



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

With apologies to Capital One, I would like to know:

What's Creative in YOUR Classes??

Do you have an unusual way that one of your teachers have designed or approached a topic? We'd love to hear about it! Here's one example:

At Beth El Synagogue in East Windsor, the 6th grade class is taking a virtual tour of Israel. At the beginning of the year, their parents bring them to the "airport" and say good-bye as they "board" a "plane" and "take off." They "visit" cities and towns around the country, doing research on the 'net, and then "send home" postcards of the places they've been to, make posters about these places, etc. When the teacher sends home information about what they are studying in the class, they always begin the memo with "this coming to you from Tel Aviv," etc. They stay in character all year.

CULTURAL ARTS PROGRAM FOR 7TH GRADERS

CAPs for sale! CAPs for sale!

[And, such a bargain, you shouldn't know from it !!]

HAVE **YOUR** SEVENTH GRADERS BEEN **CAP'** ed??

Our **CULTURAL ARTS PROGRAM** offers a 2 hour session during which 7th graders experience 2 workshops. Each program has an explanatory educational component and 2 craft projects. There is a nominal \$4.00 fee per participant for materials. Choose 2 from the following:

A Taste of Hebrew Calligraphy, Clay Creations, Fabric Creations, Foiling Techniques, Illumination, Painted Glass, and Wood Projects.

ENRICHMENT COURSES for 12 year olds and up (parents and other interested adults are welcome to participate)

In an effort to improve synagogue skills, the Dept. of Education sponsors these Enrichment Classes. The courses last from 3 - 10 weeks, depending on the course chosen:
 Torah Reading, Nusach, Shofar Blowing, Hebrew Calligraphy, Tallit Making, Megillah Reading.

For more information or to schedule one of these programs, contact Nita Polay Levin, Education Field Worker, at (732) 738 - 4301, or Levin@USCJ.org.

You are invited to a seminar on

Using Narrative in Holocaust Education

Presented by Dr. Karen Shawn

WHO: Holocaust educators, English educators, and Librarians in middle school and high school

WHEN: **Thursday, December 11, 2008**

TIME: 9:00 am - 12:30 pm (9:00-9:30 registration)

COST: \$36.00 payable to BJENY

(includes light cholov yisroel breakfast)

Pre-registration is required.

WHERE: Board of Jewish Education

520 Eighth Avenue 15th floor (b/w 36th and 37th Sreet)

MAIL CHECKS TO:

Emily Witty

Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York

520 Eighth Avenue 15th floor

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Emily Amie Witty

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Preschool Corner

What's happening over vacation:

Schools are closed, but running “winter camp” for families who still need child care. The school charges extra for this time. Staffing is challenging and requires creative solutions.

High holidays and babysitting at the synagogue:

When the school is closed for high holidays, the teachers are paid for those days. The synagogue needs babysitters during services. Can the EC teachers be required to take these babysitting jobs (for extra money)? Max's position is that there should be no policy requiring teachers to do so, but the synagogue should make it financially attractive to the teachers to do so.

Appeal from Craig Taubman:

The original email sent from Craig had an incorrect link, I apologize for sending that. I have resent the email with the correct link.

Revisiting the academics vs. play discussion:

Idie recommended the book *Practical Wisdom for Parents* by Nancy Schulman and Ellen Birmbaum.

I have collected all the suggestions from the list serv thread, and will include this in the synagogue resource center, which should be on-lin sometime soon.

Max's report on NAEYC:

At NAEYC we visited two schools – Temple Emanu-El, a Reform synagogue, and Akiba, the early childhood program of a Modern Orthodox day school. Temple Emanu-El was a good school. Its most incredible feature is a learning garden, complete with a full time garden educator. The children visit the garden every week, and there they plant, nurture, observe, harvest, and play. Child-sized passage-ways bring children from one garden classroom to the next. The documentation was very nice – I saw how one classroom mapped and discussed their mitzvot; another classroom studied the work of Kandinsky and using his techniques, painted to the sounds of the shofar.

Akiba is on a beautiful new campus, every detail thought through. The early childhood program does an amazing job of blending a developmentally appropriate Jewish curriculum, using space in wonderful, child centered ways. Fig and pomegranate trees cover the grounds.

The Network day on Wednesday received mixed reviews. The speakers were Rivy Poupko Kletenik, who is a wonderful Torah Scholar, and Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld, who is a high-energy, high-spirited early childhood educator. Many people felt touched by one but not both of the speakers, and the morning was very light on practical applications or opportunities for reflection or connection with colleagues.

Wednesday night was our USCJ EC dinner at the Ann and Nate Levine Academy, a Schechter school– 80 educators attended. We discussed the Guidelines, and connections between early childhood and on-going Jewish education venues – day schools and religious schools – and our responsibility as early childhood educators to foster these connections. We toured the early childhood program which is large and impressive. My favorite thing was a classroom studying homes. They asked every family to take a picture of the front and the back of their home, then pasted these pictures on the large cardboard blocks. They also asked families to send in pictures of places in the community they frequent with their children, and made blocks of those too.

Debbie will post a parent survey form she has used with her families (and which she made into a survey monkey survey, for better results)

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

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Hello!

I want to share with you an incredible resource from Shira Ackerman Simchovitch from the Dept. for Jewish Zionist Education at the Jewish Agency for Israel. Shira has begun creating a resource called "If You Were in Israel Right Now" which consists of a written description of the kinds of sights, sounds, smells and events you'd see if you were in Israel (at school, in the mall, at home....). Shira has also created powerpoints of children at an Israeli preschool engaging in very cool activities you will want to share with your teachers and children. Everything is free and on-line. Shira sends me an email when she has added new files. Below is the information you need to access the new materials for Hanukkah. (You can also see the materials from Tishre - all the fall holidays.) If you would like an alert when Shira post new materials, just drop me an email and I will add you to the list. Happy Hanukkah!

