



THE ELECTRONIC EDUCATOR-
A weekly update of information for you and your school!
A service of the NJ Region USCJ Dept. of Education
Michelle Rich, Director of Education and Youth Activities
Nita Polay Levin, Field Worker
Lisa Harris Glass, Executive Director

In this Week's Issue:

- Conference on Synagogue Education
- Contract information
- Closing procedures for teachers
- End of the year school committee activities
- Upcoming Teva Seminar
- Preschool corner
- God's Paintbrush*
- Combing through my files

Save the Date---

FOR THE

CONFERENCE ON SYNAGOGUE EDUCATION

Wednesday, June 10, 2009

Cong. Neve Shalom, Metuchen, 9:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.

New Presentations! High Quality Education!

For religious school teachers & principals, preschool teachers & directors, cantors, rabbis, school boards, and synagogue lay people who have an interest in bettering Jewish education in their synagogue

- * DR. SHOSHANA SILBERMAN, presenting techniques from her new book, ACTIVE JEWISH LEARNING**
- * SETTING UP A QUALITY HEBREW HIGH with RABBI RON ISAACS, creator and director of one of the best in the region**
- * WORKSHOPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS with CARYN BRUCKHEIMER**
- *TEACHING PRAYER THE "4MAT" WAY, using SIDDUR SIM SHALOM with ALEX WEINBERG, author of Siddur Sim Shalom, Remix 2.0**
- *SUZI ADELSON WAINER on Multiple Intellegences and How to Ask Questions that Challenge**
- * Consultation and display by TERRY KAYE, of BEHRMAN HOUSE PUBLISHERS**
- *RABBI ROBERT ABRAMSON, National Director of Education, speaking with school committee chairs and VPs about their role**
- LISA HARRIS GLASS, Executive Director, NJ Region USCJ, on navigating through these difficult economic times**

Save the Date!!

Attention Religious School Directors and Principals:

This in from Wendy Light, a national education consultant:

For those of you who are currently in contract negotiations, please be smart about your negotiations. Go to the United Synagogue website (www.uscj.org) and look up the Guide to Congregational Practice. Go to the section on the EDUCATOR. You will see a sample contract there. Compare this document with what you are being offered. Do make certain that your contract has: vacation leave, sick leave, shiva leave, personal leave, maternity/paternity/adoption leave spelled out. You will also want a written job description. Be sure that your contract states that the congregation will go to binding arbitration should something come up in the course of your employment or in the termination of your employment where you can not come to an agreement. (This is really important.) You also want a statement regarding when the congregation needs to let you know if they are choosing not to renew your existing contract (usually by January 31 of the last year of the agreement) as well as a statement regarding severance and retirement. It is 100% appropriate for you to have someone else (like a lawyer) take a look at the contract and you CAN come back to the congregation with some penciled changes to continue the discussion. Do this right and you will thank me years from now.

Religious school directors and principals:

Look at this sample. Are we ready for this yet? If not, hold onto it, as it may come in handy soon!

CLOSING PROCEDURES FOR TEACHERS **MEMORANDUM**

To: Faculty
From: Director
Date:
Re: End of Year Procedures

The end of the year is fast approaching. To make closure easier for all of us, I have listed all the tasks and procedures needed to end the year well. All of these items should be completed by _____ unless otherwise indicated.

I want to take this opportunity to once again thank you for all the large and small ways you contribute to the Jewish growth of our children. It is a privilege to be your partner in this sacred task.

REPORT CARDS – All report cards are due on _____ so that I have the opportunity to read them and get back to you with any questions or concerns. If you would like, you may email me your written comments for each child and I will send you my comments immediately. Please refer to the memo “How To Write Report Cards” which you received.

CLASS AND CURRICULUM SUMARIES – On the attached sheet, please indicate what objectives you achieved during the year. Keep in mind next year’s teachers. Ask yourself “What information would I want to know when getting started with a new group of children?”

