



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

UP-COMING TEACHER TRAINING MINI-COURSES

Only 1 more course left this semester!

COURSE 9: B'TZELEM ELOKIM: DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY OF MENSCHEN (for religious school teachers)

INSTRUCTOR: DR. SHOSHANA SILBERMAN

Learning to treat each other with respect and dignity in the way in which Judaism teaches is a reflection of God. In this Mini-Course, participants will learn how to develop a cohesive community of students exhibiting menschlichkeit behavior, understanding that we are all created in the image of God.

DATE: Sunday, November 23, 9 - 10:30

LOCATION: Temple Beth Torah, Ocean

first for the Winter/Spring Semester:

Preschoolers and Israel: Perfect Together !

INSTRUCTOR: LINDA RIPPS, VETERAN TEACHER

Due to the popularity and timeliness of the topic, Linda will reprise her workshop that she facilitated in Montville at the beginning of September.

Young children are not developmentally capable of conceptualizing the global map or of a place that is not in their daily lives. This would make it seemingly useless to teach them about another country far away, and yet, it is never too early to introduce a love for Israel as the special place of the Jewish People, which is different from learning about other cultures and countries. By using some Hebrew, the Israeli flag, videos and story books about Israel, we begin to plant the seeds that will bloom as they get older. Linda, who has taught preschool and is an expert in resources about Israel, will show you how to introduce the concept of kibbutz and other aspects of the country to young children.

DATE: MONDAY, JANUARY 19 (MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY), 2009 (10 - 11:30 a.m.)

LOCATION: GLEN ROCK JEWISH CENTER

Keep your eyes open for an up-coming course in March, the week after Purim (March 16 - 20) for religious school principals/education directors on Evaluation and Assessment with Susan Wyner, National USCJ Consultant for Synagogue Education!

Sheri Brown - Congregation Sha'are Shalom - Leesburg, VA
Debbie Kinman-Ford – Cong. B'nai Israel, Gainesville, FL
Phyllis Denenberg – Bnai Tikvah, North Brunswick, NJ
Max Handelman – USCJ – Chicago
Idie Benjamin – Temple Israel Center, White Plains, NY
Janice Jumbo – Philadelphia, PA
Shereen Canady - Jacksonville Jewish Center, Jacksonville, FL
Judy Jacks Berman – Cong. Beth Shalom, Overland Park, KS
Esther Cohen – Beth Torah, Richardson, TX

Topics this call: Anxious parents, stressed teachers, positive and supportive strategies as children move through the school (year by year). Making Thanksgiving Jewish

Making Thanksgiving Jewish

Thanksgiving is an American holiday. Do we need to make it Jewish?

There is so much about Thanksgiving that is Jewish anyway. As a Jewish school, we can enable our children and parents to view even this very American holiday through Jewish eyes.

-Draw parallels between Thanksgiving and Sukkot

-Harvest

-Giving thanks

-Original Thanksgiving celebration may have been based on the Biblical Sukkot celebration

-a wigwam is very similar to a sukkah (Gabe Goldman, director of the JENE Institute (Jewish Environmental and Nature Educators))

-Highlight the mitzvot of Thanksgiving

-feeding the hungry

-Tzedakah projects for Israel and locally

-Lessons for parents

-thankfulness for abundance

-brachot over food/birkat hamazon

-sharing our abundance

Jewish themes of Thanksgiving:

Family

Giving thanks

Helping others/tzedakah

Immigration stories

How does one make a Thanksgiving parent program/assembly Jewish?

-Start by singing Modeh Ani

-Kids discuss/present the tzedakah projects they are working on

-place thought-provoking cards on tables for parents, contrasting Sukkot and Thanksgiving, or any other learning you want them to take away with them

Consider focusing on immigration stories of the families in each class, rather than the traditional Pilgrim and Indian story. The Pilgrim and Indian story is full of stereotypes and misinformation.

