



**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**

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Hi Folks,

Teva always does a pretty good job with their science week programs for kids so I'm confident that this program for educators will also be good. Check it out.

B'shalom,  
Serene

The Teva Seminar on Jewish Environmental Education  
June 2nd-5th, 2008  
Surprise Lake Camp in Cold Spring, NY

The Teva Seminar is a four day innovative professional development opportunity for those interested in camping, gardening, environmental sustainability, Jewish education or just plain having fun. Through hiking, singing, text study, and gardening (no long lectures in windowless conference rooms) participants will engage in a 3,000 year old dialogue about the connection between God, earth and humanity. Come gain the tools to facilitate Jewish environmental activities of your own.

We offer four distinct curricular tracks: Congregational Education, Ethics and Texts, Camp & Wilderness, Organic Agriculture & Educational Gardening

For more information about the Seminar, or to register, please go to:  
<<http://www.tevacenter.org/seminar>>www.tevacenter.org/seminar. For more information, please contact  
<<mailto:seminar@tevacenter.org>>seminar@tevacenter.org

Serene Victor  
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

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Hello Folks,

Last year Niema Hirsch, the ed director at Congregation Beth El in Fairfield, CT has sent along her calendar so that you might use it as a template for designing yours. She has graciously, and without my requesting it, sent her 2008-2009 version so that I can pass it along to you. If you would like a copy please contact me at [Levin@uscj.org](mailto:Levin@uscj.org) . On behalf of all of us, thank you, Niema!

B'shalom,  
Serene

Serene Victor  
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

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Hi Everyone,

I am on the mailing list of a grassroots group that publishes a newsletter called Arevut. Their purpose is to encourage acts of tzedakah and gimelut chasadim and they send out information about where and how people can get involved. The newsletter I received today had a long list of bnai mitzvah projects. It just so happens that I received two requests for such a list recently and that the same thing. So, if this is of interest to you, contact Areyvut, 147 South Washington Avenue, Bergenfield, NJ 07621, Phone: 201.244.6702, [www.areyvut.org](http://www.areyvut.org)

Kol tuv,  
Serene

Serene Victor  
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

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Dear Colleagues,

We are unbelievably lucky that my successor is Susan Wyner. She is a cherished colleague and will bring the work of consultant to new heights and infuse our communications with fresh ideas and perspectives. She has years of files, documents, programs, and experience that she is willing to share with you. And she is so lovely! She always has a nice word, has a great laugh, is easy to talk to, she will strengthen whatever ideas or programs that you bring to her for comment and help you avoid mistakes before they happen. And she'll give you new ideas that you had never thought of. She can help you with administration, programming, curriculum, professional development, supervision, understanding synagogue culture ... she's lived it and taught it for many years!

Stay tuned ... Susan and I will work towards a seamless transition. I'm relieved and happy at this excellent decision.  
Shabbat Shalom,  
Serene

UNITED SYNAGOGUE ANNOUNCES NEW N. AMERICAN CONSULTANT FOR SYNAGOGUE EDUCATION  
May 2008

Rabbi Robert Abramson, director of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism's education department, is delighted to announce the appointment of Susan E. Wyner as North American consultant for synagogue education.

Ms. Wyner, who lives in Cleveland, for many years has been the education director at B'nai Jeshurun Congregation. In that capacity, she has been responsible for all aspects of education for the entire congregation, from young children through families to religious school and adults. She has nurtured teachers' careers and served as a mentor and coach to new and veteran educators in Cleveland and other places.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to Susan for her many years of dedication, loyalty, and creativity, which have inspired a whole generation of young people and has helped keep our synagogue strong," said Rabbi Stephen Weiss of B'nai Jeshurun.

Ms. Wyner, a committed Conservative Jew, will bring both skills and convictions as she works to support and nurture United Synagogue-affiliated congregational schools, their teachers, and their directors.

