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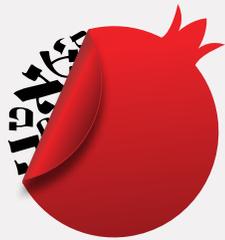
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RAVSAK would like to thank our associate members:



From the Editor

■ by **BARBARA DAVIS**

*“It’s not the size of the dog in the fight,
it’s the size of the fight in the dog.”*

Mark Twain

Recently I took part in a program at my local public television station in conjunction with the showing of Simon Schama’s “The Story of the Jews.” The program was introduced by an announcer who stated that our local Jewish community was “a forgotten minority.” I was shocked. Living as I do, in a very Jewish environment, I never thought of our Jewish community as a “minority,” much less a forgotten one. But on reflection, I realized that he was right. The Jewish people, despite our tremendous influence and impact on the world, are still a very small group, often forgotten by the majority.

And size matters, although not always in the way we think it does. For example, there has been a tremendous amount of research about the benefits of small versus large schools in the United States, but not much of it is applicable to our Jewish community day school world. The Institute for Local Self-Reliance reports that “one of the most effective ways to improve student achievement and curb school violence is to reduce the size of the nation’s schools. Hundreds of studies have found that students who attend small schools outperform those in large schools on every academic measure from grades to test scores.

Small schools also build strong communities. Parents and neighbors are more likely to be actively involved in the school. The students benefit from community support and the school in turn fosters connections among neighbors and encourages civic participation.” Yet in our Jewish world, we take student achievement and parental involvement as givens and school violence is virtually nonexistent. Jewish day school size is not dependent on policymakers’ demands for the economic benefits that accrue to large schools.

In the Jewish community day school world, size must be measured by impact, not numbers. And this impact comes not only from large schools in major metropolitan areas, but from small schools scattered around the nation. Lynn Raviv, writing in eJewish Philanthropy about the N.E. Miles Jewish Day School in Birmingham, Alabama, observed that “we have been in existence for 41 years. In those 41 years, we have educated almost 1000 students, K-8. If those 1000 students had remained in Birmingham, married and raised a family, our 1200 Jewish family community would be much greater. ... But that is not the case.

“Instead, many of these alumni live in other communities, mainly in the

large metropolitan areas, where they are strongly impacting Jewish life. We have educated a great number of students who make extraordinary contributions to Jewish life, not only in the United States but all over the world. We are not the staid school that many think because we are small. We are a dynamic community seeding other communities. Our alumni can be counted among those who feel deeply about the continuity of our people and who are making a difference in Jewish life today.”

The people at the JCC in Overland Park, Kansas, also thought they were a forgotten minority, until faced with a horrendous catastrophe. But then they learned something about their impact. Jacob Schreiber, JCC president, spoke at an interfaith Service of Unity and Hope less than one week after the shootings. “The JCC is in the midst of celebrating its 100th anniversary,” he said, “and had asked people to send in their stories about what the JCC means to them. Until last week’s tragedy struck, the response had been underwhelming. Now, we probably have 500 stories of people here telling us what the Jewish Community Center has meant to them. I didn’t have any clue of what this meant to people as a community center. Everybody and their brother, their cousin, their friend has had somebody who has swum here, done fitness, did the singing competition, been in a play ... I think this is why this has hit the community so much, because after 100 years of being open to the entire community, everybody has a connection here. It’s unbelievable.”

This issue of *HaYidion* will make the case that Jewish community day schools of all sizes have similar impact. They also have challenges, some in proportion to their size, others common to all. Unique to this issue is the inclusion of articles about schools outside of North America. One is a school enrolling more students than there are Jews in the country, and another that enrolls 80% of all Jewish children. There are several fascinating proposals advanced by our authors, including one that challenges funders to recognize the vibrancy and importance of small schools as a collectivity and to provide support nationally to ensure their continued vitality.

Regardless of size, however, day school leaders, both lay and professional, seek connections and networks. Luckily for all of us, RAVSAK serves as the glue that binds us, and whether you are the only school in a small city or a large school with many colleagues in a major metropolis, you need those ties. Issues related to size as well as many other challenges are more easily handled when the experience and advice of others in similar situations can be accessed. Once again, RAVSAK plays an impactful role in facilitating these connections. And as we know, impact matters much more than size in the day school world. ■



Dr. Barbara Davis is the secretary of RAVSAK’s Board of Directors, executive editor of HaYidion and head of school at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Dewitt, New York. bdavis74@twcyn.rr.com

FROM THE BOARD

Small Schools, Big Challenges, Bigger Opportunities

■ By **N. SHIRA BROWN**

This article was adapted from a post that appeared on eJewish Philanthropy.

Forty-two of the 130 schools in the RAVSAK network of Jewish community day schools are considered “small,” enrolling fewer than 100 children. Yet the role they play in the bigger picture of Jewish education is just beginning to be recognized and appreciated.

The Shalom School of Sacramento, California, for example, is an important nexus for its community. With only a small Jewish federation and no JCC, no kosher restaurants, not even a deli, the Shalom School is one of the only places of central congregation beyond the denominational lines of synagogue affiliation. With approximately 90 children from K to 6, the parking lot is an intersection of daily banter and community planning. Despite its central role, the value of the Shalom School and other small schools is not always immediately intuitive. Young families may choose a community with a Jewish day school, even if they opt out of its offerings, because a Jewish day school is a marker of community vibrancy. The ability of synagogues to hire a new young rabbi often hinges on the presence of a Jewish day school for his or her family.

For the wider community, school alumni are steeped in Jewish identity and literacy. When they launch into the more heterogeneous environment of public school, they are knowledgeable advocates for their heritage by providing a Jewish lens to the views of others. They are articulate ambassadors of their culture, language and the land of Israel, as they are steeped in a rich identity of tradition. They grow into adulthood as persuasive communal and philanthropic leaders.

Yet many of these small schools that are critical to the vibrancy of their small communities face many daunting hurdles. At the recent RAVSAK/PARDES conference, titled “Moving the Needle 2014,” leaders from 38 small schools and their communities, representing an incredible 70 percent of this niche market, participated in a two-day “Small School Deep Dive” learning track. This level of intensive problem-solving surrounding the unique challenges of small schools was unprecedented.

The challenges experienced by the small community day schools are not completely in sync with their larger counterparts. Some issues are simply based in numbers. For example, while both large and small schools contend with enrollment challenges, a loss of just five students for a school with fifty children represents an incredible 10 percent drop in the population. This can create a significant impact on the school’s financial and social realities.

Further, many struggles in small schools simply do not exist in larger schools. Small Jewish day schools often rely heavily on lay leaders for professional services. Young, sometimes relatively inexperienced board members are often asked to take ownership over formidable tasks including recruitment and retention, fundraising and development, school budgets and business planning, as the schools lack the financial resources to hire professional staff. Often, small community lay leaders and professionals leave their meetings with more questions than answers. The tasks ahead can feel overwhelming, and the human capital sparse. Additionally, federation and other extended support can be tenuous, as the community expectations surrounding many critical issues often outstrip the school’s ability to chart its own destiny.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 12]



Dr. N. Shira Brown is a member of the RAVSAK Board of Directors, chair of philanthropy and development for the Kadimah School of Buffalo and chief of emergency medicine at Welland Hospital, Ontario, Canada. Shira.Brown@rausak.org



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Good & Welfare

Mazal tov to Dr. Rebecca Schorsch, director of Jewish studies at **CHICAGOLAND JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL** in Deerfield, Illinois, along with Alison Kur and Rabbi Yisroel Boruch Sufirin, recipients of this year's Covenant Award. Rebecca joins past RAVSAK winners Judy Finkelstein-Taff, Dr. Bruce Powell, Dr. Marc N. Kramer and Zipora Schorr.

Welcome to RAVSAK's newest member, **COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Mazal tov to Barbara Gereboff, head of school at the **RONALD C. WORNICK JEWISH DAY SCHOOL** in Foster City, California, for being recognized among the 100 Women of Influence by the Silicon Valley Business Journal.

Rav-Hazzan Scott M. Sokol PhD, head of school at the **METROWEST JEWISH DAY SCHOOL** in Framingham, Massachusetts, received the Benjamin Shevach Award this year, the highest award given by Hebrew College in the field of Jewish education.

Timna Burston, a teacher at **BEIT RABBAN** in New York City, was named a recipient of the 2014 Young Pioneers Award from The Jewish Education Project.

Senior Zoe Kamil at **JCHS OF THE BAY** in San Francisco was named one of the winners of The Blank Theater's 2014 National Young Playwrights Competition. It will be produced at the Stella Adler Theater in Los Angeles in June.

Mazal tov to new heads of school: Nancy Leaderman at the **SHALOM SCHOOL** in Sacramento, California, Allison Oakes at the **LERNER SCHOOL** in Durham, North Carolina, Alan Rusonik at the **JEWISH ACADEMY OF ORLANDO**, Florida, Tracie Glazer, **HILLEL DAY SCHOOL**, Rochester, New York, Rabbi Ezra Levey, **SHECK HILLEL DAY SCHOOL**, North Miami Beach, Florida, Ariela Dubler, **ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL SCHOOL**, New York, New York, Jon Ben-Asher, **TUCSON HEBREW ACADEMY**, Tucson, Arizona, Dr. Wendy Katz, Interim Director, **TEMPLE BETH SHALOM SCHOOLS**, Sarasota, Florida, Lynn Heady, Interim Head, **AKIVA SCHOOL**, Nashville, Tennessee ■



Sulam 2.0

■ By **ORLEE TURITZ**, Project Director

RAVSAK's Sulam 2.0 lay leadership development program, funded by the AVI CHAI Foundation and the Legacy Heritage Fund, has seen a lot of action in the first months of our pilot year. Committed to great governance, great leadership and great Jewish values, our 10 school triads have developed goals with their heads of school and boards that will enhance their board governance and continue to integrate Jewish values into their schools. These goals include ensuring that budget cuts do not adversely affect the Judaic programming, working to increase positive student identification with Judaism, Jewish culture and Israel and assuring the description materials for an executive director search will clearly promote the Jewish mission of the school. Working with their assigned mentor, each school will work toward these goals this year and set plans for further goals when the program is completed.

Following our introductory shabbaton with scholar Arna Poupko Fisher and participation in the RAVSAK/PARDES Conference's Board Institute, participants have engaged in self-study around change, tackling issues of how we effect change, how we create movements, and what it means to be a leader and to be an effective follower. For Passover, triads contemplated the meaning of the particular and the universal and what it means to identify with a nation, learning from Natan Sharansky and artists' portrayals of the four sons from the Haggadah. Animated discussions focused on how day schools can help to plant memories that will bind the students to a tradition and a Jewish future.

Our first webinar on board governance with Elizabeth Jick detailed best practices of highly functioning boards and gave participants many avenues through which

to strengthen their board governance, from term limits to thinking about how we measure successful performance in our institution. Our spring institute featured scholar Erica Brown, and again schools grappled with leadership questions such as changing perspectives on Jewish identity in the 21st century and realizing visions through a growth mindset, as well as discussing how to recruit top notch board members, engaging in inquiry during board meetings, and reframing solicitations. A powerful leadership tour around the DC monuments topped off these exciting two days.

The thirty participants in the Sulam 2.0 program representing their 10 schools are looking forward to continuing the program with upcoming site visits by their mentors, more webinars and self-study packs and culminating in a closing assembly at the next day school conference. ■

Dear Cooki

■ by **COOKI LEVY**

Within a 50 mile radius of my school are a number of other Jewish day schools and some private, independent schools as well. I am discovering that young and talented educators with great potential start their careers in my school, where we nurture and train them, and then accept positions in other schools in the community, when the possibility of career advancement appears.

How do I keep these educators on staff in the face of the employment competition from other schools?

Talk about a mixed blessing! Of course it is wonderful to be part of such a strong and rich community that boasts numerous schools. But the dangers of “poaching” are real, and you are caught between the legitimate desire to hold on to excellent staff and their right to seek the best possible position. I do not think there is any surefire solution to this human resources dilemma, but here are some suggestions that may ease the situation.

Create and enforce a communitywide policy on interschool cooperation. In most communities with multiple Jewish day schools, there is some kind of umbrella organization that brings together the heads of school for conversations about common issues and concerns. This group should be charged with writing policy related to how schools cooperate with one another, especially in areas related to student enrollment (may I convince a family to leave one Jewish school for another?) and to staffing (may I entice your Hebrew teacher to switch to my school?). If such policies exist, then moral suasion should prevent one school from

“poaching” a teacher for a lateral move to the same position. If nothing else, establish a deadline after which such switches will not be tolerated unless all parties agree.

Have a competitive, consistent and transparent compensation package. In some communities, salaries are set by outside bodies like the local federation or a union collective agreement. In others, schools set their own pay scales and fringe benefits. Be informed. Know what the competition is paying, and endeavour to meet that level. It is very hard to convince someone to do the same job for less pay.

Ensure your staff members know as early as possible what to expect for the coming school year. Few people relish uncertainty. They like to know for sure that they have a secure position for the coming year, and, to the extent possible, exactly what their position will entail. Try to make your staffing decisions as early as you can, and communicate openly with staff. Ask them to make a commitment to you as soon as you are able to commit to them. Decrease the time staff members will spend looking for other options.

Provide meaningful leadership opportunities. Even if no openings in your

school administration exist at the moment, let your potential leaders know who they are by entrusting them with leadership opportunities. Sometimes a smaller promotion in the school one really loves will entice a teacher to turn down a larger promotion elsewhere. Share your thinking about the longer-term opportunities that await (without making any promises you may not be able to keep). To the extent that you can, offer the opportunity to attend significant workshops and feel part of the larger educational community.

Develop meaningful personal relationships with your staff. No, I am not suggesting that you must be their friend or cross any boundaries. But you should be able to relate to each one on a personal level, share their tragedies and triumphs, and offer appropriate assistance and support, well beyond the school walls, when you can. Having a personal connection with a staff member will help build loyalty to you and the institution (and it’s also the right thing to do!).

Validate and celebrate your staff—the time. Everyone loves to feel successful and essential. Make sure your staff knows that you feel that way about them. It is much harder to leave a place that offers strong emotional support, that simply makes you feel good when you go to work.

But, at the end of the day, there will be times when some of your most valued personnel accept positions elsewhere in your community. Be gracious; support and congratulate them; continue to foster your relationship with them. Who knows? They may come back to lead your school at a later date. I have seen it happen. ■



Cooki Levy is the director of RAVSAK’s Head of School Professional Excellence Project (PEP). Previously, she served as the longtime head of the Akiva School in Westmount, Quebec. Dear Cooki accepts questions from all school stakeholders. To submit a question, write to hayidion@ravsak.org, with “Dear Cooki” in the subject line.



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Small School Bigger Job

■ by **ELAINE COHEN**

Cohen describes the long list of expectations that small-school heads often confront, and the inner resources they need for their role. Her advice is geared especially for boards to help their heads succeed in this daunting work.

RAVSAK's recently established Small School Reshet is providing invaluable collegial support among the heads of school in a cluster of Jewish day schools that are often located in small communities. In addition to a number of community day schools that have enrollments under 90 students, the Schechter Day School Network includes a few similarly small schools, most of which are in communities with small Jewish populations or neighborhoods undergoing demographic shifts. From them I have learned a great deal about the demands and challenges that the head of school faces in these circumstances. My contribution to the ongoing conversations online and in real time about small schools focuses on the institutional leader.

In her *Jewish Philanthropy* posting earlier this spring, Dr. N. Shira Brown cited “many daunting hurdles” of small schools. (See her column at the beginning of this issue.) She highlighted the reliance on lay leaders for professional services, roles that are filled in larger schools by trained professional staff. It isn't just that board members in small schools tend to be young and inexperienced, as she wrote, and expected to “take ownership of a number of formidable tasks.”

As the professional leader at the center, the head of school of a small day school has a larger, more multipronged job than many of his or her professional colleagues in larger institutions. She must wear many hats simultaneously, usually as a solo professional without the benefit of a team with whom to share the many functions of school leadership. What are the key attributes for a successful leader of a

small Jewish day school?

Among this leader's most challenging demands to meet are the following:

- training a cadre of volunteers and coordinating their work
- serving as both the instructional and institutional leader
- developing a culture of a unified community where the school may well be the magnet for Jewish life in a pluralistic, small community
- maintaining some work/life balance when everything seems to fall on the shoulders of the head of school.

In some independent schools and public school districts, the role of “coordinator of

the volunteer program” is itself a full-time professional position. This person is part of the leadership team; in one school district, the job description runs as follows:

Under the direction of the Principal, organizes and coordinates parent/community volunteer program; assists in categorical programs and performs related work as required; supervised by the Principal; has direct contact with parents and community members, students, and staff.

In numerous small Jewish day schools volunteers do not simply run

In small schools, volunteers often assume responsibility for essential functions such as recruitment, marketing, admissions, alumni relations, development and institutional advancement.



Elaine Shizgal Cohen, EdD, recently retired from her longstanding position as director of the Schechter Day School Network, and was the head of school of the Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union, now the Golda Och Academy, in West Orange, New Jersey. erscohen@gmail.com



the lunch program, field trips and parent fundraisers. They assume responsibility for essential functions such as recruitment, marketing, admissions, alumni relations, development and institutional advancement. It takes a well trained board president and a highly skilled head of school to plan initiatives to be spearheaded by volunteers and then give them direction and manage them effectively. The cadre of devoted, well intentioned parent volunteers on whom the school depends are giving their time and energy out of love for the school and still have to be accountable for accomplishing their responsibilities. There's an artful balancing act required of the head of a small school that relies on unpaid people to ensure that core functions that keep the school functioning and viable are achieved within the needed time frames. Working with volunteers is more challenging than leading a team of professionals who expect to be held accountable and whose performance is evaluated annually.

The head of school has to set standards of professional behavior, deal with inevitable interpersonal issues that arise, and hold people

The head of a small day school must wear many hats simultaneously, usually without the benefit of a team with whom to share the many functions of school leadership.

accountable, even though they are not officially employees. At the same time, she has to use her nimble, interpersonal skills to be attentive to and appreciative of those who are volunteering their time and efforts.

Deborah Grayson Riegel, author of the blog *My Jewish Coach*, recently conducted a webinar to build the delegation skills of school leaders and make the case that exercising them effectively is a necessary skill set for day school leaders. Lacking a leadership team to whom to delegate various functions, the head of a small school may succumb to the daunting and unrealistic expectation to do everything himself.

In a small school, the head bears primary responsibility for recruitment, admissions, retention and marketing. From a budget perspective, every child and every family count toward the bottom line, and diminished enrollments can spiral into a crisis of confidence as well as finance. In the best of circumstances, every head of school's job entails inside and outside functions, regular early morning and evening

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commitments, and an expansive web of relationships with students, teachers, support staff, parents, board leaders, community leaders, donors, alumni, network colleagues and clergy.

Adding layers to the complex roles of institutional and instructional leader and the primary carrier of the school's vision, in a small day school the professional leader in a community with few other places of Jewish affiliation becomes the catalyst and pivotal figure for community-building. The expectation grows for the school leader to create a big tent of inclusiveness and welcoming for families as well as their children who come to view the school as their Jewish home. The work is gratifying but also depleting. Wearing so many hats and being "on" in all these ways means that private family time disappears, as holidays and the milestones of the lifecycle are observed publicly in the context of the school community. Self-care recedes to rare moments during the academic year; these demands can take a toll that cannot be sustained over time.

Despite the enormity of the multidimensional role, the head of a small Jewish day school is frequently compensated at a lower level than her professional peers in charge of larger institutions that engage a number of administrators in addition to their head of school. As someone who has worked for years doing placement referrals and assisting day schools in their search for a new leader, I have seen that when positions are posted, small schools rarely offer a competitive salary and benefits package to attract a first-rate professional

leader. They claim that the the lower tuition base precludes paying a higher salary.

However, even when the cost of living may be lower in small communities, travel to conferences and professional development programs will be higher—and these benefits are all the more necessary in order for the head of school to remain connected with colleagues, engage in big-picture thinking, and avoid the isolation and insularity of a small community. (Even though technology and social media may a big difference in terms of creating professional communities, the in-person nourishment experienced at regional and national assemblies remains essential.) Setting compensation at a competitive professional level should be a priority for the board of trustees of small day schools. It is a signal for potential candidates that the school recognizes the full scope of the position.

Planning for success in a small day school entails education of the board, training volunteers, enabling the head of school to achieve some work/life balance, and creating the conditions for the leader to achieve an ambitious agenda with support from the community. It also means that the personal qualities of resourcefulness, interpersonal adeptness and emotional intelligence are key characteristics, especially when there are no other administrators who can balance or compensate for areas where the head does not yet excel. It is a tall order and one that will continue to be needed in the growing number of small day schools. ■

From the Board: Small Schools, Big Challenges, Bigger Opportunities

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6]

As unique and formidable as the challenges may seem, however, the will towards charting solutions is even broader and deeper. Moreover, the collective wisdom shared among these schools through the facilitation of a national organization alters the field entirely. Streamlining processes towards the tried-and-true is easier to accomplish when everyone is talking to one another and comparing notes. When the Kadimah School of Buffalo needed to rapidly restructure due to a massive shift in enrollment, it was aided significantly by the larger brain trust assembled through RAVSAK.