To see the If You Were in Israel Right Now Hanakka materials, go to:

<ftp://ifyouwerehere.co.il>

Username: ifyouwe

Password: NYIJ5769

PLEASE MAKE SURE TO USE UPPER AND LOWER CASE LETTERS AS THEY APPEAR ABOVE AND TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU PUT THE ENTIRE INTERNET ADDRESS IN THE ADDRESS BAR (NOT www OR http BUT ftp) You may be asked for the password twice.

There will be new files every few days until Hanukka (songs, stories, a family etc). They will all be titled "If You Were Here: Hanukka" but with a number at the end to indicate the order in which they were uploaded and some hint as to what they are about!

Enjoy!

Max

Maxine Handelman

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When School Budgets Get Tight

So many of our schools have already been struggling with smaller populations and trying to make ends meet. And yet, it would be unrealistic to begin to prepare religious school budgets for the upcoming school year without anticipating financial challenges ahead in 2009-2010. Many of our congregants who were employed last year are facing job loss. Many of our businesses that thrived have faltered. Many of our congregations' investments have faced drastic losses. So how do we tighten our belts and prepare for some of the biggest financial challenges that our schools have ever faced?

For those who will be facing this daunting task this school year, perhaps the attached suggestions will assist you in some of your thinking and planning. (provided in both doc and pdf formats)

Good luck as you work to provide the best education in your school that will fit the congregational purse.

And . . . a terrific and multi-functional site that you might find very useful:

Many thanks to our colleague Aviva Gershman, Temple Beth-El Religious School, Richmond, VA who shared the following useful link:

www.j.co.il Click on it and have somefun!

Susan E. Wyner

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An enriching alternative for high school students:

THE ROTHBART DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM FOR TEENS

Of the Jewish Community High School

of Gratz College

Announces Registration for Spring, 2009

This unique on-line learning program developed by the Jewish Community High School of Gratz College is available to Jewish teens anywhere in the world. Students may log on at any convenient time, from any location that has a computer with internet access. Interesting courses taught by high level and engaging instructors, using both the latest technology and a proven approach to working with Jewish teens are featured. Spring 2009 courses include The Torah's Top 50 Ideas, Dilemmas in Jewish History, and Israel : Current Events and Controversies (college credit for qualifying high school juniors and seniors available).

Spring Semester begins on February 2. Please forward this to anyone you know who has a teen for whom Rothbart is an appropriate program.

For more information and to download a registration form visit the Rothbart website at:

www.gratz.edu/rothbart

or contact Program Director Michael Schatz at mschatz@gratz.edu or 215-635-7300 x. 267

Rothbart: Where Jewish Education meets the information age!

Rothbart is working in partnership with Ramah camps, Ramah Israel Seminar, and other community and synagogue based high school programs to enhance students' opportunities for serious and convenient Jewish education. If you are a Rabbi, Educational Director, Camp Director, or BJE director, feel free to contact Michael Schatz about creating an institutional partnership or custom-designed program to meet your needs.

Susan E. Wyner

Last night I had the opportunity to see the movie, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, based on the book by the same name. There have been mixed reviews of this movie amongst Jewish educators, so I thought I would chime in with my own review of its educational value.

Some have pointed out that it is unrealistic. Yes, it certainly would seem implausible that an 8 year old prisoner would spend his days sitting by the side of the electrified wire fence; wouldn't he have been put on work detail, or just have been eliminated? And, yes, it does seem implausible for a Nazi officer to live so close to the concentration camp that his 8 year old son could run over to the camp through the woods every day. And some of the other things that happen (I don't want to spoil it) seem unrealistic. But, let's get beyond that and see the message.

Some have pointed out that it humanizes the Nazis. I didn't find that to be so of the entire story. The officer's mother, his wife, and his 8 year old son are moved by the cruelty and don't know what to make of it. Yes, we do see their human side, and we see that there is nothing they can do to stop the violence, at least, not during this frame of time that the story takes place. The soldiers, however, were committed to their goals and were unmoved. The Nazi officer tells his 8 year old son that the Jews in the camp are "not exactly people." He is unmoved by violence perpetrated against the Jews, even right in front of his eyes, as is the one soldier we get to meet. The officer's daughter has been brainwashed as well. We get a peek into the history textbooks taught to children at the time and meet one of the teachers.

My recommendation is **not to hesitate** to take your older students (6th grade and older) to see this film. There is no graphic detail that would be frightening to them, but they would get to see some of the realities of this black period of our history. If it is not in the budget or calendar to do so, when it comes out on DVD (and I hope that it does, do not hesitate to show it to your students. Hopefully it will be ready by Yom HaShoah, 2010.

Nita Polay Levin

Education Field Worker

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As we get closer to Hanukkah, I wanted to share these lovely words with you from the American Zionist Movement, reminding us what the real "reason of the season" is about and of our challenges as educators and supporters of Zionism.

December 2008/Kislev 5769

Dear Friend,

Chanukah is a Zionist story. It is a story about nationhood, patriotism and identity. It is the story of the Maccabees, a courageous Jewish family that, against all odds, restored Jewish political and religious life in ancient Israel. With the holiday season upon us, we reflect on the true meaning of Chanukah and rededicate ourselves to the future of the Jewish people and to Israel, our homeland. We recognize this was a particularly tumultuous year for Americans, but that does not change AZM's basic reality and our commitment to Israel and the Jewish People.

The nature of the challenges has changed. Today, the Jewish identity of our young people, alienation from the community, understanding of Israel's past and a vision for her future are at the forefront of our concerns. **As Zionists we must inspire a new generation of Maccabees to meet the current challenges to Israel and the Jewish people.**
