



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

Sneak peak at our up-coming Mini-Courses

No Jewish Child Left Aside: Helping Teachers Reach Students with Special Needs

INSTRUCTOR: WENDY DRATLER

TIME: 10 – 12 a.m.

DATES: February 5, March 4, and April 1.

LOCATION: Regional USCJ office, Edison

Three workshops which will focus on identifying and accommodating students with special needs, how to effectively communicate with their parents, how to incorporate classroom modifications for these children, and MORE!

Offered to Education Directors and Principals ONLY.

Dealing with Parents on Sensitive Issues: A Preschool Workshop

INSTRUCTOR: CARYN BRUCKHEIMER

TIME: 10 – 11:30 a.m.

DATE: Jan. 21

LOCATION: Beth Sholom, Fair Lawn

Keeping the channels of communication with parents open and informing parents of happenings in the class will pave the road for discussing sensitive issues. Caryn will show us many examples of ways to communicate with parents and how to open dialog with them on these issues.

Helping “Non-Conservative” Teachers Teach Conservative Students

INSTRUCTOR: RABBI RON ISAACS

TIME: 6 – 7:30 pm

DATE: March 3, 2008

LOCATION: Cong. Beth Israel, Scotch Plains

Last year, we began this dialog with principals. Now we want to dialog with our teachers. There are numerous teachers serving Conservative schools who are no products of the Conservative movement. Others grew up in the movement but have limited knowledge of its mission and core beliefs. These situations may result in potential conflict between the goals of the school and the personal beliefs of the teacher. While we welcome the chance for our students to meet Jews of all kinds, we need to instruct our teachers on the differences between our movement and their personal beliefs and support their efforts in utilizing this information in our classes. Rabbi Isaacs will introduce ideology and will offer participants the opportunity to present issues and to brainstorm solutions.

Cooperative Learning

INSTRUCTOR: DR. SHOSHANA SILBERMAN

LOCATION: Beth El Synagogue, East Windsor

DATE & TIME: TBA

Dr. Silberman will show us activities that we can use to teach any subject, maximizing student participation and accountability as they take very active roles in their own learning.

Shalom,

We would like to invite you to METNY's first Regional Day of Learning, which will take place at The Jewish Theological Seminary located at 3080 Broadway in New York City. Below you will find a flyer for our upcoming event. We hope that you will join us for an outstanding day of education for rabbis, educators and adult learners.

Our day will begin with breakfast and then minyan in the Women's League Seminary Synagogue at JTS. Rabbi Neil Gillman, Professor of Jewish Philosophy at JTS, will lead our opening session. The session is titled "Contrasting Images in Judaism: Portraits of God."

Following Rabbi Gillman, Dr. Ron Wolfson, president and co-founder of Synagogue 2000 (S2K) and Synagogue 3000 (S3K) will deliver the keynote address "The Many Paths of Jewish Education: Engraving and Empowering Jewish Journeys."

There will be a choice of workshops for both the morning and afternoon sessions. Workshop topics will include, "Does it really take a village? Engaging multiple stakeholders in congregational education," "One Synagogue Model: A Junior Congregation for Religious School and Day School Students," and "Engaging Teachers in Engaging Students – Building Teacher Dialogue."

The day will include lunch and *mincha*. The day is scheduled to conclude at approximately 3 PM.

Below is a registration form to fill out and return to the METNY office.

Please publicize this to the NJ region of United Synagogue.
Please contact me if you need any other information.

Thanks,

Rabbi Paulette R. Posner
Director of Education
New York Metropolitan Region - USCJ
155 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10010

Hi Everyone,

Abraham Joshua Heschel's yohrzeit (18 Tevet, the 34th anniversary of his death) falls on December 27 during the week of reading Parashat Sh'mot, the first portion of Exodus (chapters 1-4), in which midwives resist through nonviolence the murderous commands of Pharaoh; we experience the renaming of God; and our liberation from slavery begins. Martin Luther King Day is January 21 this year. It's not too early to begin thinking about doing some programming that ties together these two great figures who were friends and inspired voices for freedom. If anyone of you has an actual curriculum that you are willing to share, please forward it to me. In the meantime, I direct you to three sites that have meaningful information about the connection between Heschel and King.

<http://www.shalomctr.org/node/122>

<http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org/praying-their-feet-remembering-abraham-joshua-heschel-and-martin-luther-king>

<http://www.ifyc.org/system/files/Faith+Heroes+Curriculum.pdf>

Hag Urim Sameach,
Serene

Serene Victor
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

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For some of you this is a reminder. For others, it is an introduction to Project Etgar, a middle school curriculum for synagogue schools. I urge you to check this out if you have at least 10 students per class.