Thankfully, best-practice solutions need not be financially overwhelming, as schools learn from each other. During one in-depth

discussion at the conference about recruitment and retention, schools quickly learned that some of the most inexpensive techniques are, by far, the most effective. "Parent ambassador" programs, parlor meetings and a vibrant social media presence wins out over the more expensive options of direct mail and print advertising.

Another example of schools learning better evidence-based practices came in fundraising and development. During the conference, schools were encouraged to develop longer-term, more sustainable fundraising through values-based, philanthropic relationship-building, while moving away from more vulnerable yearly fundraising events.

The close of the conference was not the

end of the conversation. RAVSAK has now launched an online forum for small schools to vet ideas and concerns, called the "small school reshnet." Over 40 small-school leaders have already joined.

In the past, many small schools felt like islands. Indeed, many were. But thanks to the work of RAVSAK, the larger national conversation is beginning to change the nature and tone of the small Jewish community day school's daily work. Schools are building sacred partnerships with one another that will raise the bar across the field. Ultimately, whether solutions address the metaphorical forest or trees—the possible or seemingly impossible—these conversations express perhaps the most valuable message of all: You are not alone. ■

Moot Beit Din

At RAVSAK's 2014/5774 Moot Beit Din competition, students from 20 schools throughout North America came together in Kansas City, Missouri, to debate and defend their arguments related to a case on tza'ar ba'alei chayyim (mistreatment of animals) and ethical eating.

Moot Beit Din is one of many dynamic and innovative programs RAVSAK offers to students in our network. Uniquely, it focuses on Jewish high schools and engages participants in person for a weekend of learning, networking, social activities and of course competition. Through the students' research and discussions, Moot Beit Din spurs them to examine the ethical and moral dimensions of halakhah through creative engagement with contemporary situations. Moot Beit Din exposes students to the vitality of the Jewish legal system.

This year, the program asked participants to consider whether a Jewish summer camp that prides itself on being environmentally conscious has an obligation to consider mistreatment of animals and thus serve ethically raised kosher meat, even if it raises the tuition costs at camp significantly enough to make it less affordable to many families.

Students were asked to calculate a cost/benefit analysis of switching to an organic diet at Jewish institutions—an ostensibly desirable undertaking—in light of the real financial issues that might exacerbate the high cost of Jewish living, and then debate their arguments in front of a panel of informed and engaged Jewish leaders who in turn challenged them to defend their positions.

Moot Beit Din is much more than a debate; it is an opportunity to help students connect to one another, build friendships and strengthen their Jewish identity. Participants started the weekend with a Thursday night talk from Keith Nunes, executive editor of Food Business News. Friday activities included learning and activities at host school Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, and a tour of Kansas City, with a stop at the renowned Nelson-Atkins

Museum of Art. Shabbat featured spirited student-led tefillot, text study, meetings and a final opportunity for students to refine and rehearse their presentations.

Each team delivered an impassioned, informed and original argument, making 2014/5774 one of the toughest years to judge. For all schools and participants, the value of Moot Beit Din extended way beyond the win-

Once it was our turn to go up, we debated as well as we could, though we didn't win. However, the experiences and connections we made were so beyond awesome that it didn't matter."

Senior Mitchell Podgorowicz from Scheck Hillel in Miami summed up his four-year participation: "The Moot Beit Din has afforded me the opportunity to grow as a Jewish



ner's circle. According to Dr. Joshua Moss, team advisor for American Hebrew Academy, "The most valuable thing was how the [Moot Beit Din] event gave our students the motivation to apply themselves to understanding Torah ideas and to go beyond their previous limits in expressing themselves."

Matana Zwiren, student at Tarbut V'Torah in Irvine, California, found the process surprising and uplifting. "During the actual debating process, I was shocked. Everyone was cheering each other on and supporting opposing teams.

American young man and a leader amongst my peers. I have also been able to develop a network of friends and mentors through my experiences. I truly believe that the program has helped shape who I am today and who I will be in the future!"

As a jewel-in-the-crown program for RAVSAK, one that educates and engages students while deepening their Jewish literacy and strengthening their Jewish identity, the Moot Beit Din empowers students to discuss and debate 21st century realities through the lens of talmudic and rabbinic thinking. Many came away with new "food for thought" about Jewish law and how decisions about where to source our food and what we eat can impact their role as Jews, as consumers, as future leaders and as global citizens.

View videos of the presentations and the awards ceremony online at www.youtube.com/ravsakdigital. ■

Financial Challenges and Opportunities

for Jewish Day Schools in Small Communities

■ by **DANIEL PERLA**

Small schools often find themselves in an economic bind, having much less revenue and comparable expenses compared to larger schools. Here is a diagnosis and some suggested remedies.

As part of a national day school conference nearly three years ago, I agreed to participate on a panel dealing with day school finance. The panel included a small group of colleagues who, like me, spent their days thinking about day school affordability and sustainability. As a panelist, I spent most of my time sharing details of a series of communal programs and collaborations that had the potential to improve the financial lot of day schools across the country.

	Gross Tuition Revenue/ Student (\$k)	Net Tuition Revenue/ Student (\$k)	Operating Expense/ Student (\$k)	Hard Income Ratio
Smallest Schools	\$10	\$7	\$15	49%
Largest Schools	\$17	\$15	\$18	81%

Immediately following the session, I was approached by three women who had been in the audience. Each of them was a leader (lay or professional) of a day school in a small or intermediate-sized Jewish community. Each explained to me that the programs that I was advocating for inadvertently excluded them since they lacked other schools in their communities with which to collaborate. In other words, they were usually the only school in town.

While schools in small and intermediate communities typically receive meaningful support from their local federations, their ability to obtain foundation funding for collaborative programs is indeed diminished due to their geographic constraints. As one day school head from a small school said, “The next closest day school is 150 miles away.” While fully acknowledging the demographic and enrollment challenges facing these small schools, many of these schools have educated the young men and women who have gone on to become Jewish lay and professional leaders in large cities. The closing of these schools might leave local Jewish children without an immersive Jewish education. It might also shrink the future pool of Jewish lay and professional leaders.

Small schools face some unique challenges. They are typically the sole day school in a community with a flat or declining Jewish population. The failure to attract a growing pool of new students leads to small class sizes in upper grades and this tends to lead to higher attrition rates in the upper grades. According to a report prepared by The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) and JData, the retention rates at these schools in small and intermediate sized communities are below those found in larger communities. In fact, two thirds of these schools have posted enrollment declines. Regardless of the cause of the enrollment declines, JData reports that these schools are now running at approximately 68% of their capacity, a rate which is appreciably lower than that of schools in large communities.

Notwithstanding a declining enrollment, cost per student at small schools is relatively comparable to that at larger schools. What is not comparable is the percentage of budget captured by tuition dollars. According to a report on small schools by PEJE’s Harry Bloom, small schools typically offer a lower gross tuition and offer more financial aid (as a % of budget) than do larger



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schools. This can lead to a noticeable difference in net tuition as a percent of total budget between small and large schools.

While Bloom's study included small schools in large communities, it appears that smaller schools generally have a tendency to offer proportionally more scholarship than do larger schools. Bloom reasons that smaller schools may attract less affluent families or feel that they need to offer a lower price to attract families due to their more limited programs, smaller peer networks and riskier financial conditions. Regardless of the reason, it is hard to imagine that such a tuition structure is sustainable over a long period of time.

While a sizable endowment would certainly ease some of the financial pressures on these schools, it is hard to imagine how even a large endowment could fill the funding gap in a school that has a third or more of its available seats unoccupied. It would seem that a first step in addressing the financial challenges of small schools would be renewed focus on student retention and some innovative thinking around enrollment growth. PEJE's Recruitment and Retention Academy aims to tackle these issues head on. The PEJE academies began with a two and half day conference (the first conference having taken place in Chicago in mid-May) where schools of all sizes are exposed to school marketing and enrollment experts from around the country.

PEJE hopes to have a dedicated track for small schools at its future re-

cruitment and retention academies. The academies would be coupled with follow-up coaching from individuals with proven expertise in small school student retention and enrollment growth. In addition, PEJE hopes to tackle the issue of small class sizes though a creative approach to educational staffing. Based on prior relevant experience in the YU benchmarking program, it is believed that a combination of these efforts can lead a school to a 10% or greater improvement in new student enrollment growth and in student retention within 18 months of the program's completion. This combined impact can add hundreds of thousands of dollars in net tuition revenue over the lifetime of these students within the school.

While recruitment and retention programs such as this one will not solve all the unique challenges of small Jewish day schools, they represent an important first step in moving these schools toward a more sustainable financial future. Recruitment and retention programs such as this one may also represent an opportunity for small and geographically diverse schools to learn from each other's successes and failures. It is possible that meaningful collaborations between small schools will emerge.

One thing is certain. The failure to act will almost certainly leave these small schools in a precarious financial situation. If clusters of small schools can stabilize or grow their enrollments, there is good reason to believe that these schools will continue to provide the broader Jewish community with its future lay and professional leaders. ■

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18 The Chai Year

Transitioning from Growth to Sustainability

■ by **TAL LEWIN-WITTLE** and **RACHEL SOBEL BEARMAN**

How do small schools transition from the intimacy and excitement of the early years to becoming financially sustainable? The authors offer a host of initiatives that they are implementing to try to strengthen their school's economic footing.

The Lerner School started as a dream—one that captured the imagination of thirteen founding families, future families, and community members. In 1994, few American Jewish communities as small as Durham/Chapel Hill had the chutzpah to believe that they could build and support a Jewish day school. But through determination and innumerable meetings, a school was established, founding teachers were hired, and indelible bonds were formed in friendship. Fourteen students in one combination K-1 class grew to two and then three classes. A preschool was opened, afterschool was added, and the staff expanded.

The shape and scope of a full-scale school came into being. The committed day school families and a diverse group of community members set out to raise funds to build a Jewish

school campus. A generous gift of land from Judea Reform Congregation, a challenge gift from the Michael Steinhart Foundation, as well as Steve Lerner and Sharon Van Horn's naming donation of the Sandra E. Lerner Jewish Community Day School laid the financial foundation for the Lerner School of today. Over 100 additional community donors committed to the vision, and Lerner's permanent home opened in 1998.

"When a watershed event occurs, those who are party to it very often do not grasp its meaning or power," said Rabbi John Friedman of Judea Reform Congregation on the occasion of the Lerner School's Chai Year celebration. "The founding of [the Lerner] school 18 years ago heralded a sea change for our [Durham-Chapel Hill] community. I doubt that the 13 or so founding families had any idea that they were setting out on a journey that would change our community's very conception of itself, but that is exactly the effect that the Lerner School has

exerted upon us."

While we have much to celebrate here at the Lerner School during our Chai/18th year, we also face challenges to our continued sustainability. We imagine that many small schools face the same issues of declining or stagnant enrollment and increasing costs. Moreover, while Lerner has generous and committed community support, it does not have many major donors, a significant established endowment, or resources from a well funded Jewish federation.

Our 2010 strategic plan projected that total enrollment at the Lerner School would reach 185 students. The reality was quite different.

For 15 of the last 18 years, the Lerner School was on a growth trajectory, reaching a height of enrollment in 2011-12 with 152 students in preschool-5th grade. Lerner's steady enrollment growth demand-

ed consideration of a building expansion. At the same time, the Durham-Chapel Hill Jewish community was considering the potential of a Jewish Community Center. In 2005 Lerner entered into a partnership with the Durham-Chapel Hill Jewish Federation to raise funds to build a new preschool wing onto the existing Lerner building and a Jewish Community Center. The preschool wing opened in 2009 with four classrooms, and the JCC opened in 2010 with dedicated classrooms for art and music and a full size gym for use during school hours. In our small community, both organizations recognized the benefits of partnership and our ability to accomplish together that which we could not do alone.

Our strategic plan developed in 2010 projected that by 2015, total enrollment at the Lerner School would reach 185 students, with 60 full-time preschoolers and 125 children in grades K-5. These enrollment forecasts predicted additional



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tuition revenue able to cover the new costs of mortgage debt on the preschool building and rental fees for the use of facilities at the newly built JCC. The reality, however, was quite different. Over the past 5 years, Lerner's combined attrition rate averaged 20% and enrollment into kindergarten dropped by 50%. At the same time tuition rose approximately 5% per year.

This year the school enrolled 131 students in preschool-5th grade. Based on current trends, next year we expect to sustain this enrollment but do not foresee reaching 152, and certainly not our hopeful 185 in the near future. While the partnership with the federation was the correct decision for the Lerner School and the community, the addition of mortgage and rental payments to the operating budget, coinciding with underenrollment in the preschool and decreased enrollment in elementary school, has led to a strain on Lerner's current finances. Over the past two years the school has experienced deficits in the operating budget leading to a decrease in reserves.

In some respects, our admissions decline and current enrollment plateau are not surprising. The continued pressure from stagnant wages across many sectors of our local economy and rising cost-of-living has made affording day school out of reach for many families. Our own observations support this hypothesis: of families that leave the school, 50% of those students go to public schools and 34% move out of the area. In addition, as enrollment has declined over the past few years, inquiries and tours of the school have increased, leading to a belief in a strong correlation between cost and commitment to attend. The school has an outstanding reputation for academics, with our graduating fifth graders sought after by local private schools, and our tuition is competitive with local independent schools.

Tuition and fees are out of reach for many, and there is often a gap between what families can afford to pay and what scholarship aid is available. Lerner allocates approximately 13% of the operating budget to scholarship assistance for 39% of enrolled students. While Lerner distributes its entire scholarship budget, demand exceeds quantity and approximately \$325,000 of the ask goes unfunded. Financial scholarship is funded through Lerner's operating budget as well as income from two small endowments and a federation allocation, which cover 3% and 7%, respectively, of financial scholarship awarded.

On top of this economic pressure, our market for eligible students

is small. We recently estimated the number of Jewish children in grades K-5 in Durham-Chapel Hill at between 700 and 1,000 potential students. At the high end of the scale, that would give the Lerner School a market penetration of 8.8%, more than four times the national non-Orthodox Jewish day school market share of 2.1%. While this speaks to great success at the Lerner School as compared to a national benchmark, it does raise the question, how many students

is it reasonable to enroll from our small eligible pool?

To address our enrollment challenges, we are undertaking several ventures. The board authorized a strategic expenditure to improve marketing of our value proposition, including highlighting of signature curriculum initiatives, such as the

Compassion Project and Environmental Curriculum. To broaden our eligible pool of students, we have increased recruitment efforts into the Raleigh market, which no longer has a Jewish day school. We are further cultivating synagogue and Chabad preschools as feeders for our elementary program. Even though our preschool just renewed its 5-Star license and received one of the highest programming scores, we are undertaking a thorough review of our preschool market and program to evaluate whether we can fill 60 full-time preschool slots.

To improve retention, the school has embarked on numerous undertakings, two of which are highlighted here (see inset). Finally, the finance committee and admissions director are investigating alternative tuition models and new grant and scholarship programs to help reduce barriers to entry and retain students through graduation. In the past, Lerner experimented with affordability grants

To address enrollment challenges, the board authorized a strategic expenditure to improve marketing of our value proposition, including highlighting of signature curriculum initiatives.

MOVING UP DAY

- Scheduled prior to re-enrollment date
- Students in each grade "move up" and experience a lesson in their future class
- Each student writes a letter about what they learned and their favorite activity
- Letters are appended to a curriculum guide and sent home to parents
- Each student is given a sticker that reads, "Ask me about Moving Up Day!"

FRESH LOOK TOURS

- Targeted to PreK parents with children entering kindergarteners the next fall
- Parents attend a small breakfast gathering and are asked to envision what it would be like for their child to have a Lerner education to 5th grade
- Admissions director then guides parents on a "tour" from K to 5th grade, highlighting Lerner's spiraled and integrated curriculum

to improve retention rates. It was successful in its first year but not in its second and the program is now under reconsideration to determine how best to reach appropriate families. Other initiatives

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 19]

RAVSAK Visits Bay Area Day Schools

■ By **BETTY WINN**, RAVSAK's Director of Leadership Initiatives

One of the things I miss most since retiring as a head of school is the sound of learning and laughter we so often take for granted that happen daily on our campuses. That's why I truly cherish the opportunities to visit schools and witness firsthand the excitement and passion within our RAVSAK schools. Just before Pesach I had the opportunity to take a road trip up to the Bay area in Northern California and visit seven schools.

While every school and community has its own individual characteristics and culture, I was especially struck by the collaborative spirit that has been nurtured and developed by the heads of school in the Bay area. The heads of nine RAVSAK schools, spanning a distance of approximately 125 miles, make time for monthly meetings to discuss how they can best work together to strength the Jewish community, support one another, and collaboratively support marketing and fundraising efforts. Bathea James, head of the Tehiyah Day School in Oakland, said that they consider their meeting time "sacred and everyone makes room in their schedule to attend." There is a sincere level of respect, professionalism, and community that the group shares. They work closely with one another as well as with the Jewish Federation, community centers, and local funders. All the schools share a vision of pluralism and the schools embrace the diversity of the area.

The first day I spent visiting Tehiyah Day School and Contra Costa Jewish Day School in the East Bay, where I had the opportunity to visit classrooms and see the students in action. At Tehiyah, from the hands-on, experiential KBridge Program to their incredibly colorful and creative art room, their commitment to a strong Jewish mission was clearly evident.

Contra Costa Jewish Day School was still kvelling in the success of their Blue and White Gala that took place the night before with tremendous support from the local Jewish community. I also had the pleasure of attending a board meeting with a group of highly professional and committed lay leaders and had a great visit with fellow Sulamite Dean Goldfein, Contra Costa's head.

Day two took me to the heart of San Francisco where I visited the Jewish Community High

School of the Bay and Brandeis Hillel's San Francisco campus. At JCHS Rabbi Howard Ruben had just returned from the 11th grade trip to Israel and a senior retreat to New Orleans focused on service learning. The college counseling office proudly displayed the acceptances of their college seniors to many highly competitive schools across the country. At Brandeis Hillel I learned about their focus on Hebrew and Judaic studies while meeting with their head Dr. Don Zimring and their Jewish studies chair, Debby Arzt-Mor.



I spent my last day in Foster City and Palo Alto at the Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School, Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School, and Kehillah Jewish High School. At Wornick, kindergarteners curiously studied the human body, fourth graders were preparing for their upcoming Gold Rush trip, and Dr. Barbara Gereboff explained their very innovative seventh grade philanthropy unit. Wornick shares space with the JCC, and the relationship between the two institutions is a model for all of us to learn from.



Julie Smith at Gideon Hausner took me on a tour of their new construction which will include a gymnasium and new outdoor play space, and I had the pleasure of listening to the talented kindergarteners during music class. My visit concluded at Kehillah Jewish High School. Rabbi Darren Kleinberg, who is completing his first year as head, shared his personal commitment to pluralism and his enthusiasm for the Kehillah community. The centerpiece of their annual gala, which had taken place just a few days prior, was a conversation on the State of Jewish Education in the 21st Century with Dr. Bruce Powell and Dr. Lee Shulman. It too was a huge success.



Kol hakavod to the Bay Area schools for their commitment to excellence and community! ■

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17]

under consideration are sliding scale and segmented tuition, grade-based tuition scale, steady tuition rates for particular grades based on multiyear commitments, etc.

Along with addressing enrollment issues, we are also developing plans to improve the school's financial sustainability. The board firmly believes that the Lerner School should be a community partner with our JCC, synagogues and other Jewish institutions, and be a financially strong organization with the ability to provide Jewish day school education to all families who desire it. We continue to partner with the federation and adjacent JCC to deliver programs that benefit all our organizations and enhance Jewish life in Durham-Chapel Hill. Due to the size of the federation campaign and other community priorities, the yearly federation allocation to the Lerner School contributes less than 1% to the school's operating budget. The board's development committee is evaluating our entire financial resource development program, and will craft the most efficient strategies for our limited professional development staff hours.

Although we are blessed with a donor base that contributes approximately \$185,000 (\$128,000 in direct ask; \$57,000 in fundraisers) per year, the average gift to our annual campaign hovers around \$500, with few consistent donors who gives over \$10,000 annually. Understanding capacity of our donors and potential avenues for additional fundraising will be key to supporting our academic programs and financial scholarship initiatives. To ensure the financial stability for Lerner well into the future, the board established an endowment campaign in 2013. We have initiated the campaign within our local community, but hope to find avenues to regional and national donors.

This past February, over 200 people attended The Lerner School's Chai/18th Year Gala, including founding families, community leaders, donors, teachers, alumni, and current Lerner parents. Everyone came together to share in Lerner's successes and celebrate what a passionate and dedicated community can create. Beyond being an enormously successful fundraising event, the evening highlighted the impact of Lerner far beyond just those students who had the opportunity to benefit from a Lerner School education. We celebrated how Lerner connects families to the Jewish community, creates a safe space for families to investigate their relationship to Judaism, partners in building and growing Jewish community institutions, and serves as a leadership incubator for local synagogues, the federation, the JCC and other Jewish and local nonprofit organizations. The Lerner School is clearly an integral piece of the vibrant Jewish Community in Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Day schools in small to midsize communities need support from outside funders who believe in the power of a Jewish community day school education and its impact on students, families and entire communities.