See these resources –

<http://caje.org/earlychildhood/publication2/index.html> - Talking Torah While Talking Torah

There are a couple of older articles from Young Children that discuss the treatment of Native Americans and Thanksgiving curriculum:

The Native American Curriculum: Attempting Alternatives to Tepees and Headbands, Jane Billman, September 1992, pp. 22-25

Beyond “Ten Little Indians” and turkeys: Alternative Approaches to Thanksgiving, Patricia G. Ramsey, September 1979 pp. 28-32 and 49-51 (yes, I never throw anything away!)

(I may be able to scan and upload these – stay posted)

Also, this from a director in an old email in my Thanksgiving folder – have the staff read Rethinking Columbus. She said, her staff said, “they have learned many things that are new and different, like that history is told from someone’s point of view, and that they didn’t know everything they thought they did about thanksgiving.”

Resources:

Thanksgiving song (thanks Sheri!) <http://www.songsforteaching.com/tomchapin/thanksgivingday.htm>

Books:

Rivka’s First Thanksgiving by Elsa Okon Rael

Jewish Every Day – Approaches to secular Holidays pp. 288-290 (Halloween is there too), includes more books about the Jewish Immigrant experience

Consider encouraging parents to think about all the things they enjoyed about Thanksgiving, and recreating those things every week on Shabbat. Maybe even end the Thanksgiving assembly with a Shabbat song.

Teachers and parents

Q. I have a new teacher who gets nervous every time I walk into her classroom.

Suggestions: 1. When you go in to observe, leave behind a little note with a positive observation, or take notes and mention positive things in the next staff meeting.

2. The more you go in and out, the easier it will get

3. Provide checklists for teachers so they know what you’re looking for. A list from Shereen’s will be forthcoming.

Q. My parents compare classes and clamor to get their kids into certain teacher’s classes.

Q. Is it better to make all classes be more similar, or build on each teachers’ strengths?

Suggestions: 1. Have a grouping policy. Judy’s policy is below. 2. Gather feedback from teachers about placement for their kids the following year. 3. Have some time when all the classes in an age group are doing something together – maybe music or art, or maybe open center time (based on High Scope’s work time) where all the kids and teachers are mixed in together.

Judy’s placement policy:

Placement Policy

Classroom placement is based on a number of variables of equal importance:

- Chronological age
- Developmental age
- Gender makeup in the class
- Individual characteristics

Once a classroom’s enrollment is complete, placement will be determined.

Through a thoughtful process we look at each child’s placement to make sure it is in the best interest of the child and the classroom.

The Director of Early Childhood Education, in consultation with the Early Childhood teachers, makes the final decision for placement. The Nursery School Committee of Congregation Beth Shalom has approved this policy.

Thanks everyone!!

Maxine Handelman

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I'd stop eating chocolate but I'm no quitter

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"God on Trial" will air on PBS November 9, at 9pm, as part of Kristalnacht remembrance. It is a drama about Auschwitz prisoners who put God on trial, asking the question as to whether God is responsible for horrors like the Shoah. It sounds worthwhile, and might be something worth recording for religious education purposes. Here's one link for more info:

[Click here: Auschwitz TV 'Trial' musters plenty of conviction | The Jewish Review](#)

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Combing Through my Files

Some ideas to share with you

For the Preschool set:

- **Approaches to Secular Holidays* [in a Jewish preschool]: particularly, about Thanksgiving, with alternatives to stereotypes, racism and myths.
- *The Teacher's Tidy Classroom Report
- *Hanukkah crafts and activities

For Religious schools:

- *Hanukkah crafts, activities, puzzles, games (including board games), discussion starters, dealing with the December Dilemma, whole-school and family programs.
- *Report cards and teacher evaluations
- *New Teacher Tips
- *Using Teen Assistants

Request-away!

Contact Nita at Levin@USCJ.org

Nita Polay Levin

Education Field Worker

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