"We are very excited to have Susan join our staff," Rabbi Abramson said. "Her thoughtfulness, depth of experience, and range of Jewish knowledge; her commitment to synagogue schools, students,

teachers, and her own sense of mission will help us immeasurably as we continue to support synagogue schools. Much of the future of our movement rides on these schools, and knowing that someone like Susan is working with them reassures us about that future.”



Shalom, friends,

If you have any interesting ideas for graduation ceremonies, I would love to start a file on them. From time to time, principals ask me for some ideas. Please either mail them to me or email them to me. Todah!

## Nita Polay Levin

Education Field Worker

New Jersey Region

United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism

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## FROM BEHRMAN HOUSE

May 2008

Dear Friend and Educator:

You may like to know about the new books we just sent out automatically to Golem Plan members (for more information about signing up for the Plan, see below).

### [Jewish History—The Big Picture](#)

**Grades: Adult**

Adapted from the two-volume award-winning work, *The History of the Jewish People* by Professors Jonathan Sarna and Jonathan Krasner, this single volume treats readers to a fast-paced account of Jewish history that is grounded in scholarship and rich in detail. [Read more](#)

### [Teach Me Torah](#)

**Grades: K–1**

Sixteen four-page folders (two sets of eight) introduce students to classic Bible stories—such as the story of Creation, the Exodus, and the Book of Esther—and the Jewish values we can draw from them. [Read more](#)

### [Look at Me: I Can Celebrate Hanukkah](#)

**Grades: Early Childhood**

*Look at Me: I Can Celebrate Hanukkah* introduces children to the key vocabulary of Hanukkah, including: menorah, latkes, blessings, and dreidel. Activities teach Hanukkah traditions while reinforcing developmental skills, such as making size comparisons, counting, and recognizing colors. Comes with stickers! [Read more](#)

### [Look at Me: I Can Celebrate Shabbat](#)

**Grades: Early Childhood**

*Look at Me: I Can Celebrate Shabbat* introduces the key vocabulary of Shabbat, including: creation, day of rest, blessings, Kiddush, hallah, and havdalah. Comes with stickers! [Read more](#)

To learn more about the Golem Plan and to sign up, visit  
[www.behrmanhouse.com/fortheed/golem.shtml](http://www.behrmanhouse.com/fortheed/golem.shtml)

Best wishes,  
Terry Kaye

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## From BEHRMAN HOUSE

May 2008

Dear Colleague:

Want the latest news from Behrman House? The Open Lion is on its way to you via regular postal service, but meanwhile here is a link to the electronic version. Click on  
<http://www.behrmanhouse.com/about/openlion/2008sp/>

Please forward this link to your staff, or to anyone else in your community who might be interested in it.

Terry Kaye  
[terry@behrmanhouse.com](mailto:terry@behrmanhouse.com)  
800-221-2755, ext. 216

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## PRESCHOOL CORNER

*But Everyone Else should read this, too-there are many great ideas, especially for Lag B'Omer!*

Hello all,

I can't let the day go out without sending you notes from today's call (or else you might get them some weeks from now!) I am attaching them as well as pasting them below. Thanks to everyone on the call for the great ideas. Remember, CAJE is August 11-14 in Vermont.

We will continue our calls through the summer, always on the first Wednesday of the month. The time will vary throughout the year, going back to the early side with our next call. **Mark your calendar for Wednesday, June 4 at 11:15am Eastern time (10:15 Central, 9:15 Mountain, and 8:15 Pacific) Please submit discussion topics to the list.** The call in number will be sent out closer to the call.

### Notes from EC Director's chat May 7, 2008

On the agenda this month:

- Staff retention - Moral builders for staff - team building ideas, incentives and staff appreciation ideas
- Lag B'Omer and summer plans
- Decide if we'll continue our calls all summer, or regroup in August.