SANDRA E LERNER JEWISH COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL

FAST FACTS

Established: 1995 in Durham, North Carolina

Serves primarily Durham and Chapel Hill, as well as Raleigh and surrounding areas

- Jewish population (Durham-Chapel Hill): ca. 5000 households

Current enrollment: 131

- 46 in three preschool classes serving ages 2.5-5
- 85 in grades K-5; one class per grade

Budget: \$2,150,000

- Financial scholarship awarded: \$274,250 (13% of operating budget)
- Development goal: \$189,500

Our Chai Gala tribute book closed with the declaration “Chazak, chazak, ve-nitchazek חזק חזק ונתחזק”—Be strong, be strong, and we will be strengthened. Though the command may be in the singular, the result is in the plural. Our continuing message is that together our community built the Lerner School, and together we will sustain it for the next 18 years and beyond. We have also come to learn that the “community” to which we refer now encompasses the regional and national Jewish communities and day school organizations. We at Lerner recognize that our community alone, generous as it is, cannot sustain our school over the long term.

Day schools in small to midsize communities need support from outside funders who believe in the power of a Jewish community day school education and its impact on students, families and entire communities. 30% of community day school students are enrolled in small schools in small- and intermediate-sized communities, no small feat for these populations. Together, as a cohort of small schools, and as partners with regional and national day school funders, we can ensure that Jewish day school education continues to enhance Jewish literacy and enrich Jewish identities no matter where we reside. ■

Promoting Federation-Day School Collaboration to Address Sustainability in Smaller Communities

■ by **MARK L. GOLDSTEIN** and **MARILYN FORMAN CHANDLER**

In small Jewish communities, day schools and federations need to work together fully as partners that strengthen each other. Here are a number of important ways to connect these silos.

Many leaders in smaller Jewish communities found themselves a bit perplexed by national data released last year on Jewish day schools. (For this discussion, we include those communities that are in the Jewish Federations of North America [JFNA] intermediate and small community categories.) The data described nominal increases in day school enrollment, which, for the majority of smaller Jewish communities, was not the reality. At least 10 Jewish day schools in smaller communities had closed and many had suffered significant enrollment decline. As most smaller Jewish communities are served by a single Jewish day school, whether or not it succeeds has far reaching communal implications.

Sensing that these realities are not being reflected in the nationally aggregated data, the Jewish Federations of North America agreed to add to its annual General Assembly meeting schedule in 2011 a discussion of the realities of Jewish day schools in smaller Jewish communities—but the only available time was at 11:00 PM! However, the gravity of the situation prompted nearly 30 Jewish community leaders, representing 25 smaller Jewish communities, to discuss their day school sustainability well past midnight. And the conversation continued, at better hours, at the next General Assembly and through the ongoing efforts of a Jewish Day School Task Force among Jewish federation directors in smaller Jewish communities.

To better understand the situation, the Task Force organized

a push to schools in smaller communities to participate in the JData project, a comprehensive Jewish education data project of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University. Fifty-two schools across 40 different communities provided data, representing a 51% school and 69% community participation rate, and over 5000 students.

The findings documented some unique realities in smaller communities. Not surprisingly, there are fewer schools in smaller communities and those schools are smaller. Nearly 10% of these schools are on the precipice of steep decline; about 60% are in slight declines or are in stasis.

Schools in smaller communities are much more likely to experience large enrollment decreases than schools in larger communities. Data show that over the prior four-year period, two-thirds of schools in smaller communities experienced enrollment declines, including 18% losing more than 25% of their students. Attrition rates are higher in day schools in smaller communities than in larger ones. Because most smaller communities have only one day school, students who leave, for whatever reason, generally leave the Jewish day school marketplace. On average, the schools in smaller communities are operating at lower capacity rates than those in larger communities, are more financially precarious, and operate with proportionately larger deficits. And many schools in smaller communities struggle to find and retain qualified faculty and administrators.

Day schools should see themselves as community agencies, not merely organizations serving a core constituency. Federations should engage day schools as they do other community partners.



Mark L. Goldstein, executive director of the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Marilyn Forman Chandler, executive director of the Greensboro Jewish Federation, Greensboro, North Carolina, are co-chairs of the Task Force on Day School Sustainability of Jewish Federation Executive Directors in smaller Jewish communities. markg@jflv.org and mchandler@shalomgreensboro.org

Efforts to strategically focus on the unique needs of schools in smaller communities were the focus of a Deep Dive at the recent RAVSAK/PARDES conference in Los Angeles. For the first time—and thanks to an incentive grant from JFNA—federation representatives were encouraged to attend alongside their day school leadership to discuss sustainability issues. Follow up will certainly involve many national partners (JFNA, RAVSAK, PEJE, JData), and through the efforts of the federations' Jewish Day School Task Force intervention strategies will soon emerge.

But the situation remains quite sobering in many communities. The rate of enrollment decline and attrition, unused capacity with its carrying and opportunity costs, and weak finances are particularly acute in smaller communities, exacerbated by demographic trends and the rising costs of a day school education. Notwithstanding national intervention strategies, we believe the key to 'moving the needle' will be

strengthening the federation–day school alliance.

To do so we recommend the following:

Day schools should see themselves as veritable community agencies, not merely organizations whose primary focus is to serve their core constituency. Likewise, federations should similarly engage their day schools as they do other community partners. The distanced relationship found in larger communities, where an intermediary, such as a central agency or bureau, is typically utilized, is not an effective structure in smaller communities. It might be effective in limiting engagement during an allocations cycle, but when serious issues demand cooperative strategic relationships, the federation and the day school should both be at the table. Nothing is gained by “talking amongst ourselves” without the engagement and input of the other.

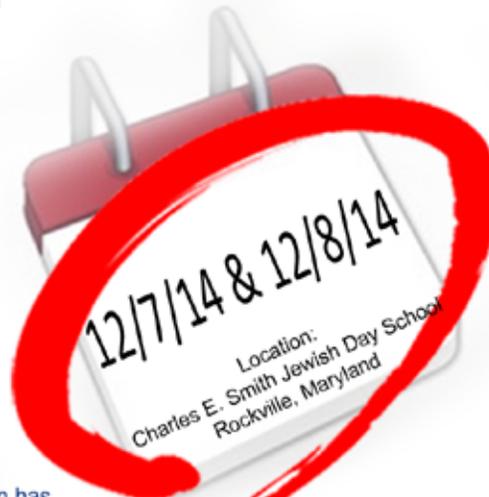
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In the Building: Beyond the Classroom

A gathering of experiential day school educators



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The field of Jewish experiential education has expanded significantly over the past decade. We invite you to join us at In the Building: Beyond the Classroom, a two-day gathering of international experiential educators in day schools from across the Jewish spectrum. Together we will share best practices, hear from inspirational speakers on topics of Jewish identity and experience, and think deeply and critically together about how to make our Avodat Kodesh even more impactful – join us!

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If you are interested in presenting on any of the above topics or others, including Israel, faculty engagement, student involvement, contact Miriam Stein – mstein@cesjds.org or 301-692-4960

Creating an Organizational Ecosystem

■ by **ANDREW DAVIDS** and **ETHAN TUCKER**

Leaders of an ambitious partnership in Jewish studies between a day school and a yeshiva seek to draw lessons from the collaboration while simultaneously expanding the project's impact to other schools.

In his biblical commentary, the 16th century Italian sage R. Ovadiah Sforno noted that God evaluated the sixth day of creation differently than the first five days. Focusing on the addition of the word **מאד** "very" in Genesis 1:31, Sforno states that "the goal of creation as a whole is very much better than the purpose of each component individually." This medieval rendition of the Aristotelian concept of "the whole being greater than the sum of the parts" can be particularly insightful for smaller Jewish organizations looking to enhance their impact through collaboration with others within their "organizational ecosystem." Through leveraging both shared and discrete assets, overlapping and disparate institutional goals can be more effectively realized.

For the past four years, Beit Rabban Day School, a community ECC-5th school, and Mechon Hadar, an institution of higher Jewish learning, based on the Upper West Side of Manhattan which draws students from all over North America, have had a deepening educational partnership that has operated under this premise. We believe this partnership has some valuable lessons for how day schools can thrive by drawing on the strengths of other communal institutions, particularly those focused on Jewish text learning.

A Day School-Yeshiva Partnership

The Beit Rabban-Mechon Hadar partnership has had several key elements.

Facilitated Havruta Study at Beit Rabban. Hadar fellows (recent college graduates) spend four hours a week facilitating havruta-based learning at Beit Rabban. Beit Rabban educators assign texts as part of their lesson plans and Hadar fellows work in small groups with the students, getting them to work through the ma-

terial on their own. Aside from the pedagogic benefits of this approach, the role modeling is powerful: students encounter full-time students of Torah who are not their teachers and to whom they can relate in a more informal way. Having more than one adult in the room during discussion also reinforces for students the legitimacy of multiple perspectives.

Afterschool Enrichment Opportunities. Over the years, several students have spent time learning in Hadar's Beit Midrash in the late afternoons, experiencing first-hand the power of immersive text-learning environments and seeing young adults enthusiastically embrace a culture of lifelong learning.

Professional Development for Faculty. Several times a year, Hadar faculty run a session for Beit Rabban faculty members. These sessions draw on the expertise and knowledge of the Hadar faculty and provide opportunities for Beit Rabban educators to further their own personal learning. A select group of Beit Rabban educators also attend a weeklong intensive for day school teachers during Hadar's summer session, which allows for much deeper interaction with the Hadar faculty.

Community Educational Events. Hadar and Beit Rabban collaborate to create evenings of learning for parents and the broader community. These events serve as potential recruitment opportunities for prospective parents, help cultivate relationships with current families and generally promote the school as a center of serious learning not just for children, but for all.

The Next Phase

Our shared institutional priorities are obvious: the cultivation of



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new generations of highly educated and committed Jews who will serve as leaders of the Jewish world of tomorrow. As an organic growth of our first phase of partnership, we are excited to take the next step. This summer, we are launching a new initiative anchored in a joint staff position: a Director of the Jewish Curriculum Project at Mechon Hadar and Jewish Studies at Beit Rabban. The initiative will advance Beit Rabban's agenda of raising the bar further on Jewish Studies at the school while simultaneously aiming to contribute to a national conversation about goals for Jewish education in classical texts.

Our goal is to integrate two central projects: intensive teaching and supervision in the classroom at Beit Rabban, and articulation of standards and benchmarks for fluency in Jewish learning in the early childhood and elementary years (N-8). By developing this second element within the context of a "lab school," the outcome will be informed by the dialogue between the material, the teachers, the students and the other key stakeholders of the school.

We recognize that day schools around the country are diverse, and different communities have different needs and goals. This initiative therefore aims to offer a vision of an a priori aspiration for fluency in Tanakh and rabbinics that can serve as the foundation for deeper learning in high school and beyond. The 21st century American Jewish community must educate Jewish students not only in Jewish identity and basic Jewish literacy, but must also train a cadre of learned Jews who will be culture bearers of our great tradition and be able to be original contributors to it as adults. Those aspirations require ambitious standards starting from the earliest ages.

Potential Promise for Smaller Schools

Our two institutions are blessed to share many types of proximity, including a commitment to a serious and open approach to Jewish learning and actual physical proximity on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. We also realize that our location provides access to a range of educational resources and talent to draw upon as this initiative moves forward. Opportunities to field-test material or observe other approaches at different day schools, or the ability to sit with other thought leaders engaged in the development of curriculum, textual analysis and the like are often either a walk or short drive away.

We also understand that many schools, including many smaller schools outside of large metropolitan areas, may find themselves either in a more limited organizational ecosystem or without the personnel, financial resources, or time to develop such a curriculum on their own. An important component of our educational vision is to build a collaborative relationship with such schools that allows these schools to include this work and our team as a part of their ecosystem. Having been developed and tested in small school that is intentionally nondenominational and envisioned as a flexible and user-friendly resource, we would hope that this may help other schools deepen their own Jewish studies program and further the educational aspirations of school leaders, parents and the community.



Lessons Learned About Collaboration

To this endeavor, we also bring some lessons learned over the past few years of our partnerships that can be applied to other types of collaborations that may be helpful and preempt misunderstandings or frustration.

Ensure clarity of organizational vision and mission. We found it quite important to both identify the overlapping areas of our vision and mission that could serve as the starting point for collaboration, and just as clearly identify differences, which can either serve the project or inspire individual work outside of the collaboration.

Define the scope of the project. If two Jews bring three opinions, two organizations with big aspirations can generate an ever-growing initiative that may quickly outpace organizational bandwidth. This is particularly true when developing a new project that will need to be supported while both partners need to attend to their ongoing work. Having a shared sense of the scope of the initiative or framing it initially as a first phase with discrete expectations can strengthen the possibility for a successful outcome, lead to a potential second phase, and keep everyone sane.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 54]

Making the Most of Technology in Small Schools

■ by **RUSSEL NEISS**

The author argues that for all that they may lack in funding for technology, small schools may have an advantage in getting it right: introducing technology where and when it supports strong education.

Many Jewish day schools, challenged by rising costs, increased competition, and a need to remain relevant, have begun to implement more robust technology integration into their curriculum and management. These technological initiatives are often sold to schools with the promise that they can simultaneously cut costs and increase the quality of instruction to students. While evidence to support the veracity of either of these claims is still lacking, it's clear that digital technologies are here to stay. That being said, smart administrators must consider the possible benefits and risks of how and to what extent these digital technologies should be implemented, and always think about how these technological tools help achieve the overarching educational goal of a school.

While this is true for every institution, it is especially true for small Jewish day schools, which lack resources such as adequate staff support, network enhancements, customization of software, equipment costs, to say nothing of keeping everything and everyone in the building up to date with the current best practices. Given this paradigm, one might assume that the best course of action for a small day school would be to look to their larger peer schools for inspiration; i.e., if a blended learning program works in a school of 800, why wouldn't it work for a school of 150? If the Los Angeles Unified School District can successfully roll out a 1-to-1 iPad program to 640,000 students, can it really be that difficult to roll one out to in a school with 64 middle schoolers?

The truth is, it's not self-evident that the cost savings that large urban charter schools are able to realize with blended learning will directly correlate on a per capita basis to small private schools. It's not a foregone conclusion that just because many

large private schools with 1-to-1 programs have dedicated help desk IT techs on staff to troubleshoot laptops that every small school should also. It's not clear that because some teachers with large class sizes have had success flipping their classroom, that other teachers will too.

We know that the size of the school matters. But why do we keep on treating technology implementation as if it were the same no matter what size the school is?

Smaller schools may be at a disadvantage because of their inability to take advantage of economies of scale, but their small size allows them to invest more effectively in human capital. Often administrators, teachers, parents and other stakeholders get caught up in the shininess of new hardware or a particularly slick piece of software, but forget that at its core technology integration still relies heavily on the humans who implement it.

It is almost always better to have an experienced educator making decisions regarding a school's educational technology than a specialized ed-tech director.

The paragraphs below explore this idea more in depth and offers some practical advice and guidance, paying particular attention to how smaller schools are better suited than their larger counterparts to effectively make the changes and investments in human capital necessary to ensure that even if a school doesn't have the latest and greatest "stuff" that they will nevertheless be able to transmit the skills and knowledge students need to learn to live effectively and productively in an increasingly global and digital world.

You don't need a hot-shot techie for a tech director

Often times smaller schools lament the fact that they're unable to hire an educational tech director with "technology bona fi-



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des” and instead find that their head of technology ends up being the teacher who just happens to know a little bit more than everyone else. The truth is, this isn’t a bad thing.

It is almost always better to have an experienced educator making educational technology related decisions at an institution. The voice of technology leadership at a school needs to be able to speak the language of teaching and learning and be able to translate between the rapidly growing and increasingly complex technological world in which we live but don’t always understand, and the educational space that teachers are pretty masterful in. While this means that certain technology functions and specialty tech needs will likely have to be served by private contractors, given budgetary constraints a small school will get far more bang for their buck from an educator who can push other faculty members to embrace digital learning tools rather than a technologist who might be more efficient at troubleshooting why a laptop doesn’t work. Put another way, hiring an educator as a tech director might not ensure that technology is used the most efficiently at your institution, but it does help to ensure that technology will be utilized in the most pedagogically sound ways throughout the school.

Technology decisions need to be made at the top levels of a school’s educational administrative team

Once upon a time when integrating technology into a school meant wiring classrooms to create school networks, buying large desktop computers and desks or tables to place them on, or making sure that there was storage space available for required servers like student management systems, many schools (particularly larger ones) treated technology as part of facilities management, and any technological staff would report to a school’s facilities director rather than the academic head of school. Small schools, particularly those that never invested in these systems to begin with because the economies of scale didn’t make them worthwhile, aren’t burdened by this problem.

And while this distinction of head of facilities and head of academics often doesn’t exist in a small institution where a head of school often serves every administrative function in the known universe, according to NAIS’s *Principles of Good Practices for Teaching & Learning in the Digital Age* technology decisions at the school need to be made by someone with the “training, authority, and support needed to influence key areas of policy development, decision-making, budget, and management” within an institution. If this doesn’t occur, you’re going to end up with a lot of expensive “stuff” locked up in a lab or closet, or laptop carts gathering dust, or being used ineffectively or in pedagogically unsound ways.

Create a “Nation of Priests”

At Mt. Sinai, God tells us to be a “nation of priests,” which is some-

what puzzling since other parts of the Torah focus on all of the special roles that kohanim play in terms of ritual worship for the Jewish people. How can we all be priests if there’s already a special group of people endowed with the skills and power to do this work for us? A similar paradigm is required for us if we want to successfully integrate technology in our schools. Technology knowledge cannot simply be the domain of one or two specialized individuals—it needs to be the entire school community. Schools need to promote an environment of professional learning and innovation that allows educators to experiment with new techniques and tools.



One easy initiative I brought to the day school I worked in New York City was a biweekly “sandbox” session where teachers could just come during a prep-period and play with new tools with their peers. There was no agenda to these meetings, but simply creating a space and a time that was dedicated to this small initiative produced significant gains in teachers’ comfort with technological tools and synergies between disciplines and teachers that previously didn’t exist. This means being willing to see beyond sometimes arbitrary distinctions between teachers (Judaic studies versus general, teachers of younger grades versus older, etc.) and just letting people get together to share best practices and experiment, but again, a smaller school here has an advantage over larger schools that require more bureaucratic infrastructure that may not allow for this sort of ad hoc experimenting and free flow of ideas.

By investing in people instead of things, and by playing to the strengths that small schools have over their larger counterparts, smaller schools can demonstrate effective technology leadership and help make their schools models for learning and living in an increasingly digital society. ■

Jewish Learning for What?

■ by **JONATHAN WOOCHEER**

The letter C appears to have assumed an especially prominent place in discourse about education today. There is, of course, the Common Core, the latest attempt to define and implement a set of national standards for what students should know and, even more importantly, be able to do with that knowledge, with a strong emphasis on so-called higher order thinking skills. And, there are, in various configurations, the four (or five, or six, or seven) Cs that name critical “21st century learning” skills, items such as creativity, collaboration, curiosity, communication, critical thinking, cross-cultural understanding, and others that have been suggested, seen as vital for students to be able to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Leaving aside the mnemonic value of encapsulating important concepts in this way, what the Common Core and 21st century learning skills have in common is recognition that old definitions of what counts as good education are no longer sufficient. It’s not that traditional goals like “literacy” and “numeracy” are to be set aside, but rather that they need to be redefined, with a particular emphasis on how students are able to become self-directed lifelong learners and on how they can use the knowledge they acquire to achieve larger goals, an economically viable career and a fulfilling life.

This is a time, I would suggest, when American Jewish education is beginning to undertake a similar rethinking of how it frames its goals to meet the needs and aspirations of 21st century Jews. Throughout my years in

the field, two terms have dominated much of Jewish education’s discourse about its purposes: “identity” and “continuity.” Jewish education, we argued, was our best means of “strengthening Jewish identity” and “ensuring Jewish continuity.”

This language, I would argue, is now outmoded. As a concept, “identity” is too vague to provide meaningful guidance in designing educational experiences and curricula, and its conventional translation into indicators such as ritual performances, positive dispositions toward one’s Jewishness, and acts of affiliation with Jewish institutions is increasingly out of touch with the dynamic and diverse landscape of contemporary Jewish self-ex-

Today’s focus is on helping learners engage with, appreciate, understand and employ Jewish approaches to dealing with life’s challenges and opportunities.

pression. “Continuity” is perhaps a hoped-for outcome of effective Jewish education, but made into a goal, it begs the questions “toward what end and for what reasons?”—questions we know today’s learners, young and older, are asking.

So, what, then, should we be aspiring to achieve in our Jewish educational endeavors? Is there a Jewish analog to the Common Core and 21st century learning skills? Happily, just this conversation is now beginning to percolate across the full spectrum of Jewish educational arenas—early childhood education,

day school, supplementary education, teen programs, Hillel and Jewish campus life, engagement efforts targeting young adults, and adult Jewish learning.

Over the last few months, I’ve had the opportunity to listen in on a number of these conversations, and I believe that a direction is beginning to emerge that holds great promise—albeit one that still requires much additional consideration, elaboration, and adaptation to various populations and settings. The common thread I see is a focus on helping learners engage with, appreciate, understand and employ characteristic and in some cases distinctive Jewish approaches to dealing with life’s challenges and opportunities—what we in our work at Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah call “Jewish sensibilities.”

In this view, the ultimate goal of Jewish education is to inspire and equip Jews (and others, if they so wish) to use Jewish wisdom—derived from Jewish texts, historical experience,

stories, practices, and communal interaction—to live more purposeful and fulfilling lives and to help shape a better world. The Jewish sensibilities we wish to encourage learners to internalize and express are compounds of cognitive, affective, behavioral and values-oriented elements—sensibilities like “betzelem Elokim,” “na’aseh ve-nishma,” “elu ve-elu,” “Shabbat,” “simchah,” and “brit.” (For a “starter list” of sensibilities, go to www.jewishsensibilities.org.)