Project Etgar is an exciting, field-tested sixth through eighth grade curriculum designed to facilitate students' search for answers to real-life questions through the lens of Conservative Judaism. Based upon <http://www.aboutlearning.com/>4MAT a sound educational model that engages students in active learning while considering their individual learning styles.

Project Etgar is a comprehensive educational program that:

- * Delivers a full and serious curriculum
- * Retains students and teachers
- * Offers text-based and experiential learning opportunities
- * Engages students in making personal and communal choices
- * Gives students a new lens for exploring Judaism's core values.

Project Etgar provides all the tools teachers need to implement active, engaging classroom instruction in a positive and productive environment.

For more information go to

http://www.uscj.org/Project_Etgar_2008207134.html

Applications are due on Friday, December 21, 2007.

If you want to talk to someone about this curriculum contact Debbie Kershner at bdkersh@aol.com

Happy Hannukah,
Serene



»Save money on art supplies.

Did you know that Torah Aura is an authorized Crayola reseller?

Recently, a number of congregational schools told us that they were spending an inordinate amount of their budget on school supplies: markers, crayons, clay, construction paper, and the like.

We know that school budgets are crunched, and we want to schools to be able to spend money on the stuff that really counts, like paying teachers well, training them well, and equipping them with quality curricular materials.

So we got in touch with the folks at [Crayola](#), and we struck a deal. Now, we can offer Jewish schools really good -- and we mean **really** good -- prices on [Crayola](#) products.

Need [pounds and pounds of clay](#) for your students to make their own golems? We got it.



Want to give each teacher their own [class set of crayons](#) and some [really good whiteboard markers](#)? We got those, too. We have [fabric markers](#) for decorating tallitot and wimples, [glass markers](#) for turning your windows into teach-able space, and [sidewalk chalk](#) for turning your concrete into billboards for your programs. In consultation with our favorite Jewish art expert, esteemed educator [Laurie Bellet](#), we carry the best products from [Crayola](#) designed to make your school a more colorful and artistic place.

And here's the best part: We offer unthinkable low prices, the lowest [Crayola](#) will let us sell for. On top of that, when you add [Crayola](#) products to your regular Torah Aura book order, our school quantity discount applies. That means that if you order over \$100 from us (be it Torah Aura products or [Crayola](#) products) you get a 5% discount on your whole order. Order more than \$400, and your discount jumps to 7%, and top \$1000, and we give you 9% off of everything.

We think that's an unbeatable deal.

But wait. There's more.

Stock up on [Crayola](#) products before January 1, and you'll get an

In This Issue:

»[Happy Hanukkah!](#)

»[Let Me Count the Ways: Shmittah — It's a mitzvah](#)

»[The Reports of Hebrew School's Death are Greatly Exaggerated](#)

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»Happy Hanukkah!

Welcome to the [Hanukkah](#) edition of the TAPBB.

We hope your holiday has been (and continues to be) full of light and joy.

This week, we've got a top-notch issue for you (but lets be honest... every issue of TAPBB is top-notch, right?).

Just in case you were worried she's losing her touch after several years of Let Me Count the Ways columns, Carol's got tips for teaching about *shmittah* in your classroom. Seriously. *Shmittah*.

Just in case you've heard that Hebrew schools were dying, Joel's here to tell you that they're alive and kicking, and they're way better off than some may think.

Just in case you're students are overwhelmed by trying to create perfect pieces of art, Laurie's got news for you: sometimes, imperfection is better.

And just in case you're out of crayons (or you melted them all to make Hanukkah candles), we've got a 25% off sale on Crayola products. Not quite a miracle of [Hanukkah](#), but not bad, either.

As usual, you should check the [blog](#) for more news, commentary, and [Zionist fortune cookie messages](#).

[Hag Sameah!](#)

»Let Me Count the Ways: Shmittah — It's a mitzvah

by [Carol Oseran Starin](#)

This year, 5768, is a shmittah year, a year of sabbatical for the land. The Torah tells us that every seventh year the land is to lie fallow and debts are to be remitted. The word shmittah means 'release.' Shmittah is a fascinating and ingenious concept. In current-day practice it also brings with it a lot of controversy. Since the shmittah year only comes around once every seven years, plan some time for a bit of self-study and then bring shmittah to your school and classrooms. Tu b'Shevat and other times you talk about caring for the environment and resource conservation are good times to include shmittah.

