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think

THE LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE JOURNAL

inside this issue:

MISSION CONTROL

CHILD'S PLAY MAKES BETTER THINKERS

PLAY ENHANCES LITERACY AND LANGUAGE SKILLS, INCREASES ATTENTION SPANS AND TRAINS FOR ANALYSIS.

By Gail Baker

"It was child's play!" The phrase implies an activity accomplished with ease and enjoyment, a goal achieved without stress. Digging a deep hole at the beach is fun, even if it requires work and perseverance. Reciting from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, where Orsino proclaims, "if music be the food of love, play on..." can be good fun, too, if you enjoy the drama of it all. Still, it requires effort and attention. Work can be child's play but a child's play is her work.

In *Five Minds for the Future* (2006), Professor Howard Gardner of Harvard University reorganizes how we look at the thinking skills our children will need for future success. He identifies five ways of thinking that develop the cognitive structures that children need in order to thrive. These are the thought processes we carefully nurture in our students.

Recently, I was describing to parents an elaborate scene from their children's Junior Kindergarten classroom. Enacting a scenario where a sick baby was going to the doctor (and with impressive ingenuity), the children had taken on specific roles and decided what was going to happen. The parents chuckled at my description and then one sighed and asked, "That's great, but they're only playing. When are they going to do real work?" Here's my analysis of the work these four year-olds were doing, using Howard Gardner's "five minds for the future":

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THE LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE

JOURNAL CONTRIBUTORS

Gail Baker is Co-Founder and Director of The Lola Stein Institute, and Co-Founder and Head of The Toronto Heschel School. Gail nurtures a career-long passion for reaching and teaching to the essential individuality in each child. Her parallel commitment is to encourage and refine the unique talents of each teacher on her team and beyond.

Greg Beiles is the Director of Curriculum and Training at The Lola Stein Institute and Vice Principal, Curriculum at The Toronto Heschel School. Greg believes children are active builders of knowledge and empathy, and that a child's perspective is shaped more by how learning is structured than by the specific content at hand.

Pam Medjuck Stein is Co-Founder and Chair of The Lola Stein Institute and a founding board member of The Toronto Heschel School. Her eldest three children are alumni, the fourth now in Grade 7. She has collaborated on The Toronto Heschel team since 1996.

Lisa Richler has worked as a writer, fundraiser, and teacher. Currently, she focuses on her three young kids and is an active volunteer for The Toronto Heschel School and The Lola Stein Institute.

GUESTS CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE:

Daniel Abramson has long explored learning through creative self-expression. Before earning his teaching degree at York University, he coordinated arts and culture at Hillel of Greater Toronto. A lifelong camper, Daniel's passion for nature drives him to connect his students to the world they inhabit. He teaches junior high teacher Toronto Heschel.

Catherine Birken is a General Pediatrician at the Hospital for Sick Children and Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto. She co-leads TARGet Kids! (Toronto Applied Research Group for Kids), a primary care research network aiming to improve child health through preventative primary health care. Her children attend The Toronto Heschel School.

Karen Chisvin is the co-founder, with Maggie Doswell, of Ellipsis Creative Development Inc. She is an alumni parent and a past Board Chair of The Toronto Heschel School.

Heidi Friedman views education holistically; with goals to teach academic skills, foster critical thinking and inquiry, and help children navigate their social world. With expertise in leadership as well as teaching, Heidi believes in the infinite potential of children. She now teaches at The Toronto Heschel School.

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl holds the Anne and Max Tanenbaum Chair in Rabbinics at Beth Tzedec Congregation. He was a student of Rabbi Heschel. He has been senior rabbi at Beth Tzedec since 1993.

Yehuda Kurtzer is President of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. He has taught at Harvard University, Hebrew College, the Brandeis Initiative on Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy, NYU's Center for Online Judaic Studies, and the American Jewish Committee's Commission on Contemporary Jewish Life.

Sarah Margles is Student Life Coordinator at The Toronto Heschel School. She has taught at Jewish day schools in the U.S. and served as a supplementary school principal in Toronto.

Ricki Wortzman is an educator who has written many books for students and teachers in several areas of the curriculum. She now coaches new and veteran teachers. Her book on inquiry-based learning in the early years will be published in the fall.

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MISSION CONTROL continued from cover...

The Synthesizing Mind brings ideas from different places together to create new, integrated, and more sophisticated understandings. In a complex world, the skill to bridge ideas and connect diverse topics is invaluable. When children at play combine different ideas that make sense to them and their playmates, they practise synthesis. In my Junior Kindergarten example, two children begin playing as the parents who are bringing their sick baby to the doctor. As others join in, their ideas have to be incorporated or the play falls apart. The children at play are integrating various viewpoints to keep the story going.