These sensibilities constitute a Jewish vocabulary for addressing many of life’s deepest



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and most universal questions. But they also provide practical guidance for the here and now. Most important, these sensibilities, and others like them, are catalysts for ongoing conversation and creativity. Each opens up multiple and diverse possibilities for elaboration, interpretation, historical and textual exploration, and application in our lives. (For example, see what the organization Reboot has done to breathe new life into Shabbat with its “unplugging” manifesto and to building sukkot with Sukkah City.)

“Jewish sensibilities” constitute, of course, only one way to approach the organization and content of Jewish learning. What is important is less the specific approach than the general thrust: a thrust toward Jewish learning that is both deeply grounded in

Jewish tradition and directly relevant to the lives—the *whole* lives—we lead today. For day schools, the discussion underway on the goals and purposes of Jewish education, the outcomes we seek and how we achieve these, should lead to a thoroughgoing rethinking of both the content and organization of “Judaic studies” and other Jewish components of the day school program, like tefillah and holiday observances. Clearly, cognitive learning—what we think of as “literacy”—is a necessary but insufficient part of what day schools can and should provide. And if we think of our desired outcome in terms of how our students live, individually and as a community, and not just what they know or how they identify, then making the connection explicit between what and how they learn and the “sensibilities” we hope they bring to their

lives becomes a paramount focus.

Many day schools are already well along this path (and RAVSAK is providing strong leadership and support for this journey). Whether we ever codify the 21st century Jewish learning we seek in a “Jewish Common Core” or come up with a handy mnemonic to identify its key elements is immaterial. What is critical is that we recognize that we seek far more than “identity” or “continuity.” We seek to enrich and ennoble the lives of our students and their families, and through them, the society and world that we live in. And we do so by trying to bring alive for them the accumulating wisdom of a complex, multifarious tradition of which our learners are both inheritors and shapers. It’s a daunting task, but one we can embrace with humility and enthusiasm. ■



Head of School Professional Excellence Project

■ By **COOKI LEVY**, Project Director

As we approach the end of the pilot year of the RAVSAK Head of School Professional Excellence Project, I am pleased and proud to report that both our fellows and our deans feel enriched and rewarded from their participation in this program. Funded by the AVICHAH Foundation, the Ben and Esther Rosenbloom Foundation and an additional anonymous donor, PEP provided the opportunity for relatively new (or new to a school) heads of Jewish day schools to be coached by long-time, highly successful heads of Jewish day schools, whom we call deans.

The deans were trained in the specific skill set of coaching, enabling them to ask of their fellows the powerful questions that stimulate creative thinking, informed and confident decision-making, and reflective practice. The fellows have been able to strengthen their leadership, articulate their short-term and long-term goals and determine how these may be attained, and build effective partnerships with their board

chairs. They have come to appreciate that Jewish tradition must inform our work as school heads, and how to use Jewish texts, practice and core values to enhance their leadership.

Both the success we have enjoyed in this first year of PEP and the lessons we have learned about it have informed our planning for the 2014 cohort. Ten new fellows will join our deans at an orientation workshop in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where we

will meet together to share our goals and expectations, enhance our Jewish knowledge, and begin the coaching process.

We are most grateful to our funders who understand that good leaders, even great leaders, like great athletes, are enriched by working with coaches who recognize the kinds of issues, dilemmas and challenges that they face, and who are committed, as are we, to the ongoing strength of our Jewish day school system. ■

Hebrew Poetry Contest 2014

The blossoms have appeared in the land, / The time of singing has come; /
The song of the turtledove / Is heard in our land. Song of Songs 2:12

The task of Jewish day schools is to empower students to sing a *shir chadash*, a new song that expresses their own thoughts, feelings and aspirations through the language of our Jewish heritage. The RAVSAK Hebrew Poetry Contest inspires students to do precisely that. Hebrew has always been a language that Jews have shaped into poetry wherever they were; in fact, many of the greatest Hebrew poets have lived in the Diaspora, for whom Hebrew was a second language. For Jewish poets, Hebrew is the language of the heart, a time capsule that can transport them and their readers to a land of words, thoughts and dreams, where King David, Yehuda Halevi, and Rachel join company. By pouring themselves into Hebrew verse, our students are taking their own seats at this elite gathering.

Mazal tov to the more than 350 students from 17 schools who took part in this year's contest! Next year, we encourage all schools to partipate, so that the "song of the turtledove" can be heard in your hallways and classrooms.

Meet the Judge

Janice Silverman Rebibo, a Massachusetts native and native English speaker, is the author of four books of original Hebrew poetry, a volume of translations to English of the popular Israeli poetry of Natan Yonatan, *Within the Song To Live*, and her latest book, *My Beautiful Ballooning Heart*, her own collected English language poetry. In Israel, critics called Rebibo's work "a bold blend of two imposing literary traditions" and "a strategic breakthrough that added something new to the war of independence of Israel's consciousness." For over two decades, her Hebrew poetry was published and reviewed widely in Israel's major newspapers and literary journals and has been chosen for a number of popular websites. Her English poetry is included in several print anthologies and online journals originating in Israel and the United States. Janice is senior program officer and technology director of Hebrew at the Center, now part of the newly launched Institute for the Advancement of Hebrew at Middlebury.



Elementary Native

1st place

Omri Elhasid

Contra Costa Jewish Day School, Lafayette, California

To Fall Asleep

On my bed I lie,
And think about the day I've had.
Was it a good day, or a bad one?
And with what games I played?

"How was your day at school?"
My mother asks before bed.
"OK," I say, and then I tell her
About the book we read in class.

And then to my bed my dad comes and asks,
"How is it going in soccer?"
"We lose all the time," I tell him. "But everything is ok."

And then he leaves and turns off the lights,
And everything is silent.
And I, I dream about tomorrow.

להירדם

על מיטתי אני נשכב
וחושב על היום שהיה לי.
האם זה היה יום טוב, או יום רע?
ואלו משחקים שיחקתי?

"איך היה בית הספר היום?"
שואלת אמי לפני השינה.
"בסדר" אני אומר, ואז אני מספר
לה על הסיפור שקראנו בכיתה.

ואז אבא בא למיטתי ושואל
"איך הולך בכדורגל?"
ואני עונה "אנחנו מפסידים הרבה,
אבל הכל הולך בסדר."

ואז הוא הולך ומכבה את האורות,
והכל שקט ודממה.
ואני, אני חולם על היום הבא.

2nd Place

Gonni Ratzin

Yavneh Day School, Los Gatos, California

Swimming

שחיה

The water reaches my face
And all my body is wet
The water is hot and feels good
And makes my heart feel great.

המים פוגעים לי בפנים
וכל גופי עכשיו רטוב
הם חמים ונעימים
ובלב עושים לי טוב.

In the water dreams are sinking
And all my body is working hard
To push me further and further
In life and in the pool.

במים מחשבות צוללות
וכל גופי משתף פעולה
לדחוף אותי יותר רחוק
בחיים ובבריכה.

I want to improve
And work harder
In the water I swim hard
To be faster and stronger.

אני רוצה להשתפר
ועובד מאוד קשה
ובמים אני חותר
כדי להיות מהיר יותר.

3rd Place

Inbal Cohen

Brandeis Hillel Day School, San Rafael, California

The Sea

הים

Rush of the water, in front of my eyes
From there the sun rises and sets, from the end to the beginning
At night or in the morning, hot or cold
The sea is so beautiful
Yesterday, today and tomorrow
Sometimes it is calm, sometimes it is stormy
The sand is hot, young and plentiful, soft and completely placid
Placid... When the sea is calm, I look at the water and see a face
And this face really looks like mine
And then when the wind blows the wonderful drawing disappears
And we must go home
And we shall reacquaint tomorrow, sea.

רחש מים, מול העיניים
משם השמש יורדת ועולה, מהסוף להתחלה
בלילה או בוקר, חם או קר
הים יפה כל-כך
אתמול, היום וגם מחר
לפעמים הוא שקט, לפעמים הוא נסער
החול החם הוא צעיר ועשיר, רך ולגמרי רגוע
רגוע... כשהים רגוע אני מסתכלת על המים ורואה
פנים
והפנים האלו ממש דומות לשלי
ואז הרוח נושבת והציור הנפלא נעלם
וצריך ללכת הביתה
נתראה מחר ים!

Honorable Mention

Yoav Konstantino, Contra Costa Jewish Day School, Lafayette, California בדורגל, Mai Haller, Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School, Foster City, California הטיול, Amit Gross, Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School, Foster City, California יהונתן, Yonathan Elbaz, Contra Costa Jewish Day School, Lafayette, California

Hebrew Poetry Contest 2014

Elementary Nonnative

1st place

Gabriel Rothman

Tierney, Brandeis Hillel Day School, San Rafael, California

On

על

Scales on fish
Sandals on people
High tide on the beach

קשקשים על הדג
סנדלים על האנשים
גאות על החוף

Sand on the beach
Water in sea
Ayin in "al."

חול על החוף
מים על ים
ע על "על."

2nd Place

Gabriella Levin-Meer

Brandeis Hillel Day School, San Rafael, California

Beach

חוף

I'm at the beach, hot sand on my feet
The waves rear up and crash down
Small children play and build sandcastles
Bigger children play in the sea and adults lie on towels.
I run on the sand, I don't know where but my legs carry me to a castle of rocks
In the castle of rocks there is a fish but there isn't any water
The fish can't breathe!
I take the fish and throw him into the sea
The fish doesn't go away very fast
He just looks at me
It's as if he is saying "Thank you"
And I am saying "You're welcome"
Then he swims away
And I feel good.
Suddenly there is a big wave
And the wave crashes on me
I am soaking wet
But I am not sad
I laugh and run into the waves
I play in the sea with the fish.

אני בחוף, חול חם על כפות הרגליים שלי
הגלים מתרוממים ומתנפצים
ילדים קטנים משחקים ובוני ארמונות חול
ילדים בני-עשרה משחקים בים והמבוגרים שוכבים
על מגבות.
אני רצה על החול
אני לא יודעת לאן אבל הרגלים מביאות אותי
לארמון סלעים
ובארמון הסלעים יש דג, אבל אין מים
הדג לא יכול לנשום!
אני לוקחת את הדג וזורקת אותו לים
הדג לא מתרחק מהר מהר, הוא רק מסתכל עלי
זה כאילו הוא אומר "תודה"
ואני אומרת "בבקשה"
אז הוא שוחה לעומק
ואני מרגישה טוב.
פתאום יש גל גדול
והגל מתנפץ עלי
אני כולי רטובה
אבל אני לא עצובה
אני צוחקת ורצה לגלים
אני משחקת בים ועם הדגים.

3rd Place

Ezra Abudarham Ryan Rotholz, Aaron Widman, Liya Koifman, Molly Beth Naimer, and Avery Stendel

Akiva School, Westmount, Quebec

Song of The Sea

We sing to God because He is the strongest.
God opened the sea with His wind and closed it on the Egyptians.
God took us out of Egypt and saved us.
We sing to God because He is the strongest.

Song song song song of the sea
Song of the sea.

The nations didn't know what happened to the people of Israel.
When they heard that the chosen nation was coming to Israel they were scared.
Moses only wanted peace with the other nations
So there won't be war with the other nations all the time.

Song song song song of the sea
Song of the sea.

With God's wind the sea opened
The water stood like a wall
The water was standing when the people of Israel crossed the sea
With God's wind the sea closed.

Song song song song of the sea
Song of the sea.

The Egyptian horses and the Egyptian soldiers died in the sea
The Egyptians drowned in the sea like a stone
They sank to the bottom of the water,
Pharaoh's chariots and the army cast in the sea.

Song song song song of the sea
Song of the sea.

The people of Israel want to be in Israel forever
God will bring the people of Israel to the holy land.
The people wanted God to bring them to the land safely.
And they will live on Your land forever.

Song song song song of the sea
Song of the sea.

God will build the holy temple
On mount Moriah.
The temple will be big,
And all the Jews will pray there.

Song song song song of the sea
Song of the sea.

שירת הים

אנחנו שרים לה' כי הוא הכי חזק
ה' פתח את הים והוא סגר את הים על המיצרים
ה' הושיע והציל אותנו
ה' גאה גאה.

שירשיר שיר שירשירת הים
שירת הים.

העמים בארץ לא יודעים מה קרה לבני ישראל
כשהם שמעו שהעם שה' בחר בא, הם פחדו
משה רק רצה שלום עם העמים
שלא תהיה מלחמה כל השנים.

שירשיר שיר שירשירת הים
שירת הים.

ברוח ה' המים נפתחו
המים עמדו כמו קיר
המים עמדו כשבני ישראל עברו
ברוח ה' המים נסגרו.

שירשיר שיר שירשירת הים
שירת הים.

הסוסים והחילים המצריים מתו בים
המצרים טבעו בים כמו אבן
הם ירדו למצולות המים העמוקים
מרכבות פרעה וחילו ירה בים

שירשיר שיר שירשירת הים
שירת הים.

בני ישראל רצו להיות בישראל תמיד
ה' יקח את בני ישראל לארץ הקודש
בני ישראל רצו שה' יביא אותם לארץ בשלום
ויגורו בנחלתך תמיד

שירשיר שיר שירשירת הים
שירת הים

ה' יבנה את בית המקדש
על הר המוריה
הוא יהיה גדול
וכל היהודים יתפללו בו.

שירשיר שיר שירשירת הים
שירת הים.

Honorable Mention

Myles Sloan, Brandeis Hillel Day School, San Rafael, California ים צבעים של ים Maya Weiss, Contra Costa Jewish Day School, Lafayette, California מדה שאנחנו לובשים בחורף

Hebrew Poetry Contest 2014

Middle School Native

1st place

Marisa Avni

Arthur I. Mayer Jewish Academy, West Palm Beach, Florida

Dancing

Dancing is graceful.
When I dance I can feel who I am.
Dancing brings me joy,
And laughter ha ha ha.
When I dance I feel blessed.
When I spin I can feel the adrenaline.
I feel I can do anything.
I feel that within, in the morning and at night.
When I jump across the floor,
I feel such honor!
Dancing is everything.
I feel like I rule the world!
Then I come back down and I'm just another girl.

ריקוד

ריקוד הוא חגיגי.
כשאני רוקדת אני מרגישה אני.
ריקוד מביא לי שמחה,
וצחוק חה חה חה.
כשאני רוקדת אני מרגישה מבורכת.
אני מרגישה את האדרנלין כשאני מסתובבת
אני מרגישה שאני יכולה לעשות כל דבר,
אני מרגישה את זה בפנים, גם מוקדם וגם מאוחר.
כשאני מזנקת על הרצפה, אני מרגישה כבוד גדול!
הריקוד הוא כל יכול
אני מרגישה שאני שולטת בעולם!
ואז כשאני יורדת אני בדיוק כמו כולם.

2nd Place

Naama Gotesdyner

Yavneh Day School, Los Gatos, California

In a Faraway Land

In a faraway land
That is close to our own,
There is a world of dreams
With a reality unknown.

There is no way to get there
And hopefully it seems
That something will return you
To the world of dreams.

The simpleminded enter
Those can only come
If they believe in good
And can't do any harm.

But you need to be careful
There is a certain dread
When the innocent that enter
Leave with heavy heads.

It's not a choice to get there
And there's nothing you can
do
When in this world of dreams
Nightmares are dreams, too.

ארץ החלומות

בארץ רחוקה
שלעולם הזה נצמדת
יש ארץ חלומות
עם מציאות קצת מזויפת.

אין דרך להגיע
ויש רק לקוות
שמשוה יחזיר אותך
לארץ חלומות.

ארץ החלומות
מארחת רק תמימים
שעוד אין בה מחשבות
ורק בטוב מאמינים.

אבל צריך להיזהר
כי לא הכל מקסים
התמימים לשם באים
ויוצאים הכל יודעים.

זאת לא בחירה להגיע
ואין מה לעשות
שבעולם הזה
סיוטים הם גם חלומות.

3rd Place

Maya Kolyer

Yavneh Day School, Los Gatos, California

I Have a Little Seed

I have a little seed in my hand,
 I'll go outside and plant it by myself.
 It'll grow in a few years,
 Until it becomes a big tree with yummy fruit.
 The fruits will be big, wholesome apples
 The most delicious apples in the whole world.
 When more apples grow,
 My family will come and every one will be happy.
 When the tree is ready to fall,
 I'll cut it down and plant a grapefruit tree,
 The grapefruit tree will grow and grow,
 And my children will continue the cycle.

יש לי זרע קטן

יש לי זרע קטן ביד
 אלך בחוץ ואשתול אותו לבד.
 הוא יגדל בעוד כמה שנים
 עד שיהיה עץ גדול עם פרי טעים.
 הפרי יהיה תפוח מושלם,
 התפוח הכי טעים בעולם,
 וכשהיו עוד תפוחים
 המשפחה תהנה וכולם יהיו שמחים.
 וכשהעץ יהיה מוכן ליפול
 אגזום אותו ואשתול עץ אשכולית,
 עץ האשכולית יגדל ויגדל
 וילדי ימשיכו במעגל

Honorable Mention

Tzur Nehama, Silver Academy, נוף, Yonatan Margalit, Contra Costa Jewish Day School, Lafayette, California תוצרת הארץ, Eden Wolf, Yavneh Day School, Los Gatos, California יש לי יריד, Amar Araky Cohen, Arthur I. Mayer Jewish Academy, West Palm Beach, Florida אני

Middle School Nonnative

1st Place

Ahava Fox

Silver Academy, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

A Soldier

Don't go
 The sister told her brother
 Stay with me!
 I will return soon!
 The brother answered his sister,
 I will be with you forever.
 Next day he left.
 She was full of sorrow,
 Day and night she cried.
 He wrote her every day,
 But one day
 The letters stopped coming.
 The sister was waiting for three days,
 But still no answer.
 On the fourth day
 A man brought her letter,
 And the man was a soldier.

החייל

אל תלך
 אחות לאח אמרה
 תישאר כאן איתי
 אני חוזר בקרוב
 אח אמר לאחותו
 אני תמיד יהיה איתך
 הוא עזב למחרת
 והיא הייתה מלאה בצער
 יום ולילה היא בכתה
 הוא כתב לה כל יום
 אבל יום אחד
 המכתבים נפסקו
 האחות חיכתה שלושה ימים
 אבל עדיין אין מכתב
 אבל ביום הרביעי
 איש הגיש לה מכתב
 והאיש הזה
 היה חייל

2nd Place

Leah Oppenheimer

Chicago Jewish Day School, Chicago, Illinois

Ocean

ocean
 noise and silence
 blue and black
 water and ice
 life and death
 fish and plants
 a ship sails
 a real dream
 my ocean.

ים

ים
 רעש ושקט
 כחול ושחור
 מים וקרח
 חיים ומוות
 דגים וצמחים
 אונייה מפליגה
 חלום אמיתי
 הים שלי

Hebrew Poetry Contest 2014

3rd Place

Dalia Shvartsman

Silver Academy, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

My Land

Sprawling land,
Fresh air on the shore,
Terrible heat at noon,
Memories from the past are gliding along.
Here I am in front of the Kotel
Imagining to myself
The life at the time of the Temple
And reflecting about it.
I'm getting filled with Holy Spirit,
I am walking in the streets,
Enjoying the hospitality of the land
And breathing its smells.
From the all corners of the land
All the melodies and sounds,
All the prayers and the thoughts
Come together.
They lift up to the heavens.
The salvation will come
To our land, Israel.

ארץ רחבת ידיים

ארץ רחבת ידיים
אוויר צה, וחוף הים
חום נורא בצהריים
זכרונות חולפים מפעם
הנני לפני הכותל
מתארת לעצמי
איך הקריבו קרבנות,
והושבת בלבי
מתמלאת בקדושת רוח
מתהלכת ברחובות
נהנית מן האירוח
ונושמת את הריחות
מארבע רוחות הארץ
מתקבצות הכוונות.
בצלילים ומנגינות
הן נושאות תפילות לא-ל,
עוד יגיע הגואל
לארצינו, ישראל.

Honorable Mention

Bella Fisher, Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School, St. Louis, Missouri הרים רכבת, Jacob Green, Arthur I. Mayer Jewish Academy, West Palm Beach, Florida חלומות, Zack Berger, Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School, Foster City, California כמו פרחים, Sophie Greff, Agnon School, Beechwood, Ohio אני לא אעמוד מן הצד, Noa Marcus, Agnon School, Beechwood, Ohio היהודית שלי.

High School Native

1st Place

Idan Livnat

Weber School, Atlanta, Georgia

Stars

After a long tiring week
One night I went for a walk barefoot on the beach
I looked at the planets
And I returned there many times and I thought that
The wonders of the sky watch me seriously
For a moment I forgot what was going on in my life
I felt calm, almost complete.

There are a lot of different stars in the sky
There are big and small ones
Bright and dull ones
Stars in every way imaginable
The wonders of the sky embrace everything
They were existent before we were.
And will remain there even after we pass.

כוכבים

שבוע ארוך, מעייף
לילה, ואני מתהלך לי יחף
מסתכל בכוכבי הלכת
שבתי לשם הרבה פעמים וחשבתי
נפלאות השמים מסתכלים אלי ברצינות
לרגע שכחתי מה קורה בחיי
הרגשתי שלווח, כמעט שלמות.

