge is to consciously and explicitly use these differences to enrich the Jewish learning program, rather than to unwittingly distant our students from it. ■

Serving Is Part of Leadership

■ by **MIKHA MOREIRA**

There is a reciprocal relationship between students and their school. The school obviously must serve its students, but the students should also serve their school, and both should serve the greater community.

concerns, so that our school will advance and continue improving. As the voice of the students, we also undertake initiatives and make suggestions. For example, this year we suggested the creation

ti. We have been running this since the earthquake in 2010.

A number of students participate in the model United Nations (MUN) activities, at our own school and at others. Since they have to represent different countries, MUN motivates students to be aware of current events and to acquire leadership qualities such as negotiation and public speaking. This club is fundamental for developing an open mind and a constructive attitude towards peace. Over the last few years, our school's Junior Achievement teams have focused on creating products that not only sell well but also convey a message, for example about environmental awareness and recycling.

Student participation in these activities serves the school and builds its reputation. Our participation reinforces critical thinking, creativity, responsibility, commitment and problem-solving and offers us the opportunity to discover more about ourselves and shape our identity.

I am proud to attend and represent a school that educates students in ways that allow us to build a better world and contribute to the greater community. ■

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.



I am the student council president of the Albert Einstein School in Quito, Ecuador. Since our school gives us so much, it is important for students to give back. Students can serve the school in different ways, and there are a number of opportunities for student initiative, involvement and leadership.

An important and special connection exists between school officials and the student council because we provide input and feedback on the school's operations. We help students share their ideas and

of a juice bar for the secondary school as a way to offer students an appealing, nutritious alternative to the traditional food service. It has been very successful, and we are very proud of that contribution.

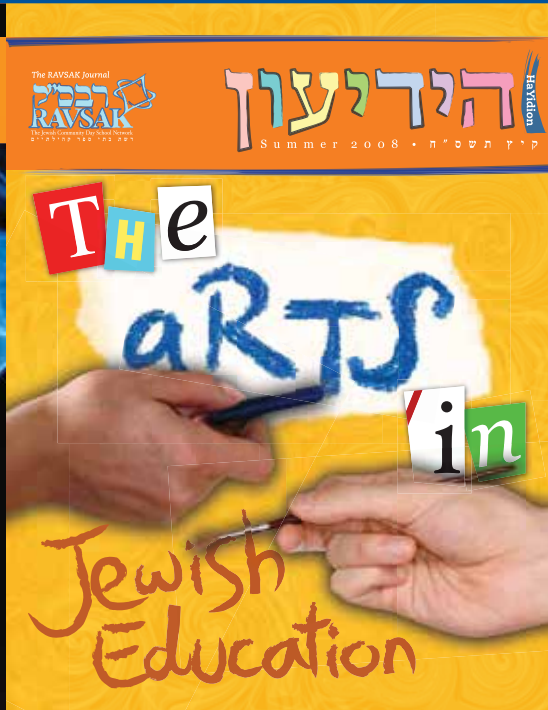
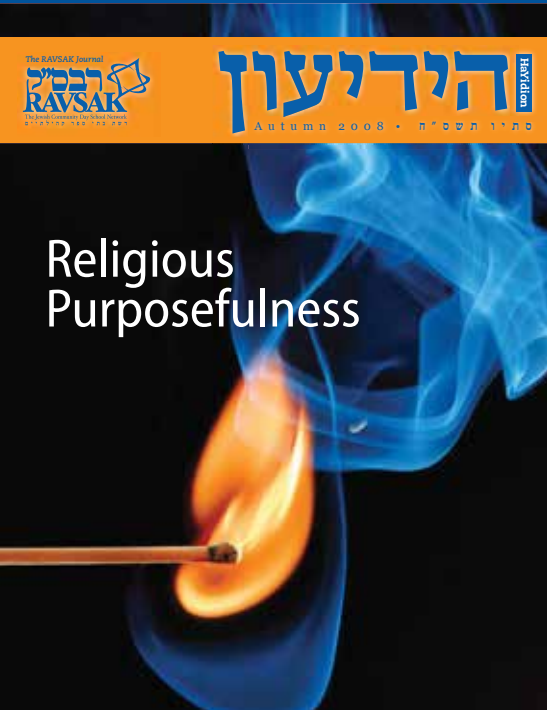
We also organize intramural games and other activities to promote student integration and wholesome pastimes. Our many fundraising activities help support student well-being and also contribute to community service projects such as an annual scholarship to a student in Hai-

Partner with RAVSAK.

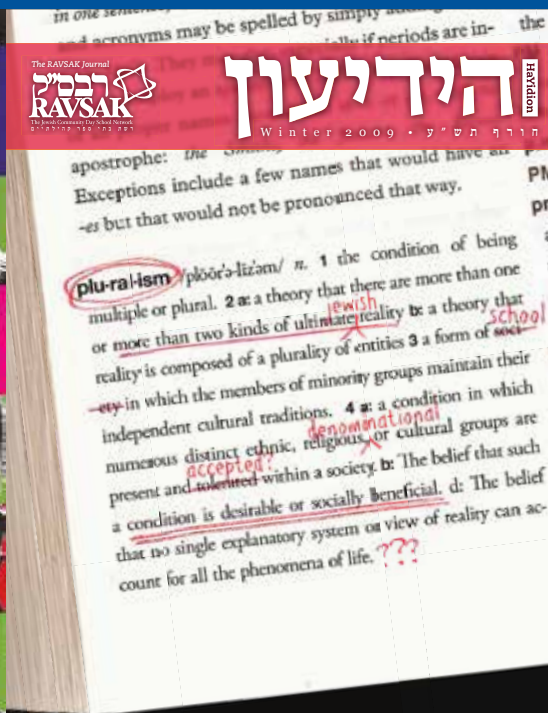
RAVSAK strengthens and sustains the life, leadership and learning of Jewish community day schools, ensuring a vibrant Jewish future. **Take part in supporting our growing and dynamic community.**

Online: www.ravsak.org | **By mail:** RAVSAK, 120 West 97th Street, New York, NY 10025

The foremost journal of Jewish education is now available for subscription!



Do you know people who should be reading *HaYidion*?



To subscribe, go to www.ravsak.org/hayidion

RAVSAK

The Jewish Community Day School Network
120 West 97th Street
New York, NY 10025

NonProfit Org
US Postage
PAID
Mechanicsburg, PA
Permit 63



**North American
Jewish
Day School
Conference**

**Register Now!
3-5 February 2013
Washington, D.C.**

**MORE INFORMATION
ON PAGES 30-31**



WWW.JEWISHDAY SCHOOLCONFERENCE.ORG



**Yeshiva University
INSTITUTE FOR
UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP**



**Schechter
DAY SCHOOL NETWORK
Engage the World**



**PARDES
Day Schools of Reform Judaism**