The Creative Mind clarifies problems, uncovers and examines dilemmas and finds novel solutions. Inventing ideas to bring to their games and plans, children see themselves as creative thinkers. They solve problems relentlessly, as their play takes unexpected twists and turns. In my example, the children encounter unexpected dialogue, and relationships. What if there are two doctors who don't agree on the ailment? What if the baby has to be hospitalized? The children have to create new roles as their story unfolds.

The Respectful Mind appreciates diversity, manages the interdependence of teamwork, and accepts the impersonal nature of fairness. If the child playing the "mommy" had it in her mind that they were going to the doctor and then home, she has to be flexible and understanding when the "doctor" sends them to the hospital. The game is helping her develop sensitivity to different viewpoints as she learns how to peacefully resolve conflict.

The Ethical Mind is self-aware and appreciates responsibilities that accrue to family, work, and community – the intimate and universal, the local and global. Other children do not always respond as one might wish, yet they can all learn to play in a way that allows everybody to participate and have their ideas heard. Because play assumes an evolving scenario, children learn that if they act aggressively, or refuse to listen to others, their game will fall apart.

The Disciplined Mind masters something specific, a particular way of thinking in a specific expertise or craft. The path to excellence requires that children learn to focus and to persevere until they achieve mastery. When their play is meaningful to them, children pay attention to what they are doing. This focus, practised at play, evolves into the capacity for extended concentration, which is key to learning and achievement. The Disciplined Mind is not visible in my example but can be seen when young children begin their first science experiments. They may spend a good deal of time "playing" with the materials before they fully understand the science. They focus and repeat a process that results in the "Aha" moment they seek.

Play is real work. Because at play the child's thoughts are self-directed and wholly engaged with what he/she is doing in the present moment, play is the essential vehicle for cognitive development. The child learns to create and sustain self-directed scenarios.

Harvard psychologist Ellen Langer describes this phenomenon in her book *The Power of Mindful Learning* (1998). According to Langer, mindful learning is authentic, sustainable, and inherently meaningful because the child brings something of him/herself into the context. For example, in my Grade 8 Judaic Arts class, the students play-acted the relationship between Rabbi A.J. Heschel and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. They were asked to imagine witnessing or participating in the famous 1965 Civil Rights March in Selma, Alabama, along with these two great men. They considered questions such as "What were you thinking as you watched the marchers go by?" and "What made you jump in and participate? What excited you? Did anything terrify you?" By putting themselves imaginatively and emotionally into the historical period, the students examined the scenario from multiple perspectives, which enriched their understanding.

In addition to fostering mindful learning, play cultivates another set of valuable skills. While role-playing "taking the baby to the doctor," the Junior Kindergarten children are in fact practising language and literacy skills. Acting out stories helps with sequencing, inference, interpretation, and analysis. These are the skills necessary for reading proficiency. In *Literacy Beginnings: Supporting Young Readers and Writers* (2007), authors McGee and Richgels write that "Communicating in spoken language and in play are very closely related to communicating in written language... Play provides a rich context for extending children's understanding about written language."

On yet another level, play highlights one of the most important elements of education: the teacher's knowledge of his/her students. Plato wrote, "You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." Observing students at play, teachers discover the children's characteristics and talents and thereby understand their respective academic and social levels. Good educators track their students' relation to teaching benchmarks. For youngsters, these standards include who can express themselves verbally, who can express themselves non-verbally, who can sequence a story or series of events.

Play is the essential vehicle for cognitive development; it helps children learn to create and sustain self-directed scenarios.

I recently led a storytelling session with a Senior Kindergarten class at The Toronto Heschel School. My springboard was the Isaac Bashevis Singer story, "Why Noah Chose the Dove." The children, pretending to be the animals in the drama, had to justify to me why they should enter the Ark. While the children were play-acting, my colleague and I took notes on which children could sequence the events but not interpret them, who could think flexibly when another classmate responded in an unexpected way, and which children could express themselves using new language and vocabulary. We also watched for their conceptual integration of background knowledge, given that they had already learned the story of Noah from the Chumash. With this important knowledge, gleaned from their playtime, we planned the "next steps" in their learning.

Albert Einstein said, "When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than any talent for abstract, positive thinking." Children engage in many different kinds of fantasy, in "free play" and in "planned play." Play is an essential educational tool, and at The Toronto Heschel School, we take child's play very seriously.

EDITOR'S DESK

SEEING THE INVISIBLE

think looks at educational basics that are essential, yet elusive.