יש כל מיני כוכבים בשמים
יש גדולים וקטנים
יש בהירים ואפלים
מכל הסוגים וכל המינים
נפלאות שמים כמו עוטפים את הכל
הם היו שם לפנינו
וישאר שם גם במותינו.

2nd Place

Tali Chais

New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California

Water

מים

Good times	זמנים יפים
Life signs	סימני חיים
Movement under the water bogs	תזוזה תחת בורות המים
Innocent creatures	יצורים תמימים
The swamp they breathe	את הביצה הם נושמים
Covered by the evening's light	עטופים באורות הערבים
In the blindness sand	בין חולות של עיוורון
They crawl on asphalt stones	הם זוחלים אל אבני בטון
And the sun looks only at them	והשמש רק אליהם מביטה
Omelet and olives	חביתה וזיתים
Grey gloves	מגפיים אפורים
And winter that doesn't bother only us.	וחורף שרק לנו לא מפריע

3rd Place

Sagiv Levi

New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California

Where?

לאן?

I am committed to life, Society's expectations are heavy like Atlas's, And I know they never end.	מחוייב אני לחיים, ציפיות החברה, כמו אטלס*, הם כבדים, ואני יודע שלעולם לא מסתיימים.
Many faces around me, Laughing, accelerating, surrounding; Is it only me that's slow?	הרבה פרצופים מסביבי, צוחקים, מאיצים, מקיפים; מה, רק אני כאן כל כך איטי?
My feet are covered with dust, Everything falls and sinks, I lift my head, I advance forward, And wait to hear.	רגלי מתכסות בעפר, הכל נופל ושוקע, מרים את הראש, מתקדם עוד טיפה, ושוב מחכה לשמוע.
I think of destiny, fate, and time And cannot decide— So where?	אני חושב על ייעוד, גורל, וזמן ולא מצליח להחליט— אז לאן?

Honorable Mention

Lieyah Dagan, New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California עולם מזויף, Dotan Brown, Weber School, Atlanta, Georgia השלט הבורד, Noam Gold, New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California צבע של תקוה, Eden Aviv, New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California מעגל החיים

Hebrew Poetry Contest 2014

High School Nonnative

1st Place

Ilan Palte

Weber School, Atlanta, Georgia

Pandora's Box

The first raindrop fell on the long road
Like the sun setting on the water,
And the heavens were closed
Like the hands of a girl who is hiding something.

Perhaps the secret will be uncovered in the future,
But only the girl will always know
What the secret will do to the world
And how it will change the lives of everyone.

תיבת פנדורה

הגשם ירד ברחוב הארוך
כמו שמש שוקעת על מים
וגם השמים היו סגורים
כמו ידיים של ילדה שמחביאה דברים.

אולי הסוד יתגלה בעתיד
אבל רק הילדה יודעת תמיד
מה הסוד יעשה לעולם
ואיך ישנה את חייהם של כולם.

2nd Place

Rachel Jones

Weber School, Atlanta, Georgia

Skeletal Digits

My hands in your hands
And I feel the sudden jolt of fear
Of cold,
Of distrust
And the strong desire to escape.
Your hands have lost their youth, their passion
And their purpose.
I was scared and your dying spirit haunted me.
You slept there in peace, in your confusion.
The world must have seemed so clear.
You were dying
You are dead.
You are buried.
Your name is engraved on the cold stone wall and I
Visit you when I can.
You're replaced by souls whose words
I understand and whose heartbeats I can
Feel.
I remember you vaguely like a character I knew briefly—
I pushed you away.
I long for you again.
It's too late to hold your skeletal digits.

אצבעות שלדיות

הידיים שלי בידיים שלך
ואני מרגישה את הטלטלה הפתאומית של פחד
של קור,
של חוסר אמון
ושל הרצון העז לברוח.
הידיים שלך איבדו את נעוריהן, התשוקה שלהן
והמטרה שלהן.
אני פחדתי והרוח הגוססת שלך רדפה אותי.
אתה שכבת שם בשלום, בבלבול שלך.
העולם בטח נראה כל כך ברור.
אתה גססת
אתה מת
אתה קבור.
שמך חקוק על קיר אבן קר ואני
מבקרת אותך מתי שבא לי.
אתה הוחלפת על ידי נשמות שאת המילים שלהן
אני מבינה ואת פעימות הלב שלהן אני יכולה
להרגיש.
אני זוכרת אותך במעורפל, כמו דמות שהכרתי לרגע -
אני דחפתי אותך משם.
אני מייחלת לך שוב.
זה מאוחר מדי להחזיק את האצבעות השלדיות שלך.

3rd Place

Aaron Drew

New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California

In the Air

She is in the air,
But cannot be smelled.

She is in the eyes of a new father,
But cannot be seen.

She is in the space between one hand in another,
But cannot be touched.

She is the spoonful of sugar in a bitter world,
But cannot be tasted.

She is the mellifluous note in a noisy world,
But cannot be heard.

Where is she?

היכן היא?

היא באוויר,
אבל לא יכול להריח אותה.

היא בעיניים של אבא חדש,
אבל לא יכול לראות אותה.

היא בתוך כפות ידיים של שניים, שאוחזים יד ביד
אבל לא יכול לגעת בה.

היא הכף המלאה בסוכר בעולם מר,
אבל לא יכול לטעום אותה.

היא התו המתוק כדבש בעולם רועש,
אבל לא יכול לשמוע אותה.

היכן היא?

Honorable Mention

Alan Ilyayev, Weber School, Atlanta, Georgia טיפת הגשם הראשונה , Bonnie Simanov, Weber School, Atlanta, Georgia
שבת שלום , Danielle Moalem, Milken Community School, Los Angeles, California העננים הלבנים ריחפו מעל
הם שואלים אותי איפה הבית Tova Beeber, Weber School, Atlanta, Georgia

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A Small Jewish Community and Its Day School: A Jewish Social Contract

■ by **JOSHUA ELKIN**

While this portrait is adapted from a larger case study project developed for the AVI CHAI Foundation, which focuses on strengthening the Judaic mission of day schools, all articles in this section are studies of day school adaptability, ingenuity and foresight.

Introduction

In 1998, the Charlotte Jewish community faced a profound and difficult challenge: how to offer a day school education for the widest range of families in what is, after all, a small Jewish community. The only day school in Charlotte was a Chabad-sponsored institution, which had been in existence since 1989. But there were leaders in the community who wanted to figure out ways to increase the outreach to families seeking a non-Orthodox education. The option of opening a second school was categorically ruled out by an outside consultant, who concluded that the community was simply too small to sustain two day schools.

What ensued was an extensive and challenging community-wide conversation during which many leaders, volunteers and professionals, squarely faced the challenge of determining how to chart a path whereby the school would morph into a community school (affiliated with RAVSAK), while at the same time continuing to be an acceptable vehicle for the Orthodox community. All parties at the table had to ask themselves the question: what are we willing to give up in order to sustain our school and insure its attractiveness for the widest possible population of Jews?

Communal leaders exhibited great resourcefulness in this process, as they have continued to do in the ensuing years. It is fair to say that each group around the table in 1998 gave up something for the sake of forging a compromise and making the school acceptable to families across the denominational

The smallness of the community and the interdependence of all segments of the community presented an unusual opportunity for building a sense of Klal Yisrael, all under the roof of one day school.

spectrum. Without watering down the Judaic program, the school leadership dedicated itself to shaping what they have called “common denominator Judaism” which would be both as welcoming and as rich as possible. The Chabad leadership agreed that the school would become independent. It would be board-driven with transparent governance. In addition, students with a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother would be accepted into the school. Girls would no longer be required to wear dresses, and boys would not be required to wear tzitzit under their clothing, as they had been when the school was under Chabad auspices. The Jewish life that would be taught would focus on the positive mitzvot instead of the negative ones.

There were some things Chabad leaders felt were essential to keep in place. Foremost among them was maintaining the leadership of Mariashi Groner, wife of the Chabad rabbi and founding head. Of equal importance was that the Judaic studies teachers would be Orthodox, observant Jews, keeping Shabbat and kashrut diligently.

This experience teaches that a small community can forge a seemingly impossible compromise, if the focus is on common goals. Leaders of different outlooks found a way to proceed forward. The smallness of the community and the interdependence of all segments of the community presented an unusual opportunity for building a sense of Klal Yisrael, all under the roof of one day school. Those who have reflected on the decision and how things have unfolded subsequently acknowledge that the community charted the best route possible at the time. It is a lesson in the challenges and opportunities inherent in working



Now an executive and leadership coach, Rabbi Joshua Elkin formerly served as head of school at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston, and as the founding executive director of PEJE. josh@joshelkin.com

across the usual denominational lines. In a smaller community like Charlotte, the only option was to figure out how to make the school work for everyone.

Managing Multiple Voices

Key to the success and sustainability of the school has been the continuity of strong leadership. Mariashi is the public face of the school. As the wife of the Lubavitcher rabbi in town and a proud scion of a distinguished Lubavitch family, Mariashi pulls off a remarkable dance as the head of a community day school, successfully negotiating the wide gaps between her own beliefs and practices and those of the people she encounters daily with her humility, charm and genuine care for the Jewish people. She presents the school as the essence of a “common denominator” approach to Judaism—reassuring parents that the Charlotte Jewish Day School can and does accommodate students from across the Jewish denominational spectrum. She is truly adept in working with all constituencies while preserving her own and her family’s sense of religious tradition and integrity.

Mariashi is a tireless leader. She is constantly engaged in overseeing all aspects of the school. She has multiple daily interactions with faculty, students, parents and board members. She is in touch with a number of alumni, who are an integral part of the CJDS narrative. She even taste tests the soup for the hot lunch that day. She speaks to the head of the preschool that is one of CJDS’s main feeder schools. She connects with the of the local federation about some benchmarking that the small intermediate communities of North America (of which Charlotte is one) are doing around day school finance and operations. Mariashi stays close to this process.

She has to manage even more constituents, including the rabbis and the volunteer leaders of the two synagogues which are housed on the same campus as CJDS. She and her board leaders spend a substantial amount of time building positive relationships with the Reform and Conservative synagogues. In addition, there are the monthly meetings of the executives of all the agencies that share the Shalom Park campus. Around that table communal fault lines are negotiated and mostly resolved before they get too contentious.

The board reflects the diversity of the school’s constituencies, with an intentional mix of the denominations. Regardless of the background, everyone acknowledges how adept Mariashi is at forging trusted relationships with all members of the board and with other communal leaders. Her love and passion for the school, as well as her longevity, position her to balance the many different voices with which she comes in contact.

But What Is “Common Denominator” Judaism?

As the Charlotte Jewish Day School morphed from an Orthodox to

a community school, it was clear to all that this would be the sole day school in town and that it would be essential that everyone commit themselves to the core of what all arms of Judaism affirm. On the one hand, the school had to be an acceptable vehicle for the Orthodox community; on the other hand, it had to be warm and embracing of the full range of Jewish children and families who might show up at the door. The head of school speaks constantly about “what we have in common,” or common denominator Judaism, but not by watering down the content. Rather, she strives to build a rich Judaic program and atmosphere, including preserving the number of hours of Judaic studies from the previous Chabad school, an intensive focus on Hebrew language, and a determination to keep the material fresh and varied, including new holiday celebrations each year (see below).

According to one longstanding board leader, the school has to appeal to three broad groupings: an Orthodox constituency; parents that mainly see the school as a bulwark against assimilation; and others who are running away from the public options and choosing CJDS over other private schools. Creating something in common among these groups is a tall order; yet, the school is remarkably effective in creating an environment where all students and their families are embraced and affirmed, whatever their affiliation or observance pattern might be.

The focus on character development provides a means for Jewish language and tradition to permeate the school in a way that is acceptable and inspiring to all.

In its Judaic studies curriculum, “common denominator” includes the same focus on excellence and constant improvement found in the school overall (see below). For example, the Tal Am program of Hebrew instruction is widely used in the school; however, the program is adapted to fit

CJDS’s particular needs. Teachers are expected to work over the summer to modify Hebrew reading pamphlets to reflect their own approaches.

The focus on character development provides another means for Jewish language and tradition to permeate the school in a way that is acceptable and inspiring to all. The CJDS leadership is concerned about social and emotional development, as well as intellectual and spiritual growth. Over the life of the school, there has been an increasing focus on middot and menshlichkeit. In addition, the faculty models how students should speak to each other. For example, teachers are trained not to yell, and perhaps for that reason there is remarkably little yelling in the school by students too.

Managing and Implementing Change in a Long-Established School

One of the critical ingredients in the school’s recipe for success and cohesion lies in its culture of constant self-improvement. This drive starts with the head and permeates every aspect of the school. In its Jewish life, Mariashi refuses to repeat holiday programs from year to year; every year she strives to add something new and fresh to school

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 40]

programs. (One can see the diversity and creativity of programming on YouTube.) The theme for each school year is different, forcing all members of the community to step out of their comfort zones.

The striving to achieve higher standards extends to the general studies domains as well. A number of years ago, the director of general studies came to the conclusion that the standardized testing which was being administered each year was not sufficiently geared to higher-functioning students. She courageously adopted ERB testing, which is widely used in the independent school world. Initially the scores were embarrassingly low, but with perseverance, the CJDS students were able to score at much higher levels even within a year.

To support this culture, the head of school invests heavily in her teachers' professional development by finding budgetary monies to bring high quality in-service sessions to the entire staff along with follow-up. Tellingly, a key local Reform rabbi praised CJDS and its leaders for their creative resource development, which helps ensure that teachers have what they need to be effective. Her appreciation surely reflects the fact that the school's strong educational practices have made it attractive to a broad swath of the Charlotte Jewish community.

Chabad is fortunate in that its movement stresses the importance of education, and so there are many qualified Judaics teachers—usually young women—available to come from outside Charlotte to teach at CJDS. Most of the Judaic staff has been teaching at the school for quite some time: 10, 15, 18 and 25 years. The teachers offer role models of how to live as shomer Shabbat, as was stipulated when the school morphed from a Chabad to a community school.

Board Leadership

Finding mission-appropriate leaders to sit on the day school board is not an easy task in any sized city—all the more difficult in a smaller community. We heard from a number of informants that multiple organizations keep approaching the same people to fill key slots. It is not uncommon to find board members of the day school who serve in volunteer leadership positions of their synagogue and even the federation. This reality has both minuses and pluses: the volunteers find their time, money and loyalty pulled in many directions; nonetheless, crossover leadership means that there are people who see the totality of the community and who adopt multiple perspectives as they work on issues, solve problems and plan for the future.

What strategies can a day school develop to retain volunteer talent over the long term who are willing to invest time, energy and financial resources? The head of school has come up with one solution: keep past presidents of the board engaged and involved in the school. While these long-time board members complain and joke about their longevity, they also know that this kind of continuity helps secure the school for the long run. This is a brilliant move that more schools should consider, especially in small communities. Past presidents are deeply invested in the school's success, and retain an indispensable fund of knowledge and expe-

rience that can strengthen the board's work. With the existence of term limits in the by-laws, CJDS is able to maintain continuity, but without foreclosing opportunities to recruit new volunteer talent for the board.

Links to Other Organizations

An additional factor garnering community support for the school is its location in Shalom Park, in close proximity to many other Jewish organizations. Examples include the baking of matzah with the students in the preschool, which is located right next door to the day school, and the musical performance of CJDS students at the recently held community-wide observance of Yom Hazikaron for fallen soldiers in Israel.

Two other examples of campus-based collaborations stand out. The day school has a partnership with two preschools, one next door on the campus, and the other housed a mile away at the Chabad facility. The collaboration, JIE (Joined in Education), provides a vehicle for the three schools to raise funds to support their program. Their joint efforts yield greater returns than three separate programs.

The campus also provides a special setting for intergenerational programming, with the day school students visiting senior citizens regularly at the JCC on the campus. The physical proximity of all the organizations makes this kind of intergenerational activity natural and organic to the educational enterprise. Though the community may be small, it is tight, interdependent, and strives to create something larger than the sum of its parts.

The Social Contract

The Charlotte Jewish Day School is able to survive thanks to two main factors. At the beginning, the stakeholders arrived at a kind of social contract—Orthodox teachers, community day school—that required all parties to give up something in order to create a new whole that would work for the most people. This agreement required a complex dance among all the players, one that might not work elsewhere. Yet the contract has worked spectacularly in Charlotte for over 25 years, where the school has grown and thrived, receiving enthusiastic support from Jews of all denominations.

The second foundation to the school's success has been leadership, both professional and lay. Both have demonstrated extraordinary consistency during the school's life from the beginning. Lay leaders ensured that the city established one, unified, community school, on terms that people could live with. The persistence of former presidents on the board long after they finish serving their term has established a school community that is consistent and strong, with wise leaders devoted to the school for the long haul. Mariashi has given the school a steady voice and vision to match her dedication and passion for Jewish learning.

Nonetheless, Mariashi's longevity in the position renders the challenge of leadership transition at CJDS even more acute. The difficulty that all schools face in finding a new leader is compounded by

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A Small Jewish Community with a Big Educational Impact

■ by **RAQUEL KATZKOWICZ**

The Jewish community in Quito, Ecuador, has found an original formula for preserving its values in the conception of its day school: combining top-level education for all with a distinctly Jewish secular atmosphere.

The Einstein School in Quito, Ecuador, offers a unique model of a thriving Jewish school in a predominantly Catholic country with a small Jewish community. What characterizes our school is not so much its size (700 students) as its interest in offering an educational model based on cutting-edge methodology and research at the service of the larger Quito community. Our aim has been to achieve a quality secular education based on a set of values revolving around freedom, the quest for truth, respect for others, justice and peace, i.e., values closely aligned with those that Judaism has contributed to humanity.

Given the small number of Jews in Ecuador (currently about 600), the Einstein School, since its beginning, opened its doors to non-Jews, who have always accounted for a large majority (currently about 90%) of the student population. Today our classrooms are filled with students who are Jews, Catholics, Protestants, evangelicals, Baha'is and agnostics, within a climate of total respect and mutual enrichment. This means that, from the time they are very young, students are able to develop an open-minded attitude towards the ideas and contributions of others.

We believe that having opted to establish a school with a diverse population had less to do with sustainability and more to do with a decision, from the start, to celebrate diversity and tolerance and to contribute to international awareness. These are qualities that we have maintained and reaffirmed through the adoption of the three International Baccalaureate programs.

Background

Our school's history dates back to an oral book-report contest held at another school in Quito, in which one of the students publicly denied the twentieth-century Holocaust and alleged that the concept had been "made up" by the Jewish people. This statement was received with indignation not only by members of the local Jewish community but also by the others in attendance. Even though a formal apology was issued by the school that had organized the event, members of the community

deemed it necessary to establish a school based on the permanent pursuit of academic excellence and a framework of respect for diversity and the humanistic values of Judaism, a school open to children and young people without regard for nationality, race or religious creed.

Thus, a vital aspect in those initial stages was to consolidate

a pedagogical proposal seeking excellence and incorporating the latest contributions to educational research. In the 1960s, Ecuador's educational system was reformulated with the implementation of the First National Education Plan, which entailed the incorporation of modern teaching programs. In this framework, our school proposed an innovative academic system in which the students were the protagonists of the educational process, with the teachers guiding learning, encouraging students' individual pursuit of knowledge and assessing according to each student's particular way of learning. With regard to behavior policies, our school's model from the beginning preferred reflection and respect towards others, with the idea of building upstanding, independent students aware of, and concerned

Establishing a school with a mixed population had more to do with a decision, from the start, to celebrate diversity and tolerance and to contribute to international awareness.



Dr. Raquel Katzkowicz is a UNESCO and IB consultant, former principal of two Jewish schools in Montevideo, Uruguay, and Einstein's head of school since August 2006. katzkowicz@einstein.k12.ec



about, themselves, others and their environments.

Alongside this focus on personalized instruction based on students' experiences and using dialogue as a key aspect of education, it was considered important to create a bi-

lingual school. A debate arose around whether Hebrew should be the second language, following the tradition of Jewish schools around the world. However, the final decision was to opt for English and to incorporate Hebrew and French as third languages.

Jewish Studies in the Curriculum

Our current curriculum combines the three International Baccalaureate programs (the Primary Years Program, the Middle Years Program and the Diploma Program) with requirements of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and our Jewish studies curriculum.

All students have classes in Jewish culture from preschool through the twelfth grade. Using a non-religious approach, the subject content ranges from the history of the Jewish people, to traditions and celebrations, to current affairs in the Middle East. This helps Jewish students build their identity and non-Jewish students to understand the underpinnings of Judaic values in Western culture.

All students also have obligatory classes in Hebrew as a third language from preschool through third grade, after which they may opt to continue with Hebrew or to take French, thus giving them freedom to choose as a function of personal aptitudes and individual interests. Every year there are several non-Jewish students that choose Hebrew.

Through the Primary Years Program, the Middle Years Program and the Diploma Program, we encourage appropriation of the IB learner profile. Exposure to multiple cultures and different viewpoints through our curriculum supports the development of

Our students internalize and appropriate the dilemmas and issues that the Jewish people and the State of Israel have experienced in the past and are facing now.

one of the key attributes: open-mindedness and an international mentality. This is complemented by the fact that we also have teachers from a variety of countries. Currently, 36 of our teachers are not from Ecuador, and this includes teachers

that come from Israel (shlichim).