On today's call:

Max Handelman – USCJ, Chicago, IL

Idie Benjamin – Temple Israel Center, White Plains, NY

Jennifer Zukowski and Naomi Sutherland–Temple Beth Sholom, Las Vegas

Ellen Walters – Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Ed, Philadelphia, PA

Phyllis Denenberg – B'nai Tikvah, North Brunswick, NJ

Charlotte Muchnick – Philadelphia, PA

## Supporting our teachers

### **Little gestures go a long way**

- Keep little chocolates in the director's office all the time (and no, Max did not suggest this one!)
- Thank the teachers every day when they leave
- Make lots of positive comments about what they are doing with the children. In other words, let them know you notice.
- Include a positive, short article with the monthly pay check. If you have good articles to suggest, please send them to this list serve.
- Brief thank you's written on note cards for specific things
- Invite teachers to "report" other teachers for positive things (so-and-so gave me ideas or resources for my unit, so-and-so helped watch my kids so I could talk to a parent, etc). For each report, the commended teacher's name is written on a card and dropped in a bowl/basket. At a staff meeting once a month, one card is picked and that teacher gets a gift certificate or other small gift.
- Snacks at meetings, the occasional bagel breakfast
- Flowers or other memento every Rosh Chodesh
- Notes from parents praising teachers
- Cakes and a sign for each teacher's birthday

### **Ice breakers, bonding and connecting to the synagogue**

- Make a poster with each teacher's baby picture, and let teachers guess who is who. Nice at the beginning of the year.
- Each teacher shares something that no one knows about her. This works even with a staff that's been together a while.
- Dinner from the school for teachers in need (new baby, death in family, etc). Better yet, if the synagogue has a chesed committee that distributes meals, make sure the teachers are included on the committee's radar screen.
- Get the teachers (as a group) invited to the first few minutes of a synagogue board meeting near the beginning of the year, so the board can see in person who the teachers are.

### **Special moments; rewards for big things like accreditation**

- Mystery bus trip to lunch each year after the last day of school. Destination is a mystery, with little clues or props distributed on the bus to help teachers guess
- Director invites all the teachers to dinner in her sukkah, or Shabbat dinner at her house
- Bring in chair massage people to give all the teachers massages (especially good after accreditation)
- Bring in ceramic painting people and have a dinner/painting party for staff
- Provide cool beads and have a party/meal where all the teachers bead chains for their nametags.
- If you have hotel connections – book hotel rooms and have an overnigher/mini-vacation for teachers.

### **End of the year appreciation**

- Parents doing something special each day for a week
- Parents cover the class for a short time so teachers can enjoy a treat all together
- Parents host a nice dinner for teachers with flowers, gifts, etc.
- Parents coordinate an end-of-the-year gift with something from each child – pictures, drawings, possibilities are endless with services like shutterfly/snap fish..
- Director takes entire staff to a play

## **Above and Beyond**

- Give time. In conjunction with evaluations, book an hour with each staff member to talk. Give the person your undivided attention for as long as she needs. Use self-evaluations as part of the process. For a large staff, start in January.

## Lag B'Omer

- Picnic
- Games/sports day
- Kids make visors to wear at the picnic
- Build pretend bon fire and sit around and tell stories and jokes
- Special snack (popsicles)
- Tell Rabbi Akiva stories
- Study some Torah outside

## Other issues and suggestions

- Get parents to read what you send out by making sure that all flyers, forms, etc are posted on the synagogue/ec website. Get a teenager to help arrange this over the summer.
- Getting a handle on salary. The question was raised: What is “salary commiserate with experience”? Max shared salary ranges from this year’s placement applications, and USCJ’s 5768 Salary Survey.

Some examples:

-3 Urban synagogues looking for new directors are offering between \$45K and \$60K, while a synagogue in a smaller community is offering \$40-45.

-USCJ Synagogues with 200-399 member units had a salary range for full time EC directors of 40-79K

- USCJ Synagogues with 1000+ member units had a salary range for full time EC directors of 40-85K

## What about a Jewish Accreditation Program?

- Someday, the Guidelines for Conservative Early Childhood Programs may yield an accreditation program; JECEI is working toward a national accreditation tool, and there are 4 communities with local Jewish accreditation programs – Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington DC and Boston.
- A stumbling block will be the teachers’ levels of Jewish education.

Thanks for a great call!

Max

Maxine Handelman