By Pam Medjuck Stein

In this issue, ***think*** focuses on the essential characteristics of children: how they play, wonder, and use their bodies and souls to grow. We offer you the opportunity to see the invisible as we crystallize considerations that ground the best education. Author Dr. Robert Halliwell suggests the results of such attentiveness are easy to spot: happy, fulfilled children who grow into happy adults with meaning in their lives.

The Lola Stein Institute Director, Gail Baker, sees the student first as a child. She reflects on how children play and explains that play-based learning advances the sophisticated and essential learning goals identified by Harvard professor Howard Gardner in his book *Five Minds for the Future*. Her article could not have come at a better time, as the Ontario Ministry of Education is also recommending play and inquiry-based learning for its early years learning initiative.

Here's a chance to see the invisible as we crystallize considerations that ground the best education.

Greg Beiles, The Lola Stein Institute Director of Curriculum and Training, continues his "Jewish Thinking" series addressing the double-value educational benefit derived from playing games. He explores how games deliver both concrete and conceptual content to players, while fulfilling the Jewish tradition of mental agility. On a parallel track, physical games are also multi-purpose. Lisa Richler, who we are pleased to announce will be writing regularly for *think*, highlights the advantages of physical education beyond the gym, when skills are thoughtfully mixed for additional cognitive goals.

Meanwhile, Toronto Heschel School junior high teacher Daniel Abramson brings a child's self-esteem to the discussion through a poem by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav; he argues that children encounter the world and learn to appreciate it through their sense of self-worth and individuation. Looking into the topic of self-esteem, Heidi Friedman links emotional well-being and readiness to learn in her Grade 1 case study on children facing change. Further respecting a child's inclination to participate and inquire, Sarah Margles, the school's Student Life Coordinator, mindfully orientates students towards investigation. And Dr. Catherine Birken attends to the intentionality of this holistic schooling in her evaluation of education through the research scientist's lens.

We also have stories to tell. Author Ricki Wortzman and I describe why storytelling is so important to education, especially for the intergenerational transfer of values that Jewish education should provide. Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl, the senior rabbi at Toronto's Beth Tzedec Congregation, describes his personal experience with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and shares reflections from his student years when Heschel taught young rabbis to integrate their Jewish experience with the human experience. Creativity consultant Karen Chisvin returns us to the context of all that we do as parents and teachers and the invisible power of attitude. In our first *think* magazine "book report," she synopsizes *The Adult Roots of Childhood Happiness* in which Dr. Robert Halliwell presents his strategies for intentionally and conscientiously nurturing children to be happy and resilient. Read on and see the invisible!

Dear Editors of THINK,

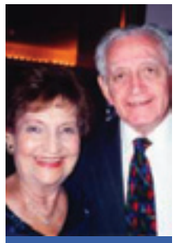
Jan.3, 2011

We have just finished reading the Lola Stein Institute Journal (Issue #8 Fall 2010) from cover to cover, and need to tell you how stimulating, inspiring and informative we found it to be. We've kvelled watching our grandchildren Olivia and Ethan Varkul thrive at The Toronto Heschel School, and through issues of "Think" you clearly explain the educational ideas and philosophy that nurtures the positive feelings children and parents have for their school. The articles help us expand our own thinking about how children learn, even at this grand-parenting stage of our lives. They help us embrace how ideas like thinking-through, democracy, hands-on learning and Jewish mindfulness (just to mention a few of the concepts expounded upon in this issue) help create the active learning environment of your wonderful school.

We feel gifted that we too can grow from our grandchildren's school experience through the efforts of the dedicated teachers and administrators who take time from their busy schedules to describe the mission and passion behind their work.

Thank you for growing our grandchildren while caring for them so deeply.

Sincerely,
Monica and Barry Shapiro



Lola & Mannie Stein

the Lola Stein story

Lola Stein z"l was an early female pharmacist in South Africa, but her very special talent was in hospitality and friendship. She cared for family and friends, at home and abroad, individually, uniquely, and lovingly. One friend chooses to honour her memory in a way that also reaches out to many.

The Lola Stein Institute reaches teachers close to home and afar. The Institute began within The Toronto Heschel School in 2003 and has expanded its educational leadership more broadly thanks to international recognition of its excellence in teacher training and curriculum development. It now offers workshops locally and internationally, customizing the delivery of its attention and expertise uniquely to each school.

SPOT LIGHT

highlights of the thinking behind The Lola Stein Institute

Greg Beiles is Director of Curriculum and Training at The Lola Stein Institute and Vice Principal, Curriculum at The Toronto Heschel School. With an M.A. in Education, Greg is on Sabbatical this year at the University of Toronto pursuing a Ph.D. on Philosophy of Religion.