The international mentality is reinforced through a school calendar that celebrates all of the Jewish holidays (Luach Hashaná Haivri) and commemorates national holidays as well.

It is also worthwhile to note that, since we offer secular education, weekly religious instruction takes place through the Talmud Tora, under the supervision of the rabbi at the Jewish community center and synagogue complex, which is located just five blocks away from our school. It is there that our Jewish students also have access to activities and youth movements such as HaNoar HaTzioni.

Outreach

As an International Baccalaureate school offering all three programs, our school has hosted workshops on a number of occasions for participants from around the country and the region, and members of our staff have served as advisors for candidate schools and members of accreditation teams. However, our contribution to the larger educational community has also focused on issues of particular importance for Jewish schools. Some seven years ago, our school began working closely with representatives from the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and the local Jewish community to develop a unit on the Holocaust, human rights and recent genocides. This unit was officially adopted as part of the world history curriculum in high schools nationwide as of the 2008-2009 academic year and serves as the framework for research on these topics for annual competitions

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Meeting a Need by Addressing Special Needs

■ Interview with **ILANA RUSKAY-KIDD**

The head of a new school for students with language-based disabilities explains the kinds of conversations, choices and relationships that have informed the school's vision and formation.

Tell us about the Shefa School, including whom it's for, grades, number of students, as well as the process by which the school was founded.

The Shefa School was created out of the community's experiences of students and families who loved being in Jewish day schools and all that's a part of Jewish day schools—the sense of community and holistic Jewish environment—who were diagnosed with a learning disability and experienced the devastation that ensues from having to leave their Jewish day school where their siblings, cousins and friends are. Being in the large educational marketplace of New York City, families are opting for wonderful private secular schools that serve kids with special needs. And I heard countless stories of families who felt that their child's special needs were then being very well served but their Jewish needs were not.

Shefa is for children with language-based learning disabilities, with average to above average intelligence, who are unable to be successful in a mainstream setting. This fall we'll start with two classes of 12 students each, for kids ages 7-10, with mixed second-third and fourth-fifth grades, and then will be broken up into more homogeneous groupings during language arts and math classes. Eventually we'll be a K-8 school. The reason we're starting with second grade is that language-based disabilities often don't get diagnosed until formal reading and writing instruction takes place.

How did you personally decide that it was necessary to create this school?

For me, it was having gone to Jewish day school and having seen students struggling; having worked in the JCC in Manhattan's preschool where we had a wonderful inclusion program and then we were not able to send some of our students with special needs on to the Jewish day schools; and hearing many stories from friends and people in the community.

How did you go about creating this new type of school?

I began by doing a pre-feasibility study. I met with tens of parents who might have been interested in this program when their children were in this situation. I spoke with Jewish educators and communal leaders to gauge their interest and garner their in-

sights. Ultimately I wanted to answer the question, Was this a good idea? After a summer of research, the enthusiasm was so powerful that it went from "a good idea" to "this must get done."

Then I worked on a business plan and talked with leaders of other special schools. We looked at ex-

cellent secular schools as a model for instructional design and financial management for this kind of organization.

Why did you choose to create a separate school and not a program within a larger school?

I did have preliminary conversations with some day schools. In New York, the reality of a very tight and expensive real estate market made it hard to imagine building on a campus. Schools didn't have the room and/or the will. While I would strongly

For parents, the pain of taking children out of a day school is the loss of Jewish community, Jewish ritual, the study of Torah and the broader connection that Jewish day schools offer to children in their Jewish lives.



Ilana Ruskay-Kidd, founding head of school at the Shefa School in New York City, previously served as the director of The Saul and Carole Zabar Nursery School at the JCC in Manhattan. ilana@shefaschool.org

encourage schools to explore ways to accommodate special needs students, there are many parents who are happy to have their students at a school where they won't be seen as different. For some families it is a positive for us to be a separate school, a place where students will spend time repairing their damaged self-esteem and hopefully re-integrate into a mainstream school when they're ready.

How do you decide whom the school cannot serve?

In many ways this was the hardest decision we had to make. There is certainly more than one group of students who need a school to serve them. But all educators warned us that in order to produce excellence we needed to focus on one targeted population and not try to serve everyone.

I spoke to many day schools in the community to find out who are the students leaving and where are they going. I discovered that the biggest number of students leaving were for language-based learning disabilities. It seemed the right place to begin. The idea for this kind of school has been discussed for some time. I think the reason it never got off the ground before is because people were worried precisely about this issue of having to leave out some children.

My inspiration has come from the famous expression from Pirkei Avot: "You are not required to finish the work, nor are you free to desist from it." My hope is that someone else will open another program for other students, or we'll be in a position in 5-10 years to open a second program.

What have been your experiences, successes and challenges, in finding and dealing with...

Parents?

Excellent! We have found that there is a tremendous desire for our school, not just from New York City but also New Jersey, Long Island, Westchester and deep into the five boroughs. It has been amazing to see parents willing to take the jump, the leap of faith required to entrust their children with us. After all, Shefa has no history or track record for them to draw upon. The willingness of these parents to sign on speaks to their commitment to their children and to Jewish education.

Funders?

Obviously like any nonprofit organization, fundraising is an uphill battle. That said, we have been extremely blessed with the response to our school. The larger Jewish community regards Shefa as filling a significant gap that truly requires attention. We've received support not just from people who are directly affected by this issue. The generosity that people have shown toward Shefa has been especially moving.

The larger Jewish community, including other day schools?

Jewish day schools have been terrific—remarkably welcoming and excited by our arrival. Shefa solves one of their problems: their in-

ability effectively to serve some of their students and their sense of guilt and helplessness that follows when they don't have adequate Jewish alternatives. We've been extremely careful to message that we have no desire to take away students that they can serve. In the future, we hope that those schools will be able to service more students, and we envision our role as offering a model and services that can enable mainstream day schools to serve a broader spectrum of students. We also intend to enable students to return to those schools after working with us.

The question about day schools being models of inclusion is often discussed. We are naturally in favor of schools being as inclusive as possible. That said, there is room in our community for both mainstream and niche schools. No one model is "right."

Qualified faculty?

We've received hundreds of resumes. Clearly the school has tapped into a wellspring of enthusiasm. The most moving notes have come from college students and beyond who themselves have a personal connection to these challenges, whether they've experienced them themselves or had siblings or friends with these challenges. Finding teachers with both strong special education credentials and Jewish studies background is a tall order, but we've succeeded in filling most of our positions.

Do you think that the Shefa model is replicable in other communities, or is New York unique because of its size?

I do not think the Shefa School is a solution across the nation in this precise form. It could be replicated in other large cities. In places with smaller communities, programs lodged within schools are probably the more appropriate scenario. But our hope is that while Shefa itself might not be the right model, we might have much to teach in terms of academic excellence and best practices and will inspire conversations within communities about what might be the best approach for increasing capacity to serve students with special needs.

In particular, we believe strongly in uncoupling Hebrew dual-language as a necessity for some students, particularly those with language-based learning disabilities, where language is often the area of challenge. In interviewing over 100 parents, what I witnessed was that the pain of taking their child out of a Jewish day school was not that they wouldn't be able to conjugate Hebrew in the past tense. The pain was the loss of Jewish community, Jewish ritual, the study of Torah and the broader connection that Jewish day schools offer to children in their Jewish lives.

Most Jewish day schools see as their mission to serve all Jewish children; even if that's not always realistic, schools often try hard to accommodate as many students as possible. Do you think there's value in having more day schools be "niche" schools, whether specializing in working with special needs or in other ways?

I think the day schools need to understand it all as differentiation, and differentiation is not easy or always well done. Schools need to

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A Primer for School Growth

■ by **DANIEL ALTER**

The joy of watching a day school grow comes with a great many challenges that are often unanticipated and difficult to prepare for. Alter offers a roadmap based on his school's own navigation of this process.

A few years ago I organized a meeting for our eighth grade parents to discuss an upcoming school trip. The first two parents who arrived began talking with each other, and it became immediately apparent that they had never met. I was shocked! After all, we were a small school that was proud of the fact that our school community feels like a family. How could parents of children in the same school, let alone the same class, not know each other? In discussing this episode with other faculty it became clear to us that the nature of our school community was changing.

When I began my tenure as head of school at Denver Academy of Torah our school population was hovering between eighty and ninety students. Next year we expect to reach a student population of close to two hundred. As our student population has grown and we have transitioned from a small school to a mid-sized school, we have been forced to think about the impact of this growth on our school ecosystem and respond accordingly. We have tried to be proactive when possible, but every so often we find new unexpected areas of impact. Virtually every aspect of school life has been affected in some way. Here are areas where we have had to make changes as our school has grown.

Marketing

For many years our school marketed itself as providing individualized attention through a small teacher to student ratio. As our typical class sizes grew from an average size of eight to sixteen students, and now will often reach twenty students or more, we have had to rebrand ourselves. Ironically, we now talk about the academic and social benefits of large classes. While both messages are true, it is virtually impossible to move from one identity

to the other overnight. It is critical that school leadership think in a proactive way about how to slowly shift the message in a way that resonates and is genuine. Shifting the message in such a drastic fashion requires forethought and time.

Professional development

One of our sources of strength has been the achievement of teacher stability and a low turnover rate. Now, however, our teachers who were afforded the luxury of teaching small classes for many years must teach classes that are more than double the size of what they were once used to. Professional development for our teachers in recent years has focused on pedagogical skills that support them in differentiating and individualizing curriculum, a more significant challenge as class size grows.

As our typical class sizes grew from eight to sixteen students to twenty or more, we have had to rebrand ourselves. Ironically, we now talk about the academic and social benefits of large classes.

Admissions

This last academic year was the first time in our school's history that we had to contend with fully enrolled classes, and the first year we had a waiting list. As a result, we have had to reexamine admission policies. In the past,

certain policies were driven by a desire to fill empty seats for purposes of improved socialization. In a very small class, difficult or insurmountable social challenges can exist. As a result, growing the size of the class becomes a priority, often leading to overzealousness to accept new students even when they are not a good fit for the school.

Additionally, schools are often at the mercy of families who request far more tuition assistance than what is fair and reasonable or make other demands on the school. While we continue to see ourselves as a school with a mission to serve our constituency, today we find ourselves in a stronger position to make decisions



*Rabbi Daniel Alter is the head of school at Denver Academy of Torah and Rosh Kehillah of the DAT Community.
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that are in the best interest of our school and our students. Our admission policies have allowed for stricter evaluation of what a family offers as far as financial, goodwill and volunteer resources.

Development

Our school has a lean but strong development office. Although our annual fundraising success continues to grow annually, we need to be cautious before patting ourselves on the back. As our school has grown we now have more core stakeholders in the form of parents, grandparents and other friends of the school. As such it is natural and necessary that our development efforts should grow at the same pace. Of course, more students in Jewish day school often means more money to be raised due to the high percentage of tuition assistance we provide. It is important that growing schools remain vigilant against a false sense of success due to population growth.

Capital plans

We have run out of space. We are desperately short of classrooms, administrative offices and storage space, and we need a larger lunchroom. Capital campaigns require fundraising that can be 10-30 times the size of annual fundraising and require intensive planning, organization and effort. Growth can outpace a school's capacity and resources, in which case it is important to manage the growth and plan appropriately.

Policies and guidelines

On the first day of this school year we discovered a major problem with our student pick-up procedures at the end of the day. For several years, we had managed the long line of cars awaiting children and carpool members with an administrator who walked the car-line and transmitted the names of waiting families via walkie-talkie to a teacher inside the building. The corresponding children were then sent outside to meet their ride. This year, however, the car line was so long that it wound through the entire parking lot and blocked street traffic! A new protocol was quickly developed and implemented. This incident inspired us to examine all our policies to ensure that growth would not impede other school routines.

Staffing

As our school has grown we have had to hire more teacher's aides. Our front office is busier and requires more personnel as well.

School culture

Small schools tend to be close-knit volunteer-oriented institutions.

Parents are often incredibly invested and more willing to forgo weaknesses in the academic or extracurricular program. The warmth and family feel of the school is perceived by parents as a compensation for other challenges. As schools grow, increased resources translate into enhanced levels of professionalism. The downside of this change often means less direct involvement on the part of parents. This is an issue that larger schools need to consider in ensuring that parents remain invested in the school.

Security

In a small school the faculty and staff will quickly recognize if a child is missing from class, are familiar with the nature of each student's



This year the car line was so long that it wound through the entire parking lot and blocked street traffic!

specific allergies, and can anticipate who is most likely to get into a fight at recess. As a school grows, this level of awareness isn't realistic. Procedures and protocols become critical to ensure vigilance when an intimate familiarity with every student's personality and medical issues is not possible, and the student body grows beyond minimal numbers.

Additionally, in a small school a stranger is far more conspicuous than in a larger school. Someone who is not part of the school community was once easily recognizable, affording an internal level of security with regard to strangers which we no longer have. Recognizing this shift has again necessitated a higher standard of vigilance and new policies with managing our entrances and visitors.

We hope that this list will inspire other schools going through similar changes to think proactively about the many changes that will occur as the character of a school changes due to growth. ■

■ By **RABBI REBECCA BEN-GIDEON**, Head of School, Madison Jewish Community Day School, Madison, Wisconsin

For busy parents of school-aged children whose time is at a premium, finding an hour or two for Jewish learning can often seem impossible. Yet we also know that parents choose Jewish day schools partly for what they can bring to their adult lives (“Does it Fit? Unconventional Thoughts about School Choice,” *HaYidion* Spring 2008). For example, parents considering our school often ask whether we offer anything for adults whose own Jewish education ended long ago.

This year, we sought to offer a regular, substantial adult education class as a means of increasing social bonds between families and as a response to these parent requests for opportunities to increase their own Jewish knowledge. In the fall we launched a Chai Mitzvah group as a means of addressing both of these needs.

Chai Mitzvah is a national adult Jewish learning initiative built around a series of monthly group learning sessions on topics such as gratitude, mindfulness, philanthropy and interpersonal relationships. Par-

ticipants also choose a personal learning goal or project in the areas of ritual, social action and Jewish learning. We offered the program to any member of the community with children in grades PK-5. In this way, our school could offer a service to the wider community as well as build our brand as a center of Jewish learning where parents can find study opportunities that will enrich the whole family.

Our group consists of 12 members including parents, prospective parents, a grandparent and two community members who

send their children to synagogue-based supplemental programs. The group provides a safe environment where learners can reflect on issues of identity, meaning and the challenges of parenthood.

The curriculum is flexible enough that we are able to make sure that each session includes suggestions for ways to bring the topic of the night home to the family. In a session on philanthropy in the fall, we talked about how to set up a tzedakah night as part of Hanukkah celebrations. And at a recent meeting, we emphasized what a powerful example it is just to tell your child that you are leaving them with a sitter so that you can go study with the rabbi at Chai Mitzvah class.

In this way, our school, with the help of the Chai Mitzvah curriculum, is helping to build a strong foundation for students to grow into adults who will continue Jewish learning throughout their lives.

To learn more or sign up your school, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at erabin@ravsak.org. ■

Meeting a Need by Addressing Special Needs

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be able to tell parents, “We’ll meet your kids where they are.” There should be extra math groups for high achievers, and Orton Gillingham sessions for students with reading challenges. Schools need to devote themselves to sending the right messages and finding the needed resources. We often hear that schools can’t afford to do it, but I think they can’t afford *not* to do it. The choice is between the cost of bringing in the resources versus losing students and potentially their families as well. Schools should do this from the perspective of fulfilling their mission, but also there is a financial incentive to the school.

From your experience so far, what lessons have you learned that you’d like to share with the field?

On the positive side, I’ve been moved by the extent to which day schools have truly been thinking about, caring about serving their students. The down side is, there is not enough open discussion about these challenges. Schools should discuss them more openly and look to share ideas and resources. A lot of research is available about how to serve language-based disabilities. We have the opportunity to learn from experts and to look to secular schools that have succeeded in working with different populations. ■



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A School Grows in Washington Insights on Opening a Second Campus

■ by **RONIT GREENSTEIN**

The move from one campus to two solves space issues while challenging a school's sense of unity and intimacy among students and faculty. Greenstein describes changes and innovations her school developed to meet these challenges.

The fall of 2013 at the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital (JPDS-NC) was a time of firsts: the first days of 5774, the first days of the academic year, and our first days as one school on two campuses. The expansion process had begun three years earlier, as the population of young Jewish families in the District of Columbia and surrounding areas rose and there was increased demand for quality Jewish day school education.

A Second Home

Based on the results of a detailed survey, we knew that we needed to find a second campus within a ten-minute drive from the current school. The board found a suitable building already zoned as a school one mile away. The building even had Jewish roots and a direct connection to JPDS-NC: it was built in the 1920s by great-great-grandparents of a current JPDS-NC student.

The construction and move to the South Campus was a carefully orchestrated operation. Working closely with the project manager, the transition team—composed of administrators, board members, staff and the architectural team—executed a plan comprised of studies of projected student population, infrastructure changes to connect both campuses, programmatic changes to maintain the connections across the campuses and countless spreadsheets and checklists.

The renovation of a stately home turned school building came to fruition on September 9, when the Kay and Robert Schattner Center South Campus became home to one pre-kindergarten and three kindergarten classes. In the fall of 2014, three first grade classes will join the South Campus, leaving the North Campus to house second through sixth grades.

Redefining Size, Reaffirming Identity

Being on two campuses drove us to reflect on our core values. What does it mean to be a small school? Is it about the number of students? Is it about being in one location? Or is it really about intimacy and having a sense of community that is essential to our identity?

Throughout this period of growth and transition, JPDS-NC has continued to foster the elements of the school culture that

defines us. We were staunch in our commitment to creating strong bonds among students of all ages, among their families, and among students, teachers and administrators. We devoted hours to discussing the programs and practices that encouraged our students to develop connections within and across grades.

We designed new programs, schedules and opportunities for bonding and bringing our students together as one community. We are working continuously to ensure that our signature programs—Reading Buddies, Birthday Lunches, iBuddies, and whole-school performances—adapted and endured. And we

What does it mean to be a small school? Is it about numbers or being in one location? Or is it really about having a sense of community?



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continue to reflect, re-evaluate and tweak programs and processes as needed.

Form Meets Function

The South Campus building provided an opportunity to rethink and revitalize our early childhood learning program. Built as a large private home with smaller rooms and larger public spaces, the building encouraged us to explore different ways of thinking, planning and designing our program, and to apply elements of the Reggio Emilia pedagogical philosophy.

The building features two spacious central rooms that serve as the *ki-kar*, the central gathering space for students in their grade; an expansive studio/laboratory, a *sadnah*, where students meet for research work and art exploration; and an outdoor learning area. These large communal spaces allowed us to introduce research labs in reading, writing, and science. The labs have contributed to the curricula and to building community on campus by providing children with scheduled times to connect with grade-level friends and to learn with every grade-level teacher. Teachers began using communal spaces more frequently, which invited more collaboration. Our studio/laboratory and outdoor learning area also presented an opportunity to develop our STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) program.

Adding the South Campus also gave us the opportunity to reassess our use of space on the North Campus. We redesigned classroom use to better align with our educational needs, built a new science lab, created spaces for small group work, and added much needed office space.

Necessity Drives Innovation

The year before we opened the South Campus was the most challenging year from a recruitment perspective. Since the site was occupied by another school, we did not have a physical space to show prospective parents. We used architectural sketches to convey our vision of the physical space. Although we were able to meet our goal of filling three kindergarten classes and a pre-kindergarten class last year, now that we are in our beautiful new space, applications for kindergarten are up.

The shift to a school with two campuses also meant rethinking the logistics of admission events. Hosting open houses and tours that span two campuses became an opportunity to give parents an even richer sense of JPDS-NC. Since most prospective students are entering kindergarten or pre-K, we begin our visits at our South Campus. Then we invite parents to take the five-minute bus ride to the North Campus. Not only does the ride literally take parents to a different place, but being on a school bus allows everyone to embrace the spirit of elementary school life, and gives administrators a chance to have one-on-one conversations with prospective parents.

Our changed landscape also inspired programmatic innovation. Community events such as the annual Veterans Day performance and an Art & Science Expo are hallmarks of JPDS-NC life. We wanted to ensure that not only would these beloved traditions continue, but that each program would remain a whole-school event, providing a sense of unity for our school, and a sense of continuity for returning and alumni families.



Community Outreach

When a major transformation takes place, creating effective communication channels and getting key messages right become imperative. We began by focusing on internal communications, and proactively addressed the potential for confusion, resistance, and concern that growing pains can bring to any organization. We strengthened our communications infrastructure by launching a new parent portal. We expanded and adjusted our weekly newsletter to better meet our goals and changing

circumstances. We engaged with parents, alumni and friends through social media.

We also expanded our external communications with an eye toward building trust, increasing outreach and gaining visibility. We created opportunities for connection and conversation by giving those impacted by the new campus a way to share their concerns with us directly and productively. We scheduled community meetings to discuss changes prior to opening our South Campus and we invited parents, grandparents, alumni, supporters, staff and new neighbors to several “Meet the Building” open house events.

Ahead of construction work on our new campus, we went door-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 54]

Endowment

A Strong Base of Funding for the Future

■ by **LYNN W. RAVIV**

Raviv portrays the different ways that a school endowment can strengthen a small school. Besides sustainability, endowments can drive educational growth, community building and much more.