STUDENT OBSERVATION AND SUGGESTIONS – Please be specific on this form to help with curriculum planning for next year. In addition to big ideas and themes for the Judaic curriculum, include prayers, language patterns, vocabulary mastered. Attach to this form each child’s prayer chart.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS - Using the attached form, please consult with the other teacher of your grade and draw up recommended class lists for next year.

CLEANING ROOMS, DESKS AND STORAGE CABINETS – These should be carefully cleaned out and organized. Any school equipment – scissors, staplers, construction paper, paint, magic markers, etc. should be returned to the labeled boxes in the school office. This will allow us to take an accurate inventory of these items so that we will be adequately stocked for next year. *Do not leave things on the tables or shelves for others to put away.* It is likely that you will find things in your room that you don’t recognize since many other groups use the classrooms. If you think they have an owner who might value them, put them in the box labeled “miscellaneous”. You are encouraged to discard items that seem dated or ownerless.

CLASSROOM REPAIRS – Please use the enclosed form to indicate any attention your room and furniture need or would appreciate over the summer.

LIBRARY AND LEARNING CENTER – All borrowed materials must be returned to the appropriate places by _____. Don’t forget to take down all bulletin board materials. All curriculum material, files, etc. that you are returning to me should be thoughtfully organized. Don’t give me things that really should be discarded. I will appreciate your thoughtfulness in going through materials first. Please help us maintain a good resource center by returning school property. As with any library, you will be asked to pay for books and materials that are not returned.

STUDENT MATERIALS – Students should take home their bins and books and be reminded to bring them back next year. This is especially important regarding the Hebrew texts and the *Siddur*.

REIMBURSEMENTS – The deadline for submitting receipts for reimbursement is _____. This deadline is firm because the synagogue books close for the year.

END OF YEAR ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Here are a couple of ideas for an end of the year meeting and closure with your school committee:

1. Hand write thank you notes to school committee members to acknowledge the time and effort they put in as volunteers dedicated to excellent education.
2. At your closing activities, publicly acknowledge members of the school committee and the chair by calling their names and having them stand.
3. At your last meeting of the year spend some time reflecting on how they did as a committee through a “free write” exercise. Give about 5-10 minutes for each member to answer questions such as “What are some of the things the school committee accomplished this year? What do you think should be our goals as a committee next year? How might the committee be more effective next year?” This could be followed by a group discussion that would be the basis for next year’s work.
4. Spend time outlining the areas they want to address next year in the committee.
5. Bring in a bottle of wine to toast the members of your committee, collectively and individually.

6. Distribute copies of *Tefillat Haderekh* and end the meeting with the recitation of this prayer as a way of stating that as we end this year we begin a new journey for the next year.

7. Recite the paragraph of the *kaddish d'rabbanam* that refers to the educators: *We pray for Israel, for our teachers and their students; and the students of their students, and for all who study the Torah, here and everywhere. May they have abundant peace, loving-kindness, ample sustenance and salvation from their Father who is in heaven; and say Amen.* (Debbie Friedman has written a melody for this prayer.)

15TH ANNUAL
TEVA SEMINAR
On Jewish Environmental Education
June 1 – 4, 2009
Surprise Lake Camp, Cold Springs, NY
For information, contact:
Teva Learning Center
[Leora Mallach: seminar@tevacenter.org](mailto:seminar@tevacenter.org)
co-sponsored by
JNF

Preschool Corner:

Closing of the school year & graduation. .

Here are some ideas:

Recently, on the Preschool Directors Listserv, there was a gathering of ideas for closing ceremonies. Some directors were looking for a graduation and some were opposed to it. Here is a sampling:

We have a very elaborate end of the year graduation. We do a wedding in which we marry letters Q to U. All the children, the staff, the Rabbi and the Cantor are involved. We build a Chupa that is decorated by the children. We have a script, the children are able to show their parents many of their accomplishments that they have made during the year. We also incorporate song with sign language because our four year olds who graduate learn sign during the school year. The parents are amazed and then we have a celebration with all the families afterwards with a DJ who provides entertainment.

Ours is pretty traditional- we have a moving up ceremony for our 2-3-4 year olds. Each class sings two songs and we hand them their 'diplomas'. We then have juice and cookies afterwards. It is a big deal for parents though and a nice chance to publicly thank your volunteers and recognize staff not returning next year.