Why is Jewish education important to you?

It's not enough to say "I am Jewish because my ancestors were Jewish." Judaism carries "valuable cargo," ideas that the world needs – not necessarily more than the ideas of some other peoples – but just as much. For example, Judaism asserts the right to autonomy, the right to be different. We have a lot to teach about what it means to be a stranger in a strange land, what it means to need compassion, and why justice is necessary. The biblical literature teaches us a passion for justice and rabbinic literature suggests how to make principled choices and live ethically. Our responsibility is to preserve, enliven, and teach these ideas.

Is a Jewish education practical?

Judaism is the source of our values, and values matter because they guide our choices. The "big ideas" in Judaism give us an alternative world view to the materialism that is damaging the planet and undermining human relations. Jewish literary traditions and methods of study are also great cognitive training. Studying Torah, Talmud, and the Hebrew language require mental discipline and high level reasoning. In Jewish learning the emphasis on the mastery of skills is an orientation that transfers across the curriculum to math, science, history. The tradition of Jewish learning presses us to reach for the highest standard of education possible for all children. We are not permitted to leave anyone behind.

In an interview days before his death, A.J. Heschel advised young people, "Above all, remember that you must build your life as if it were a work of art." What does he mean?

Heschel means an ethical and spiritual work of art. He uses the word "art" because being ethical and spiritual isn't automatic – it takes skill, discipline, practise, and active imagination, just like any other form of art.

Aristotle points out that science is the knowledge of what "is," whereas art is the knowledge of what "could be." It is important for children to engage in both. Understanding science, the way the world works, is essential to learn how to live in the world and because what "is" is the raw material for what "can be." At the same time, children should experiment with art, with what "could be." Otherwise they get stuck in how things are and don't see themselves as agents of change, able to bring new ideas into being.

Thinking like an artist is the dynamic thinking of one who produces and creates. It means to envision what does not currently exist and have the confidence, skill, and experience to attempt to bring the vision to life, be it problem-solving as engineers or as planners or as creators of visual art, music, or theatre.

Is there one Jewish teaching that most inspires your approach to education?

Rabbi Hillel said, "That which is hateful to you, do not do unto others; the rest is commentary; now go and learn." Most people focus on the first part of this teaching – the Golden Rule. But the essential method of Jewish learning is the "commentary." We have to speak, read, ask, discuss, probe, and avoid assumptions. That way, we'll be able to treat each other with the dignity that Judaism commands. It's a life-long process. That's what Hillel meant when he said, "now go and learn."

GAMES for the MIND

In Part Four of his series on Jewish Thinking, Greg explores the science and tradition of playing games.

By Greg Beiles

Whether spinning dreidels on Hanukkah, dressing up for Purim, or shooting plastic arrows at targets on Lag B'Omer, "play" and games are part of Jewish traditions. One might suspect that the activities aim to keep children entertained, or just to add fun to Jewish celebrations. When we take a closer look at play and games in Jewish tradition, we find that many of the games played at our celebrations are in fact teaching games. What they teach may seem rather simple: often just a remembrance of an historical event, such as dreidels recalling the miracle of Hanukkah. However, if we dig a little deeper and consider the goals and cognitive processes involved in some of this play, we see how these games may be sources of rich educational possibilities.

Spinning dreidels at Hanukkah is a good place to start. The game is a very basic way to recall the Maccabee victory over Greek imperial soldiers. Many people know that the four Hebrew letters on the dreidel – *nun, gimel, heh, shin* – stand for the phrase "***n**es **g**adol **h**ayah **s**ham*, a great miracle occurred there." One rabbinic interpretation suggests that the Jews played dreidel to distract the Greek soldiers, while they secretly studied Torah, which had been banned by King Antiochus. Drawing on this interpretation, I once modified a version of a dreidel so my students had to correctly answer a Torah-related question before taking a spin. The goal was to reinforce for the kids how Hanukkah connects to Torah study and how on the Festival of Lights we celebrate our own freedom to practise our religion and ways of learning.

In truth, the dreidel game did not originate from the time of the Maccabees. Rather, it is modeled on an English and German game called "totum" which was especially popular at Christmastime. For older students, this history is an illustrative example of how Jews sometimes adapted games and activities of their non-Jewish neighbours to enhance Jewish traditions. (The Pesach Seder, modeled after a Greek Symposium is another well-known adaptation.) With these examples in mind, students can then be given the challenge of adapting an existing game – such as "Trivial Pursuit" or "Clue" – to teach about Judaism. As the students differentiate and manipulate method and content, they practise a number of valuable cognitive exercises.

As students differentiate and manipulate method and content, they practise a number of valuable cognitive exercises.