The importance of having endowment funds is critical to sustaining and growing our schools, especially schools in smaller Jewish communities which have limited donor bases. Endowment is a different kind of giving. Endowments open doors not only to existing donors but also to those donors who believe in the future, those that do not want their money spent on the day-to-day operations, but who want to help the institution grow and thrive.

Offering an endowment program is a way to identify new supporters who are interested in the school yet may not have ever made a gift before. Instead, these donors are ones who want to leave a bequest or start a fund that is earmarked for a certain aspect of the existing school program that speaks to them, or maybe for a new program that would expand the school's offerings. These are benefactors who are looking to the future and who are thinking about the lean economic times.

We all remember well the recent downturn in the economy. Luckily, at N. E. Miles Jewish Day School in Birmingham, Alabama, we had our endowment to see us through this fiscal crisis. Being able to draw from our endowment helped us maintain our operations without using current dollars. We all must be prepared for the next one. The best way to do so is to begin an endowment, for those who have not, and for those schools that do have an endowment program already in place, to grow and safeguard the investments.

Cultivating new donors is an exciting ongoing event. What a great opportunity to spread the word about the amazing and im-

portant work of our day schools. We meet face-to-face, a coffee, a lunch, a chance meeting, and we tell our story! It is all about relationship building and telling the story. Bringing new friends to the school for an event is a transformational experience in building the relationship. And we keep in touch—a holiday card, a mazel tov on a simchah, a newsletter, and other opportunities that arise.

There are a number of frameworks to oversee the building of an endowment program. One design is in the form of a development committee of the board. This committee is run solely by lay members, members who are intentionally chosen because of their expertise in finances. Another design would be to implement a professional position of director of development, someone who oversees the strategic plan

of the development committee. In Birmingham, we started our endowment with both of these pieces in place. Now in addition to our development committee and part-time director of development, we rely on the Birmingham Jewish Foundation in many ways.

Our day school is fortunate to have the expertise of the Birmingham Jewish Foundation to help our school with management. We co-mingle our foundation funds with the BJB, which means they manage our assets. When the economic downturn occurred, we were able to rely on our foundation assets, because our BJB has managed them well, including a spin rate calculated to smooth out the ups and downs.

Lisa Engel, president of The Birmingham Jewish Foundation, writes that “the Foundation has enjoyed a strong working part-

Day schools have a wealth of opportunities to validate to donors that their gifts have well met their intentions.



Lynn W. Raviv is director of development at N. E. Miles Jewish Day School in Birmingham, Alabama. raviwlv@gmail.com

nership with the N.E. Miles Jewish Day School since the beginning of its endowment. In addition to housing the Day School's endowment, we support the Day School in numerous other ways such as targeted grants from our Unrestricted Fund and Designated Funds that are set up to support the school. We believe that the Foundation's integral relationship with the N.E. Miles Jewish Day School provides an ongoing stream of operating funds today and also a strong base of funding for the future!"

Last year, we drew \$60,000 from our NEMJDS Endowment Fund at the Foundation. In addition, we had access to more monies from the various NEMJDS designated funds, also held at the Foundation. Birmingham is not a large Jewish community; presently, we have approximately 1200 families. We have worked hard over the years to build our foundation, which today has \$3.5M, with known expectancies in the neighborhood of an additional five to six million.

Even though we rely on the Birmingham Jewish Foundation in many ways, we are very cognizant that we have a very important role in our ongoing relationships with our donors, in cultivating new donors and in focusing on the strategic vision of our endowment. Our volunteers and the professionals must be committed to continually evaluating and growing the endowment program. Donors that make endowment gifts expect their funds will be managed well, and therefore will be available for years to come. Thus, it is very important to have a knowledgeable and strategically visionary endowment committee which will continue to review investment policies, regularly assess investment allocations, and ensure that the best financial practices are being utilized.

Day schools have a wealth of opportunities to validate to donors that their gifts have well met their intentions. It is a thrilling opportunity when we invite donors to the school to enjoy an event that is related to their gifting desires, to see their name on the L'Dor v'Dor donor wall, to interact with students on projects their funds supported, or to be publically recognized at Kabbalat Shabbat, some of the many ways of saying thank you. Acknowledging the impact of a donor's gift on the mission of the school supports core values of our institution: family, enabling all members of our "family" to share in the richness of our school; *menschlichkeit*, validating the value of choosing to do the right thing with a loving heart.

Not only are we not a large Jewish community, we are not the most wealthy Jewish community. What matters most is that we are committed to keeping our Jewish community vital and thriving. We are so very fortunate to have friends of our day school who know the importance of this cornerstone institution in our community.

My hope is that all of our day schools will one day have the conversation that I was fortunate to have in 1997. "We are going to give the

school \$1M!" You are going to do what? "We are going to give the school \$1M today!"

Receiving a landmark gift as this one is a story in itself. However the story that is more meaningful is the determination of how this gift will continue to grow our school, make it thrive. What do you do with \$1M? Well, you bring a diverse committee together as a think



tank. And we did. The result created an endowment fund appropriately named The Judy and Harold Abroms Center for Academic Excellence, a "center" without walls.

For over sixteen years of its existence, the Center has brought new levels of excellence and creativity in our program. Because this Center's purpose is to enhance our mission and broaden our scope, our students are exposed to opportunities which our general operating budget would not allow. We have expanded our arts programs, funded trips, created ulpan classes for students who entered after kindergarten, developed programs with the science museum, connected virtually with other schools as well as virtual classes from Israel, to name a few of the exciting programmatic additions. This Center reflects the impact that endowments have on the life of our schools.

Endowments breathe life into our schools. They allow us to dream, to vision, to see the future. An endowment is tantamount to planting trees, the supreme act of hope for the future. Endowments support the core values for our school for our students who will soon take their place among the Jewish leaders of tomorrow. They are our hope for the future. ■

A School Grows in Washington: Insights on Opening a Second Campus

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to-door to meet the neighbors. Our efforts also included goodwill gestures to our immediate neighbors, clear communications with the local community via meetings, mail and listservs, and outreach to churches/organizations, neighborhood association representatives and elected officials. Finally, we shared news and stories about the life of the school through press, social media and other externally driven communications.

Opening a second campus also opened the door to donor engagement. We saw steady, solid and continued growth in our community. The opening of a second campus presented opportunities for engagement with grandparents, alumni students, alumni parents and supporters, and led to an increase in our donor base.

Face Time vs. FaceTime

Among the biggest challenges we face is how different it is for a staff to be in two separate locations. There is value to proximity, to im-

promptu conversation, to face time. Being on two campuses has resulted in a loss of some cross-fertilization among teachers and administrators. Just as important, despite the fact that administrators split their time on both campuses, there is sometimes a feeling among staff that it is harder to connect with administrators.

And at times, it is *literally* harder to connect. The JPDS-NC leadership team meets regularly to discuss the various aspects of school life. Since many meetings take place during the school day, it means that some of the leadership staff has to participate via FaceTime. All staff members who have had to jump into an energetic conversation via FaceTime, rather than in person, have noted that it is far more challenging to do so; in addition, there are the technical challenges of frozen screens while we are in mid-conversation. We continue to explore effective models and solutions to overcoming this issue, from using different technology to changes in schedule times and locations of meetings.

A Time of Transitions and Possibilities

Not surprisingly, the past year centered on transitions, integration and adapting to a new reality as one school on two campuses. While there was a breathless quality to this year and the last—a time of continuous planning and preparing for operating on two campuses—this transition period has also been marked by a burst of creativity, innovation and productivity. Our expanded environment presented us with an opportunity to look at everything anew. An opportunity to grow in new ways.

To plan for an expansion, it is necessary to engage in strategic planning, identify areas for process improvement, examine data and accountability measures, develop leadership, embrace creative solutions, encourage collaboration, and acknowledge that transitions can be demanding and continuous. To thrive, it is necessary to inspire and challenge your school to not only align to a new vision, but to become an organization that is constantly improving while fulfilling its mission. ■

Creating an Organizational Ecosystem

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23]

Give the initiative a home. While a collaboration should look and feel like a true partnership, the administrative and logistical support should be clearly located within one of the organizations. A formal agreement should be developed to ensure clarity of who does what, where outside funds are to be donated and tracked, and what phone rings when someone wants to know more about the program.

Plan for ongoing evaluation and communication. Partnerships almost always involve some risk and new initiatives need some time to coalesce. It is critical that a schedule and program of ongoing evaluation and internal communication be in place to allow for the collaborators to make midcourse adjustments and refinements and to effectively assess program.

Engage stakeholders. Internal stakeholders, whether faculty, administrative staff, clients or

lay leaders, often develop a high level of commitment to a single organization and its missions. A successful partnership requires them to expand their loyalties and commitments to another entity. It is important to have a plan for internal communication and buy-in that creates opportunities for understanding about the collaboration and how it furthers the agendas of both institutions.

Share the success equally. There is a Hebrew idiom that suggests that if something is done but not reported upon, it is as if it did not happen. Make certain that there is a marketing plan in place to let external audiences know about the program and about the partnership. Both institutions should make certain to be reinforcing the mutuality of the initiative and raising the importance of partnerships within the broader Jewish community.

Add new partners. An important outcome of

a well implemented collaboration that is shared with others is that it can lead to others wanting to join the effort. This can include additional organizations, new communities and new donors who will find compelling efforts that allow each dollar to have a multiplier effect and where the opportunity for organizational efficiencies and impact is expanded.

Organizations like RAVSAK create framework for collaboration within the field, and *HaYiddion* serves as an important platform for the sharing of ideas, successes and approaches that can inform the discourse within this important sector of the day school world. We hope that both the experience of our expanding partnership and this new initiative will help inspire others to look to others in their community and beyond to dream together, leverage one another's assets, and accelerate innovation in the field. Having more of us working together truly creates a world that is very good indeed. ■

RAVSAK Partners with Pearlstone on Professional Development

RAVSAK again is proud to partner with the Pearlstone Center outside Baltimore, a Jewish retreat center and educational farm, on its 4th annual Nevatim-Sprouts Conference, Sun-Wed July 13-16. This professional development conference brings together early childhood, day school and religious school educators from around the country for training in Jewish garden and environmental education.

Participants learn the basics of educational garden design, share lesson plans and Jewish, environmental curricula, tour the state's premier outdoor classrooms, harvest and prepare farm to table meals, and walk away with the tools, resources and professional network needed to develop Jewish environmental programming at their schools.

This year, in response to past participant feedback, an additional day was added to the conference to provide more opportunities for interactive lesson-plan modeling and group brainstorm. Hands-on sessions explore how to integrate an educational garden into your institution and bring the outside into the classroom to teach about the Jewish calendar, social justice, stewardship and responsibility, among other Jewish values. Pearlstone's skilled staff utilize the center's four-acre organic farm, small animal pasture and trails throughout the conference. Continuing education credits (CEUs) from the Maryland Department of Education are available to participants.

For additional information, visit pearlstonecenter.org/nevatim. ■



Promoting Federation-Day School Collaboration to Address Sustainability in Smaller Communities

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21]

Federations and day schools should view each other as strategic partners, not just as a funding source or a beneficiary. Simply basing the development relationship on the annual allocation misses the greater opportunities to work together on donor-centered development, foundation grant opportunities and planned giving efforts, including the national Create a Jewish Legacy initiative. And yes, it means federations and day schools should share information.

Day schools and federations should never miss opportunities to promote each other. Day schools should be community partners in PJ Library and Shalom/newcomers programs. Communities that welcome newborn Jewish babies should include the day school in the program, as synagogues and JCCs are included. Federation announcements should be made regularly at day school board meetings and events; day schools should be invited to provide briefings/updates to the federation board. Day schools should promote the federation annual campaign and federation leadership should be visible at day school fundraising events.

Where the federation owns the community newspaper (more often than not in smaller communities), the day school should receive favorable advertising rates and editorial coverage, similar to promotion offered for the JCC or JFS. Day school leadership should regularly meet with federation leadership to provide updates. The head of school and federation director should meet regularly. And federations should include day schools in its meetings of agency presidents and executives.

Day schools and federations should seek opportunities for co-branding, from letterhead, to websites, to public statements, to event co-sponsorship of programs. Day schools should be active partners in a federation's Israel programming, from Yom HaAtzma'ut to community Israel partnerships. Day schools may also have resources which can be used by federation and other agencies in promoting Jewish learning.

Federations and day schools should invest in regular and honest com-

munications, avoiding Gomer Pyle-style messages: "sur-prise, sur-prise, sur-prise." Disingenuous conversation misses the opportunity to address the very real and very pressing issues of sustainability such as resource development, student enrollment, educational quality, enhancing consumer receptivity to day school education and school HR challenges. The development of new business paradigms and sustainable financial models applicable to the unique realities in smaller communities are best served by honest, open and regular communication.

Gone are the days when the problems and opportunities of day schools and federations did not intersect or were solved independently of each other. Being part of a Jewish community requires teamwork, true partnership and dialogue.

Changes in our marketplace, whether demographic realities in smaller Jewish communities or the changing nature of young Jewish families, make working together essential. Donors are attracted to collaboration, strategic visioning and realistic financial modeling. Developing creative revenue, new program paradigms, and strategic partnership will require broad-based leadership engagement and community stakeholder buy-in. And that will happen with strong day school and federation collaboration.

The Jewish day school is an anchor, community-defining institution in smaller Jewish communities. Strong Jewish day schools of excellence are vital components of the infrastructure of a vibrant Jewish community. They enable communities to attract Jewish education-committed newcomers, including clergy and Jewish communal professionals. They enable families choosing a more enriching Jewish education for their children to remain in the community. They attract Jewish educators who are able to broaden a community's Jewish learning or connection to Israel. As such, their sustainability in smaller communities is a community issue requiring community collaboration. Federations and day schools should come to recognize that their respective success is inextricably linked to each other, as well as to other community-based Jewish organizations. This rising tide really does raise all ships. ■

A Small Jewish Community and Its Day School: A Jewish Social Contract

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40]

the fact that the school is so closely identified with its founding head. An even greater concern lies in the question of whether a new leader would be able to preserve the social contract nearly as successfully as she has. If the new leader is Orthodox or Chabad, he or she will need to establish credentials with the

majority of the community that the school is truly welcoming to all. If, on the other hand, the new head is not Orthodox, he or she will need to honor the contract in order to convince the Orthodox in the community to continue with the school. This complex dance is essential for preserving the school in its current configuration.

CJDS shows what a small school can accomplish in overcoming divisions within the Jewish community. The contract that enabled this unity, however, comes at a certain cost, and will require either reaffirmation or renegotiation in the future, when the time comes for the school to appoint a new head. ■



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Tuning the Choir: The Multicampus School

■ by **GEOFF COHEN** and **DAVID GINSBERG**

This section features articles about the challenges facing large schools. In this first piece, the authors describe the administration of the largest RAVSAK member, Cape Town's Herzlia with 10 campuses.

United Herzlia Schools (UHS or Herzlia) is a Jewish school in Cape Town, South Africa. The Cape Town Jewish community is 15,000 strong, with 80% of the Jewish children attending Herzlia. Established in 1940 in a small building in the city with a handful of pupils, Herzlia today is a network of ten schools with 2086 students ranging in age from 18 months to 18 years (from Chai to Chai); it comprises the Sarah Bloch Day Care Centre, four pre-primary schools, three primary schools, a middle school and a high school. Our main challenge, described below, is maintaining a sense of unity as one school across multiple campuses in diverse locations.

We recognize that education means the development of the whole child—emotionally, socially, intellectually, physically and spiritually. Our educational foundation rests on four pillars: Jewish Life & Learning, Academics, Sport and Arts & Culture. We strive to prepare our students to live lives informed by Jewish values and to prepare them to take their places as citizens of democratic South Africa and in the global community. Herzlia is consistently ranked in the top ten schools in the Western Cape Province and we have a 100% pass rate at grade 12 level (Matric). It is the third largest feeder school to the University of Cape Town.

At the same time, Herzlia is a school for all Jewish children irrespective of their income status, religious affiliation or academic ability. We are proud to be the first mainstream school in South Africa to introduce an alternative academic stream—vocational program—which is considered to be a groundbreaking innovation in the South African educational system.

Herzlia is in a truly unique position of having ten smaller schools in a large framework. This allows for an efficient central administration while still keeping the individual personality, flavor and ethos of each school. Our principals must work in a given administrative and educational framework that is vital for the

efficient running of an operation with an operating budget of over R120 million (over \$114 million).

Multicampus School Model

A head of school or director of education is critical in order to understand and implement the whole-school policy and vision. Geoff's appointment in 2010 as director of education (equivalent to head of school) at Herzlia enabled him to focus on one clear task: putting the *United* back into United Herzlia Schools. Running a school with numerous campuses needs someone with a global view of the aims and mission of the school as a whole. This role is to guarantee that the core foundations, policies and values are adhered to by all ten principals while at the same time ensuring that their unique educational expertise is exercised in their schools.

Herzlia is a multicampus school that is spread out geographically across the city of Cape Town. The current structure has evolved into a workable and efficient model that has proved to be sustainable and efficient. To maintain its character, each campus has its own principal and staff, and to maintain efficiency, central operations are guided by and managed by the central administration as well as nine systemic heads working across the entire system. The principals and systemic heads of departments report to the director of education, who together with the director of finance and administration are responsible for the running of the whole school.

Being a multicampus school spread out across the city creates a number of challenges. With each school having its own principal, teachers and support staff, it is imperative that the core values and structures are implemented across all the campuses. In order to run the school cohesively and efficiently, we put in place the following positions.



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David Ginsberg is the director of finance and administration of United Herzlia Schools. dginsberg@herzlia.com

Director of Finance and Administration

A central administration is essential for the successful financial management of a multicampus school system. By centralizing finances, governance, remissions, accounting, fundraising and budgeting, we ensure financial sustainability and efficient spending across the campuses. Each campus has its own budget developed by the finance department in conjunction with each principal. Taking into account pupil numbers, facilities and resources, this system creates fairness and meets the needs of each campus.

It is important to find the balance between what is centralized and what is decentralized. Central control is a key factor in maintaining and managing efficiencies across the system. It also frees up the principals and systemic heads to proceed with their core function, that of education. It ensures compliance with both government legislation and internal governance.

Areas of centralization are legislation, admission/enrollment, purchasing, ITC/Wi-Fi, resources, staffing, transport, etc.

Principals' Management Committee (PMC)

The PMC is an essential tool for the communication and implementation of school policy. This group meets monthly to focus on policies, issues and challenges. It also allows for collegiality and sharing of ideas, which provides the school's leadership with the opportunity to work together and function as a team with one vision. It is comprised of the director of education, the director of finance, the head of Jewish life and learning and the ten principals.

Systemic Heads of Departments

The appointment of department heads overcame many of the challenges facing a multicampus school. Each core department has an appointee who is able to take a global view of the school's aims and objectives, thus ensuring that each department is run with one vision and one value system. This maximizes efficiency and the best use of personnel. It ensures a clearly defined ideology, ethos and mission. Fundamentally, systemic heads of department ensure that we are all singing from the same hymn sheet. The core systemic departments are the following.

Jewish Life and Learning (JLL)

As the *raison d'être* of our school, Jewish values must be at the heart of a clearly defined ideological policy and core value system that is articulated and communicated across all the schools. The development of suitable and appropriate educational materials, programs and cur-

ricula forms a substantial part of this portfolio. The appointment of a head of JLL has ensured that Jewish studies is upheld as the cornerstone of our existence.

Herzlia defines itself as a community school that is aligned to modern Orthodoxy. The alignment to Orthodoxy is determined by five key foundational pillars:

1. Shabbat: our observance of Shabbat is Orthodox
2. Kashrut: our kashrut policy is Orthodox
3. Tefillah: our tefillah is Orthodox, with boys and girls separated
4. Limmudei kodesh: our curriculum is Orthodox
5. Jewish studies staff: we attempt to employ religious Orthodox role models as teachers of JS



While these pillars are entrenched in our ideology, our enrollment policy is open and Herzlia accepts all pupils regardless of their religious affiliation. At present 14% of the students are not Jewish, 12% are members of the Reform/Progressive community and 4% are considered to be fully observant and part of the Cape Town Dati community. The remaining 70% are members of Orthodox synagogues but not necessarily observant.

Our entire pupil body is well integrated within our ideological definition and are all part of the Jewish life of the school.

Hebrew

In order to increase the number of pupils studying Hebrew as a matriculation subject, and to inject enthusiasm and relevance of Hebrew as a spoken language, we appointed a head of Hebrew whose

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key role is to ensure that Hebrew remains a core subject in all the schools. While it is school policy for every pupil to take Hebrew till the end of Grade 9, we are faced with the problem that South African legislation dictates the study of two out of eleven official languages. This creates the challenge of maintaining sustainable pupil numbers taking Hebrew in grades 10, 11 and 12.

Academics/Curriculum Development

With the constant changes in the school curriculum, we found it vital to appoint a head of curriculum development to investigate and interrogate the myriad learning materials, curricula and programs. This was done to ensure that our high academic standards are consistently maintained, along with our status as one of the top academic institutions in the country. It also ensures that all ten campuses are taught the same curriculum in a professional manner and at the same standard. A huge challenge in both time, energy and finance has been to draw up a development plan for all staff that enables our teachers to grow, develop and improve their skills.

Educational Support

As an inclusive school catering to pupils with a vast array of barriers to learning, it was critical to appoint a head of educational support. This person is responsible for the schools' inclusive education program. This key element of the schools' policies ensures that no Jewish child is rejected through a special need or disability.