Shmittah provides opportunities for all sorts of lessons.

[To read about five shmittah teaching ideas, click ahead. >](#)

»The Reports of Hebrew School's Death are Greatly Exaggerated

by [Joel Lurie Grishaver](#)

The word is on the street, "Hebrew School is useless." While the forces that be have done their best to render the Hebrew School impotent by (a) dropping its hours below the minimum needed, (2) not providing it with sufficient funds, (c) not developing adequate training vehicles for staff, and (d) refusing to treat it with respect, the Hebrew school is alive and making a difference.

Let's take a simple example. A Hebrew school that used to have an excellent reputation reports that a majority of its fourth and fifth graders are failing to retain the majority of Hebrew and Tefillah material they have been taught. Other curricular areas are being reduced to allow extra drill of

January 1, and you'll get an **additional 25% off**. You read that right. From now until the first of the year, all [Crayola](#) products are **25% off**.

As always, you can place your order by calling (800) 689-0793, emailing orders@torahaura.com, or heading right to the website, www.torahaura.com.

[Order online right now and save 25%! >](#)

»Teaching Jewishly - Now Available!

Teaching Jewishly, Joel Grishaver's newest book for teachers and educators, is available now and in stock.

It makes a great Hanukkah gift for teachers, or the perfect semester-long study text for staff meetings.

[Order now and we'll ship today! >](#)

been taught. Other curricular areas are being reduced to allow extra drill of "Hebrew reading." The secondary result will be an expansion of the number of students who will receive extra tutoring to help them keep pace. In some schools a large percentage of the students are "on tutoring." The next step for this process is logically on line tutoring. It is both cheaper and more flexible. From there it is just a short ride down the slippery slope to replacing Hebrew school with on-line learning. Irony here, is that the teachers are not to blame, the curriculum is not to blame, even the parents commitment is not to blame — the villain here is a compromise made with the devil by all of those parties. They've all made a compromise to lower their standards enough to please the lowest common denominator. It's a cycle that seems to go round and round.

Given this vicious cycle it is important to keep our eye on the ball.

[To dissect that ball, keep reading. >](#)

»Loving Imperfection

by [Laurie Bellet](#)

Sometimes imperfection is better.

The other afternoon, during 'open studio' time, I overheard a delightful conversation between two first grade girls. It went something like this:

Child 1 - "My Mom drew me such a good castle. She didn't think it was good but I think she is a great draw-er."

Child 2 - "Why was your Mom drawing for you? Why didn't you just draw it yourself?"

Child 1 - "I don't draw very well. My Mom is much better at it."

Child 2 - "Well, you'll never get better if you don't practice. Besides, you are a really good builder, and if you do the drawing yourself, the picture would truly be yours."

Child 2 had articulated what many of us, as teachers or parents, forget. Children need to actually do their own art work, however flawed it might appear, in order to own and learn from the experience.

Nowadays, there are so many ways that students can turn out "perfect products." We have die cut shapes that are holiday specific, lovely wood or fabric kits for ritual wares and even velvet or translucent coloring activities. A dedicated teacher could also spend hours cutting proper shapes or perfect Hebrew letters. There is definitely a place for these activities and a time that the product is what you are after. But, we cannot delude ourselves into thinking that prepackaged materials offer a comprehensive learning adventure.

When children are given freedom to innovate their own art or craft activities, the learning opportunities abound.

[To keep reading, click... >](#)

Chevre,

I urge you to register for the Jewish Educators Assembly 2007 conference which will take place January 27-30 in Chicago (we promise to provide coats for those of you from the South :-). You will have the opportunity to learn from Professor Daniel Pekarsky, (Madison, WI) the foremost educator writing about vision in Jewish schools. I have had the pleasure of studying with Danny for the past two years as part of a Mandel visions project, and I would follow him anywhere. (He loves to sing!) And Chancellor Eisen will also be present to address us. It's a star studded program!

So plan on coming and meet colleagues from around the country. Give yourself an amazing Hanukah present - register for the JEA conference now ! Early Bird deadline December 15, 2007

<file:///C:/DOCUME~1/SERENE~1/LOCALS~1/Temp/3D"http://www.jewisheducators.org/"=>www.jewisheducators.org

Happy Chanukkah and Shabbat Shalom,
Serene

Serene Victor
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education