On Lag B'Omer students take to the outdoors to play field games in commemoration of Bar Kokhba and his followers who fought Roman soldiers in the forests of Judea. At The Toronto Heschel School our Grade 5 students are responsible for planning and leading field games, modeled on events from Torah and Jewish history, for the younger grades. Over the years the Grade 5 students have invented such creative games as "Moshe's Race to the Sea," "David and Goliath's Tug of War," and "Miriam's One Legged Dance." By adding this layer of creativity to the already symbolic Lag B'Omer games, our students engage in the imaginative interpretative play which is so characteristic of Jewish thought.

Imaginative interpretative play is characteristic of Jewish thought.

The playfulness of the rabbis is most prominent in their fun with words. Rosh Hashanah blessings, derived from puns on the names of particular foods, are good examples of rabbinic word play. For instance, the Hebrew word for carrot is "***gezer***". From this the rabbis derived the blessing, "Sheti***gzor gezer***ot tovot" (May God decree for us good decrees). The pun works because "decrees" (***gezarot***) has the same Hebrew root letters as "carrot" (***gezar***). Likewise, referring to the fish head traditionally adorning the Rosh Hashanah table, the rabbis declared, "*Sheniheyeh rosh velo' lezanav*" (May we be the head and not the tail).

The rabbinic puns take advantage of the particular structure of Hebrew syntax, and provide an engaging, imaginative way to teach students how to formulate Hebrew sentences. More advanced Hebrew students can create their own pun-based wishes for a new year. The game also works in English. On the pretext of a pickle, one could wish that one's friends "not to end up in a pickle in the coming year"; or starting with an apple, one might wish everyone "a fruitful year ahead!" Beneath the humour of this game are very real cognitive benefits. Word games like this not only teach linguistic structures, metaphor, and symbolism, they also exercise the brain's lateral thinking capacities. These *Rosh Hashanah* games are truly good for the *Rosh*! (*Rosh* = Head)

Games do more than engage our children with our traditions. They teach history, encourage sophisticated linguistic thinking, and create flexible, agile, minds – all in active, humorous, and thought-challenging ways.

The playful approach of the ancient rabbis is easily transferred to the contemporary classroom. At The Toronto Heschel School, teachers develop concept-building games across the school curriculum. Among the many games developed by the math department is a game to teach the concept of re-grouping for subtraction. Each player begins with a mock $1,000 bill. The player rolls dice that generate numbers up to 99. The player must subtract the amount rolled from the $1,000. To do this, she/he must first trade in the $1,000 bill for ten $100 bills, one of the $100 bills for ten $10 bills, and so on. Players keep rolling, trading, and subtracting until they get down to $0. During the game, the players record all their mathematical "moves" – the series of trades and subtractions – to ensure that they translate the activity of the game into standard mathematical notation.

We also have a team of Hebrew-language teachers designing games to teach Hebrew grammar in an engaging way. Tongue in cheek, we call our project, "Gramma' through Drama," as often we use elements of drama, such as improvisation, in our Hebrew grammar games. In one of my favourite Hebrew grammar games, students hop on and off milk crates as they verbalize changing verb tenses. The particular height of each crate provides a kinesthetic cue for changing tenses. The game keeps the students moving; the busy pace seems to relax them; and they become less concerned with making mistakes. The games create a relaxed, yet focused, state of mind that is critical for second-language learning.

Games do more than engage our children with our traditions. They teach history, encourage sophisticated linguistic thinking, and create flexible, agile, minds – all in active, humorous, and thought-challenging ways. Jewish tradition invites all of us to participate in this creative play. Let the games begin!

NURTURE CONNECTION, TEACH INDEPENDENCE.... AND VICE VERSA

The more children understand the natural world, the more they can understand themselves.

By Daniel Abramson

The first time I entered the famed Toronto Heschel Teaching Garden to meet Ellen Kessler, the garden was abuzz with activity…literally. *Morah* Ellen drew her students' attention to a small hole in the ground where bees flew in and out busily pollinating a small patch of strawberry plants. She bent low as one student approached, a ripe tomato in hand, asking if he could eat it. The blessing flowed as the boy prepared to enjoy the fruit he had helped to grow. Other students focused on a patch of earth uncovered by moving a tree stump. They cheered their discovery of worms and potato bugs.

In my years as a summer camp educator, I witnessed campers and counselors experience moments of wonder and awe as they explored the natural world. I sensed the value those moments held, long before I learned to speak of them as "teachable moments."

The best way to diminish a camper's fear of thunder was to teach her what lightning actually is. To calm a terrified cabin of campers I would frantically rub a polar fleece blanket on my head until static electricity crackled. The whole cabin would burst into laughter watching me get zapped by hundreds of tiny sparks.