Sports

Faced with the challenge of not being able to participate in school sport on a Saturday, when most schools play competitive sport, we must meet the sporting needs of our pupils and maintain both participation and excellence. This challenge, together with our wide geographic range, impelled the appointment of a head of sport. Recently we developed a policy of composite teams, taking our best athletes in an age group from all the campuses, which has resulted in us being far more competitive in the South African sporting culture.

Information and Communication Technology

The new technological age has necessitated the introduction of technology into our teaching and learning, thus requiring an educational and technological head of ICT. On the educational side, we are faced with numerous challenges of keeping up with the rapidly changing developments in technology. Mobile devices, social media, Wi-Fi, connectivity have all necessitated a global view of implementing technology into our schools.

Arts & Culture

The departments of art, drama and music are integral to the educational process in our schools. The head of this department

is charge with preserving a global vision across our different schools.

Marketing and Communications

As part of the effort to ensure school unity across the campuses, our communications, while maintaining the individual flavor of each school, had to adhere to a shared brand. We have upgraded our website and electronic communication with the same look and feel throughout, produced a branding style guide and trained all support staff in its correct usage. A dedicated marketing head is crucial to maintaining the branding of the school in both the Jewish and wider community.

Human Resources

With a staff of nearly 400 people, our school requires a dedicated HR manager to maintain an HR policy and strategy. Labor legislation in South Africa is a minefield of compliance and strictly legislated. A centralized HR policy has ensured compliance while taking an enormous task off the shoulders of the principals. The efficient appointment of staff, running staff induction days and preserving decent conditions of service are key elements in maintaining a happy staff.

Fundraising and Sustainability

Fundraising and sustainability are challenges that face all institutions. Herzlia has a foundation in charge of major fundraising for capital projects, whose needs are decided by the principals and governors. Smaller projects are funded by the school's PTAs within the structure of the individual campuses. This system takes geographic cognizance of the demographics of our campuses. A fundraiser that is suitable for one campus would not necessarily be appropriate for another campus.

Stakeholders

As a community we receive essential top-up funding from the Cape Town Jewish Community's UJC campaign. This in turn makes the school responsible to the wider Cape Town Jewish community as they feel, quite rightly, that they have a stake in the school. My role as director of the school includes serving as the liaison between the community structures and to ensure that all ten schools communicate one message. This crucial role maintains the schools' standing within the Jewish and the wider community structures and in essence puts the school at the heart of the community.

Conclusion

Through a process of evaluation, we have faced the challenges of a multicampus school, making needed improvements to our teaching and learning as well as upgrading our facilities and resources. Through trial and error, we have developed a plan and strategy to cope with the challenges of a multicampus school in an ever-changing educational environment. ■

■ By **DEBRA SHAFFER SEEMAN**, RAVSAK's Network Weaver

The activities of our fifteen RAVSAK reshet groups are in full swing. A reshet is a community of RAVSAK professional and/or lay leaders who share their questions and learning with one another and collaborate on joint programming, publications and problem-solving. As the reshet activity grows, a model of distributive leadership is being used to facilitate conversations and invest in community-building. When RAVSAK was created, school employees and lay leaders would turn to the RAVSAK staff in search of answers to school questions; now RAVSAK members can communicate with one another directly and set the stage for future collaborations. In this month's Reshet Roundup, two reshet groups shed light on the powerful impact of networks on our schools.

The reshet dedicated to RAVSAK day school board members has functioned as a forum in which board members ask policy questions, share school practices, clarify the role of the board of directors vis-à-vis the head of school, and engage in continued learning about their role in the school and broader Jewish commu-

nity. Over the past few months, the members of Reshet Board have spent considerable time discussing the grey areas between the role of the head of school and that of the board of directors.

Though these topics are never simple conversations, discussions on the reshet have been conducted with great respect for all those involved. Questions relating to surveying school faculty members, parental access to board members, inviting another school's headmaster to join the board, and the efficacy of board personnel committees have all been recently discussed. In addition, this reshet provides exceptional opportunities for school board members to develop their skills. Monthly webinars have been conducted around themes of managing school change, strategic planning, and roles of a board chair.

While Reshet Board is working to understand and define some of the grey areas of lay leadership, Reshet Head of School has been primarily engaged in raising the bar of the education we offer and supporting colleagues through

challenging leadership situations. This reshet serves as a tremendous resource for quick responses when necessary. For example, one school leader recently turned to the reshet to discuss options and obligations in handling a parent's suspected substance abuse. Reshet members immediately responded with multiple options that outlined both ethical and legal obligations, talking the school leader through the process and checking in after the fact.

Following that conversation, Chaye Kohl, outgoing head of school at Hillel Community Day School, commented, "What struck me (in this conversation) was the shared wisdom and wonderful support so quickly provided to a colleague dealing with 'a difficult question.' This reshet rocks!" Judy Miller, head of school at Columbus Jewish Day School, echoed that sentiment saying, "I have nothing to add except my gratitude to RAVSAK for this supportive group. This was a difficult issue and you responded quickly and with sound advice. You are all amazing!" ■

A Small Jewish Community with a Big Educational Impact

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43]

for both students and teachers. In October 2013 we also inaugurated our new library, which houses the Muñoz Borrero Center for Human Rights and Holocaust Studies and Research and provides resources for students and teachers from all over the country. This facility bears the name of an Ecuadorian consul who was named one of the Righteous among the Nations in 2011.

In addition, in collaboration with a local university, we have brought to Quito three Israeli Nobel Prize winners in chemistry and physics and one of the CERN researchers responsible for discovering the Higgs Boson. While here, they discussed their work with students, teachers and professors from the larger educational community and thus provided a unique opportunity for local educators to learn more about the caliber of science and technology in Israel and the level of entrepreneurship in the country.

Each year, 100% of our graduates go on to attend prestigious colleges and universities, and 65% of them study abroad. We are proud to

contribute to the broader society students with concepts, attitudes and values that will allow them to appreciate and respect other cultures and other ways of thinking and, through an atypical hasbarah approach, to internalize and appropriate the dilemmas and issues that the Jewish people and the State of Israel have experienced in the past and are facing now and to be advocates for them, as well as for human rights in general.

Conclusion

With 40 years of experience, we receive visits from other small Latin American communities on a regular basis to study the way to teach Jewish culture to non-Jews within the framework of values education and an approach that is meaningful for families from all faiths. The impact of this effort on all of our students is evident whether they remain in Ecuador or go abroad. They are proof that a curriculum offering academic excellence and values education inspired by Jewish thought, history and culture can work very effectively for a heterogeneous population. ■

Leading Large Jewish Day Schools: Seeking Answers Together

■ by MITCHEL MALKUS

Malkus, a new head at one of the largest American day schools, has undertaken an initiative to engage leaders of large schools in a discussion to share challenges and successes. Here are some common threads thusfar.

When I began the headship at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School earlier this year, it became increasingly clear to me that large schools face challenges of developing infrastructure, building personal relationships with every student, and managing significant teams of professionals that differ from challenges other schools face.

I was in touch with a number of other heads who shared how they viewed these issues. One head confided that as her school grew, she felt that the unique community she had invested years in building was harder to maintain given the size and diversity of her school. Another head had reached out to me to compare the percentages that my school invested in professional development, tuition assistance and building infrastructure. With few similar schools, he wanted to benchmark his school with other large schools to determine where his school model fit. A third head called to discuss how he could identify senior leaders who had the breadth of experience and knowledge to lead a division in his school, when that division was larger than most other Jewish day schools. While these challenges are not new, they are areas of practice that deserve attention.

In reaching out to RAVSAK, I learned that there were no forums for heads and professionals at larger schools to speak with each other about what our needs might be as a subset of the day school world, as well as what kinds of leadership we might provide the field. Many in the day school world look at very large schools and see all of the resources, programming, and success and assume that large school may not have significant challenges. At the same time, boards of trustees at large schools may expect the educational leaders to have most of the answers to address issues as they arise.

At the recent RAVSAK/PARDES conference, a group of heads of large schools held the first of what I hope will be a series of ongoing conversations to help identify the unique challenges of our schools and begin to share the knowledge we generate

with each other and with the field. Planning for and holding that first conversation brought to light a number of the issues large schools face.

What Constitutes a Large School?

Leading up to the conference, I asked the RAVSAK staff to provide a list of schools with 750 or more students that I could invite to join the conversation. The answer I received was that such a list would represent only a handful of schools, and instead the RAVSAK staff suggested schools of 500 students or more. That list includes 26 schools with a range of student enrollment up to approximately 1,300. There are only three schools with enrollments of 1,000 plus students in North America. While there may be many differences between the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School with close to 1,100 students and my previous school, Pressman Academy in Los Angeles with just under 500 students, both are probably considered large in the field of Jewish day schools. Defining what constitutes a large school was the first tangible outcome of the discussion.

How Does One Lead a Large School?

At the conference session, heads of the schools shared questions and challenges of managing faculties and staffs of over 100 people, ensuring that there is a consistent vision and approach to teaching and learning, and identifying principals and other educational leaders capable of running divisions in large, complex organizations.

After the conference, a colleague at another large school engaged me in a conversation of leading change in an environment with over 250 employees. This head shared that at his previous school which was much smaller, he made it a point to meet with and share his perspective on every new hire. At his current school, he could not possibly be involved in hiring beyond the key leadership positions, nor would he choose to do so. Although he



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saw this change in role to be essential at his school, he wondered how he can consistently insure that new hires fit the larger vision of the school when so many people were responsible for hiring.

A second head wrote me after the conference about a large-scale initiative she had launched that seemed not to be taking hold. She felt that she had laid the groundwork, allocated sufficient funds, and created buy-in, yet her principals reported that there was a sense among faculty that the school-wide administration was acting on its own and had not consulted the faculty on the proposed change. This challenge typifies the kinds of management issues that confront leaders of large schools.

What Does Success Look Like?

A final area that emerged in our conversation at the RAVSAK/PARDES conference was how to benchmark our budgets, enrollments, retention rates and fundraising. For many of our large schools, our enrollments and programs grew steadily year after year. With the economic challenges of the past few years, large schools feel the need to learn from each other how different schools manage risk, contain costs and sustain our institutions in more difficult contexts. One area of risk is that large schools have built significant infrastructure that was supported by the large enrollments. The challenge is to maintain the infrastructure that may support a depth of programming and curriculum that our communities have come to expect as our current enrollments provide smaller revenue.



Schools need to maintain the depth of programming our communities have come to expect, even as enrollments provide smaller revenue.

different options, the wisdom of field leaders, and the benefit of our collective experience.

These were the first fruits of what we hope is just the beginning of a conversation that will identify the key issues that large schools face and begin to offer benchmarks and best practices for our largest Jewish day schools. While we have only begun to define and clarify the common challenges we face, there is also a very real sense that our schools have knowledge to share with each other that will be essential in addressing these issues. ■



Just as every child in a small school may represent a major loss, shrinking enrollments in large schools can cause a revisiting of priorities. One example emerged from a conversation I had with another leading up to the RAVSAK/PARDES conference. This head asked if we might discuss responses to parents who felt that smaller enrollments created a situation with few sections of every class in his high school. While his school had not cut back on the breadth of offerings, having fewer sections of the different classes reduced the ability of students to take electives because they often conflicted with required courses.

In the past, students had more options for arranging their schedules; fewer sections cut down on these options. There was much discussion at the conference about the need for large schools to collect data and share knowledge with each other, so that we can all address these kinds of challenges with knowledge of dif-

Sizing Things Up

Two Leaders of Large Day Schools Share What Works

■ by **SHANA HARRIS** and **CATHY LOWENSTEIN**

Two leaders of large schools in Canada exchange reminiscences about their careers and thoughts about the components that have enabled them to succeed and their schools to thrive.

Shana Harris, head of school at Bialik Hebrew Day School in Toronto, and Cathy Lowenstein, head of school at Vancouver Talmud Torah (VTT) in Vancouver, are both experienced leaders of large Jewish day schools. Bialik recently opened a second branch and is about to embark on construction of phase two of a four-phase building in order to meet the demands of increasing enrollment. VTT is about to break ground on a \$20M campus campaign to expand its premises to accommodate growing enrollment and better support the new frontier of 21st century education.

Recently, the two school leaders spoke about the challenges they have encountered as the dimensions of their work have increased. Their relationship—and now friendship—began when Shana mentored Cathy through the Lookstein Center's Principals Program. Cathy then left public education to teach at Bialik where Shana was her administrator.

CL: *I remember those early days at Bialik. Everything was new to me coming as a former public school employee. There was a very specific pace to the day and a new culture to learn and I appreciated how you arranged a mentor teacher to facilitate my integration. Equally important was the time you gave me every week. Although you were not formally my mentor, I certainly viewed you as one and enjoyed our conversations and trusted your sound advice. And when a teacher trusts her administrator, I believe great things can happen in the classroom.*

SH: Those Wednesday morning meetings were meaningful for me as well. Even though I have been a school administrator for quite some time, the teacher in me still reigns supreme so the

opportunity to “teach” my teachers is a very satisfying aspect of my job. As our school has grown, however, it has become increasingly difficult to carve out that sacred time with my faculty. I am lucky to have a wonderful team of administrators and department heads to ensure our teachers are well cared for and properly mentored and supervised, but I do miss that direct interaction with them. It is important for me to build trust and that can only be accomplished through adequate time to build a relationship. As head of a growing and bustling school with two branches, I realize this is increasingly difficult to do, and it is something I miss.

CL: *I agree. I, too, have a great leadership team which has its finger on the pulse of the day-to-day initiatives, activities and any issues that may come up. I trust them to be on the front lines, especially with respect to our faculty. And as much as I try to check in, the demands of my job mean I am often pulled in many different directions daily. As head of school, my job description focuses more on the “macro” than the “micro.” Nevertheless, it is sometimes difficult to accept that my role is so broad that I miss some of the most rewarding aspects of school life.*

SH: Integrating teachers into the life of a big school comes with its own set of challenges. It's important to have safety nets built into your structure to set them up for success. New teachers, especially, need to find a place where they can feel safe and secure. They are one of the school's most important assets so the investment is worth the effort and expense. We pay our teacher mentors to support new teachers. This allows new teachers to ask for help without guilt or fear of being a burden. Both mentor and mentee feel good about the arrangement.



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CL: *Yes, what's interesting is that you mentored me through my action-research project on establishing a mentorship program at Vancouver Talmud Torah. Through your guidance, we created a very successful program that benefitted both mentor and mentee, not just because mentors received additional compensation, but because teachers on both sides believed they learned and improved their practice through the relationship. We have now evolved the model to a Teacher-Leadership initiative, which maintains the mentorship component, but gives the teacher-leaders added responsibility and more creative input into curriculum and school programs.*

SH: There are definitely mutual and reciprocal benefits to both parties. It's especially gratifying to witness "lifelong learning" in action. This should be a personal learning goal for every teacher and administrator, regardless of their years of experience in the classroom or in administration.

CL: *Earlier I mentioned the challenge of integrating into Bialik's new and unfamiliar school culture when I first arrived. Even though I am Jewish, and had children attending Jewish day school, adapting to a large day school environment was like learning a new language. Think of all that one has to learn in the first couple of years: dual curriculum, faster pace, involved parents, holidays and celebrations that can disrupt the typical flow of a classroom day. For both Jewish and non-Jewish teachers alike this can be a culture shock. Then there's curriculum night, report cards, parent-teacher conferences. All schools have these events on their calendar, but the pace and volume, coupled with the high expectations of our parent body, make the stakes feel even higher. I agree that the foundation to managing all these demands is proper support for your faculty, especially new teachers.*

SH: There are so many anxiety-provoking events in the life of a teacher. And in the age of email and social media, it feels as though everyone must be available 24/6. I certainly feel that way. Did I mention that one has to be married to an angel to do this job well? It also helps to have colleagues whom I can contact as a sounding board or source of support. No matter where we fall on the spectrum, we need to surround ourselves with people who will guide us, prop us up when needed, and give us a hard dose of truth when necessary. Neither teachers nor administrators can operate in a vacuum. We are all interdependent.

CL: *I know how reassuring it's been to reach out to you over the years when I've confronted obstacles at work. It's always helpful to know you're not alone.*

As our school has grown, it has become increasingly difficult to carve out that sacred time with my faculty.

SH: There was a time when I knew every student and every family at Bialik. Now that we have two campuses and continue to grow, this is almost an impossible task. And it makes me sad. It is so important to me that every family feels welcomed and valued at our school. I don't want anyone to feel anonymous or alone. Our school is ultimately one large family and I would like everyone to feel part of that family.

As my role and responsibilities evolve, I trust that members of our administrative team maintain those close, intimate ties that I once had with my faculty and families.

CL: *I can certainly relate to that. When I first joined VTT, I took pride in the fact that I could name every child and every parent. Now when I greet parents in the morning, it takes me longer to get to know each family because of our large size. It can be quite frustrating because I am by nature a people person and I value the relationships I build with our families. The upside is that our school is growing, which is wonderful for a small Jewish community like Vancouver, and that more and more children and families are benefiting from a Jewish education. I have complete trust in my leadership team to take the time I can't to build those relationships and to inform me when a situation requires more attention, more thought, or more care. I have had to learn how to let go and delegate. One of the advantages of a big school is that we have a number of good people managing the school and we can delegate responsibilities to them.*

SH: I couldn't agree more. Trusting those in your inner circle to do their jobs competently is key to your success and to the success of the school. But, letting go of some things is hard. One has to stay focused on the big picture if the goal is to keep the school strong and vibrant. And, if something doesn't come to your attention, you have to trust that you don't need to know about it.

CL: *Working with boards is another of our significant responsibilities. Over the years, I have learned how to work with my board and carefully distinguish between what are board responsibilities and what are my responsibilities. When we were smaller and growing and when our board was less developed, our lay leaders were more involved operationally and in the day-to-day matters of the school. With growth and complexity, however, both the board leadership and I have had to step back and understand that their involvement is centered around governance, strategic planning and financial oversight. That shift took time and it was not always easy.*

To be an effective head of school, knowing that I have the unequivocal

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Sizing Things Up: Two Leaders of Large Day Schools Share What Works

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support of my board and that they trust my decision-making abilities is paramount. Nevertheless, there are times when I need a sounding board, to run my ideas past others, and having an excellent head support team facilitates this. We meet on a scheduled basis which allows me to discuss some of the more pressing issues facing the school in a confidential and honest setting.

A head of school's relationship with his/her board is critical to running an effective organization. I have had the good fortune to work with outstanding and committed presidents, vice presidents and members of my head of school support and evaluation committee. Strong board leadership has significantly benefited the school.

SH: Effective board recruitment, coupled with board mentorship, regular professional development and strategic planning is best practice and one of the key factors in setting up a school for success. Just as we assign support and mentorship for our new teachers to flourish, so should a head of school receive

the right balance of mentorship and support from his/her head of school support and evaluation committee. The relationship should be one of total transparency and trust. I credit part of our success to the many board members who have shown faith and confidence in us all these years.

Additionally, I believe that one of the strengths of our schools is that we have implemented many changes while still staying true to our founding missions and philosophies. Over the past number of years we have dramatically reduced the size of our board, and this has resulted in more effective governance practices. In addition, we have implemented programmatic changes in our general and Jewish studies, including the implementation of differentiated instruction, significant increases in resource staff to provide remedial support to our students, the establishment of professional learning communities, and data gathering in various areas to measure, report on progress and implement changes as necessary. While both of our schools have implemented program chang-

es to ensure that our students have the best learning opportunities, we still maintain the valued traditions that keep us unique. These include our commitment to academic excellence, Ahavat Yisrael and the development of Jewish values and *mentschlichkeit*.

CL: *Yes, indeed! It takes tremendous fortitude to stay on track and honor the school's value system in the midst of much pressure from stakeholder groups. It is a challenge to do so, but keeping our vision focused on our values enables us to maintain our high standards and give our students the very best general and Jewish learning opportunities. As I look at our students and alumni, I am proud of how committed they are and of their incredible achievements.*

SH: Cathy, we are both privileged to be heads of school at two very special educational institutions that are continuing to grow and flourish. Although large schools can be challenging to lead and manage, they enable us to offer a large number of Jewish families the gift of an excellent Jewish education. ■

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Take part in RAVSAK student programs!

Hebrew Poetry Contest

The RAVSAK Hebrew Poetry Contest provides students with the motivation to develop their expressive capacity in Hebrew, and teachers with the opportunity to introduce the riches of Hebrew poetry from the Psalms to today. Winners are selected by recognized Hebrew poets and literary scholars. The contest aims to raise the profile of Hebrew learning within schools and throughout the field. Separate competitions for elementary, middle and high school.

RAVSAK Art Contest

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

Jewish Court of All Time (JCAT)

What do Golda Meir, Albert Einstein and the Rambam have in common? They all gather to debate at JCAT! RAVSAK's Jewish Court of All Time program enables middle school students to delve into history by adopting a historical figure and acting in that role, while interacting with a large cast of their peers and adults playing other characters. JCAT provides students with an opportunity to practice historical research, deliberation, perspective-taking, genre and voice in writing, and other skills.

Moot Beit Din

Moot Beit Din challenges students at Jewish high schools to examine the ethical and moral dimensions of Halakhah through creative engagement with contemporary situations. Combining the best of debate with legal analysis, Moot Beit Din exposes students to the vitality of the Jewish legal system and its relevance to their own lives. Moot Beit Din creates a fun, exciting and social atmosphere centered on traditional Jewish learning.