When we return from break, I will be meeting with my Pre-K teachers to plan for our annual “End-Of-The Year Celebration” for our “senior” class, otherwise called our “Tzeeporim” 4/5 yr. olds. We always do something special to help celebrate their moving on to K.

I have a real problem with these programs for a couple of reasons. It is my experience that there is always one or two children who are not going on to kindergarten (either they miss the deadline or the parents decide on one more year of preschool for a little more growth-time) and what do we tell them. My other concern is the pressure it puts on the children to learn their lines, the songs, the standing and waiting their turn; the developmentally appropriateness of the program. I prefer to have an end-of-the-year celebration for the whole school. An outdoor picnic, a singalong, a Shabbat dinner...something that includes everyone and doesn't leave anyone feeling slighted.

Our end of year celebration in our pre-K class is called a “siyum” which denotes a celebration at the end of study. We do not stress graduation or kindergarten, just that each child has completed this class year.

The children make a baked ziti dinner for their families as a way to thank them and we all eat dinner together at 5:15 on the last day of school. Dinner is followed by a casual song fest in which the children sing and dance their favorites from the school year (they have voted as a class on which songs to sing.) This lasts about 15 – 20 minutes. We then move to the sanctuary where the children sit on the bimah and receive a certificate from the teacher. The Rabbi then blesses the children under the tallis. It all lasts about 1 – 1.5 hours.

Directors:

Not a member of the listserv? Contact
ECDir@USCJ.ORG

For your teachers: contact
<http://uscj.org/archives/ecteach.html>

Click on “Join or leave the list (or change settings)” and fill in your information from there.

Why re-invent the wheel? Get in on this exciting exchange of ideas & find solutions to your issues!

DIRECTORS:

Welcome back from Pesach!!! I am very excited to announce that for our next EC director's chat, we will have a special guest - Kimberly Rubinfeld, the project manager for **Heksher Tzedek**. Hopefully you've heard of this new ethical certification seal that will be introduced to the kosher food industry in the coming months, a joint project of the USCJ and the Rabbinic Assembly. I invite you to check out the website to learn more: <http://hekhshertzedek.org/> and to join the call with your questions.

Our next call will be
Wednesday, May 13 at 11am EST (10am Central, 9am Mountain and 8am Pacific)

And the call in information: 1-218-486-8700 (Midwest) Participant Access Code 84072

Please let me know if you will be able to join the call.

B'Shalom,
Max

Maxine Handelman
Consultant for Early Childhood Education
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
847-641-9963
Fax: 773-929-4387
www.uscj.org
I'd stop eating chocolate but I'm no quitter.

I recently received the Teacher's Guide to the highly acclaimed book, *God's Paintbrush*. Both are published by Jewish Lights Publishing. The teacher's guide is a short book, easy to read, and one I think that is worthwhile having in your hands. In case you haven't heard of *God's Paintbrush*, it is an excellent book to share with young children (aged 6 – 9) to get them started thinking about God. In a study done by Dr. Shoshana Silberman, children talk about God more often in religious school than with their friends or family. (For your own, quick study, just ask your students!) Since children's ideas about God are usually formed without guidance, they "usually result in superstitious beliefs and immature theologies...[which are] frequently abandoned because they cannot grow or sustain our youngsters through their journey to adulthood. (pg. 2)." Using metaphor and beautifully illustrated pictures of situations young children will recognize, discussion can be formulated even in this young age.

I also highly recommend the *God's Paintbrush Celebration Kit* as there are multiple copies to be shared with your students to begin the discussions.

To order your copy of either, contact Kate Treworgy, Associate Publicist, at KTreworgy@JewishLights.com. Tell her Nita from NJ Region USCJ sentcha!!

COMBING THROUGH MY FILES:

Several articles on religious school report cards

Activities for celebrating Yom Ha'Atzma'ut: from
Preschool through high school

Activities for Shavuot

Lech Lecha: a short ceremony to recognize high school graduates at the end of the year (very little prep needed)