As a teacher, I'm interested to know *why* my polar fleece method worked. I used to believe that the comedy of my scientific demonstration simply lightened the mood on dark stormy nights. Recently, however, I read a prayer by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav and his words give me pause to consider another possibility.

Grant me the ability to be alone;
may it be my custom to go outdoors each day
among the trees and grass - among all growing things
and there may I be alone, and enter into prayer,
to talk with the One to whom I belong.
May I express there everything in my heart,
and may all the foliage of the field -
all grasses, trees, and plants -
awake at my coming,
to send the powers of their life into the words of my prayer
so that my prayer and speech are made whole
through the life and spirit of all growing things,
which are made as one by their transcendent Source.
May I then pour out the words of my heart
before your Presence like water, O L-rd,
and lift up my hands to You in worship,
on my behalf, and that of my children!

-Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav

"To know how metamorphosis happens makes it all the more amazing to see a monarch butterfly emerge from a gold-flecked chrysalis. And anyone who can read the great narratives of ancient civilizations in the stars is rewarded by the additional lens through which to ponder the heavens. Understanding how things work enables us to consider their broader meanings."

To be sure, the Rabbi's words hold potent messages about the intimacy of our relationship with nature, but for me, as an educator, thinking back to those tiny sparks, one line stands out from the rest: "Grant me the ability to be alone."

I would certainly understand if Rabbi Nachman prayed for the *opportunity* to be alone. We can all benefit from a little extra peace during the day. Or perhaps a more ecological reading of the prayer suggests desire for *access* to open spaces. Encounters with nature and injunctions to protect it are an important aspect of Judaism, but I don't think this is what Rabbi Nachman's word "ability" implies.

In a flash, just as a peal of lightning crashes above a camp cabin, the meaning becomes clear. Rabbi Nachman's "ability to be alone" is what gives my camper the courage to face her fear. Knowledge. What allows each of us to be "alone" is a sense of competence, the independence that grows when we understand the world. Above all else, knowledge empowers our students to stand on their own and navigate the challenges they will face.

Knowledge not only emboldens us to venture into the world. It encourages us to recognize the miraculousness of nature. I find it fascinating that learning how a great magic trick is accomplished always lessens the effect, while learning about the natural wonders that shape our lives renders them more impressive.

To know how metamorphosis happens makes it all the more amazing to see a monarch butterfly emerge from a gold-flecked chrysalis. And anyone who can read the great narratives of ancient civilizations in the stars is rewarded by the additional lens through which to ponder the heavens. Understanding how things work enables us to consider their broader meanings.

Ironically, the more a student's knowledge makes him able to be alone, the more he recognizes that we are never on our own at all. The impact of our actions on other living things becomes self-evident as we come to understand the connectedness of all earth's natural systems. A warm sense of connection emerges through what Rabbi Nachman calls the "custom" of closely observing nature's wonders.

Inquiry and observation nurture our appreciation of nature. Respect for the source of these wonders increases in tandem with the knowledge we cultivate. When teachers foster a love of nature by providing students with opportunities to explore it with their hands and feet, we motivate them to make personal choices that support their world and its sustainability.

Young students may not yet articulate how the knowledge they gain through their school's outdoor education and environmental programs fosters their "ability to be alone." It took me years. Nonetheless, they reap the benefits academically and personally. As a classroom teacher, I appreciate the transformative power generated by fleeting sparks of wonder. The moments are very special and they occur naturally when we engage in the world around us.

If you want to know how we know, just speak to the little boy who brought his tomato to *Morah* Ellen. Ask him how it compares to tomatoes brought from the grocery store.

"KNOW AND BE KNOWN"

A Grade 1 Case Study on Managing Change.

By Heidi Friedman

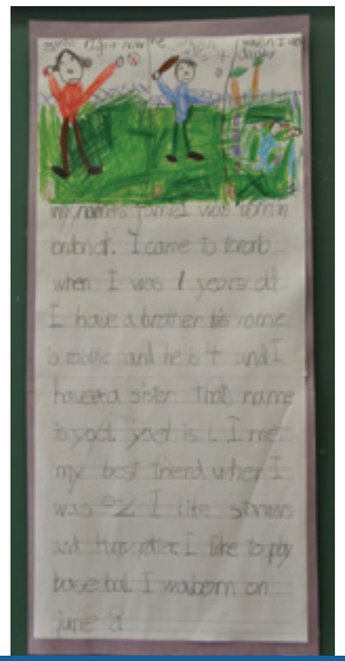
As the mentor of the Emotionally Responsive Classroom Practise, Lesley Koplow's job is to connect a child's emotional wellness to his/her learning potential. She recommends that teachers develop school routines, curriculum, and quality adult-child interactions that foster the child's ability to feel comfortable, flexible, and creative during the school day. The classroom is supposed to be a supportive and meaningful learning environment, mindfully geared to enhance each child's emotional well-being, as well as healthy peer and adult relationships. The practise benefits the children and deepens the teachers' understanding of the developmental and life experience challenges that emerge in class.

To teach our young students how to face change and feel empowered to respond to an event beyond their control, we ran a Grade 1 class project from November 2010 through January 2011. Elissa, the Grade 1 teacher, was expecting a baby and would leave her class at the end of December. For some students the staffing change was potentially disruptive and upsetting. However, Elissa and I (the incoming Grade 1 teacher) viewed the transition as an opportunity to provide the children with tools for coping with change and getting to know new people. The situation was resonant with change and uncertainty, and we were very excited to seize the moment for real learning.

The situation was resonant with change and uncertainty, and we were very excited to seize the moment for real learning.

We initiated a project we called "Know and Be Known" and rooted our strategy in the principles of Emotionally Responsive Classroom Practise. One of the central aspects of a child's emotional development is the structuring and strengthening of a sense of self; a child comes to understand herself and she watches herself interact with others. To ground the scenario in a concrete challenge the children could grasp, we centred our project on the question: "How can we as a class and as individuals become **known** to our new teacher and how can we get to **know** her?"

Elissa and I felt that overlapping in the classroom would ease the transition, so at the end of the fall term we spent time with the children together. I asked the students how **they thought** we could get to know one another; how **they could teach** me about themselves, their concerns and fears, and share the norms of **their** class. I explained that I was the newcomer and they, the children, were the experts. I wanted them to know that I saw them as leaders and a valuable source of information, and to make it clear that, although I was going to be their teacher, I didn't hold the key to all knowledge. I took the opportunity to introduce myself fully and to share my philosophy of education.



Although Elissa and I had a number of strategies and ice breaker games to ease the transition, we asked the children to suggest how they believed they could get to know their new teacher. We initiated a conversation asking them how they could teach me about their class routines. We wanted to empower the children and let them teach their new teacher about their class. The children suggested they make a book of all they do at school with Elissa, so that Heidi would know the things they did in Grade 1. The class brainstormed all that happens at school over the course of the week. Each child took one aspect of the Grade 1 program and wrote everything he/she knew about it, with a picture to illustrate the routine.

Over the next two weeks the students worked with Elissa, writing and illustrating the classroom routine. Just before the winter break the class gathered in a circle and the students presented their writing to me. Each child read his/her information and I asked questions. On the suggestion of the students, we ordered the pages according to the daily and weekly schedule and then compiled the pages into a book. I showed the children that I was taking the book home to read over the vacation and promised that I would use it as a reference guide in January.

As a class we also decided that we wanted to get to know each other better. All members of the Grade 1 community spent more time writing information about themselves that they wanted to share with one another. We then compiled these pages also into a book to read and reread in the classroom. With so many meaningful activities underway, the children felt like full participants in the transition.

On the first day back at school in January, I welcomed the children to their classroom. I had made some intentional changes to the set up of the room. While I saw the apprehension in their faces, I knew

that this would be a springboard for a deeper conversation. I gathered the students together and asked them to list all the things that were the same and all that were different in the class. The children immediately exclaimed that the teacher was different but the children were the same! They pointed out how the arrangement was different, but the furniture was the same. All day the children added to the list, enjoying the chance to discuss the changes.

To build a healthy relationship with the parents of my new students, I made it a priority to meet with them promptly. I believe in educating the whole child and that community exists at multiple levels. My goal was to bring the parents' and my voice to the table together, so we could get to know each other and build a partnership. At the meeting I asked the parents to share their hopes and dreams for their child this year, and I shared my philosophy of education and the specifics of the transition project with them.

We empowered our students to respond effectively to change.

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen Covey discusses the habit of proactivity. Proactive people develop the ability to choose their response to any external situation and to focus on their immediate circle of influence. Our "Know and Be Known" project aimed to cultivate this very habit in the Grade 1 children at The Toronto Heschel School. Through classroom opportunities that helped them face change, we empowered our young students to realize that they can choose and plan how to respond effectively to a given situation.

A DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION FOR **GOOD EDUCATION**

Research and early investment bring the best results at school.

Dr. Catherine Birken

As a pediatrician researching the optimal trajectory for children's health, my work involves early markers of health and analytic techniques. As a parent assessing my children's education, I look for parallel strategies to indicate the way to effective education. Just as I want my children to grow up healthy, I want their education to offer them every opportunity to realize their potential.

I am involved in an initiative called TARGet Kids! (Toronto Applied Research Group for Kids). Our research links early health exposure to later health outcomes. We determine risk factors for poor health, develop tools to measure health, and recommend strategies for the primary care setting, i.e., doctors' offices, to keep children healthy. We aim to raise the ceiling of children's health through doctors' office health care that is timely, preventative, and effective.

By the end of childhood, an estimated 40% of our children deal with at least one potentially preventable health problem, such as complications from obesity, asthma, injury, behavioural problems, or learning difficulties. TARGet Kids! aims to understand what leads to these undesirable health consequences, and to translate our research into helpful medical interventions and daily knowledge.

In the medical world, a risk factor is something that increases a person's chances of getting a disease. We measure risk and health using subjective and objective information. In Canada, most young children and their parents attend visits to their doctors as healthy children so that their doctors can monitor their development; for babies it's usually monthly and later on it's annually. At TARGet Kids! we inform these encounters with the knowledge our research generates. We take advantage of the doctors' unique and special relationship with the parents and patients to address important health questions and concerns.

In thinking about my children's education, I understand their relationships with their teachers are as significant to their learning as their doctor visits are to their health. Just as good health care promotes a child's well-being, ensures timely accurate diagnosis, and effective treatment when they are sick, in parallel, a good education promotes a child's cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being and ensures that teachers are trained and engaged with each child. To me, the outcomes that teachers are working to prevent include frustration, disinterest, impatience, and boredom. I monitor my children's enthusiasm for school, their emerging skill to patiently persist in a task, their acceptance of error as a learning moment, and their openness to engage with their teachers and peers. These are the measures of success I look for in their overall educational wellness.

When **two girls independently dress as their teachers** for Purim, it's one way of **copying the masters.**

I monitor my children's enthusiasm for school, their skill to persist in a task, to accept error as a learning moment, and their openness to engage with teachers and peers. These are the measures of success I look for in their overall educational wellness.

I want my children's education to be positive and healthy. I want them to embrace positive learning and social experiences at school that will foster their development. This means their developmental and social needs should be noticed and answered on time. It is also important to me that their curiosity and creativity are protected and nurtured. Just as I want my children to value their health, I want my children to love to learn, and I assess the evidence of these educational priorities carefully.

I notice the talent, commitment, and motivation of my children's teachers to ensure they thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

TARGet Kids! looks at early predictors of health in young children to try to prevent problems. Simple messages delivered between physicians and parents are powerful and effective. For example, low iron levels in otherwise healthy toddlers can lead to iron deficiency anemia, which links to poor learning. TARGet Kids! studied the risk factors and then recommended that doctors, at the nine-month baby visit, advise that babies start to drink from a cup. A shift in community practise may now reduce low iron levels.

We call this kind of simple message "anticipatory guidance," as it can affect the long-term health of many children. Keeping to "the doctor's visit" model of anticipatory guidance, simple messages delivered between teachers, parents, and children at school can have an equally long-term impact. The daily personal encounters my children have at school guide them towards the educational wellness I am looking for as a parent.

I look for a school's commitment to educational excellence. I look to see if that commitment is implemented through proven research-based teaching methodologies. I look to see if the teachers are passionate about teaching. I look to see if the kids in the halls and playground are really happy. I see wellness also where strong bonds are forged between teachers, families, and children, both in their daily interactions and at school community events where families meet for fun.

I see wellness in strong bonds between teachers, families, and children, in daily interactions and at school community events.

My children attend The Toronto Heschel School, which invests early and rigorously in its children. Daily encounters between teacher and child include extra special care and focus on the whole child, even at the beginning of student life at the tender age of four years old. I notice the talent, commitment, and motivation of my children's teachers to ensure they thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Teachers pay close attention to their personal development, their self-esteem, and self-regulation. The school emphasizes physical activity and outdoor play in its large field and teaching garden. I use my researcher's model and appreciate that the students' strong academic and personal achievements result directly from the special relationship they, and we parents, have with our school.

In a recent issue of the *Paediatrics and Child Health Journal* there was an article entitled "Quality is Free" by economist Daniel Trefler – not the usual fare in a medical journal. Trefler's thesis is that the small cost of providing quality early child health initiatives for children is tiny compared to the huge returns on investment for society. I draw the parallel again to a parent's early attention to educational wellness and a school's careful supervision of its students' healthy learning habits and its sense of community.

As a doctor and researcher I assess evidence, risk factors, benchmarks, and communication strategies. As a parent looking at my children's schooling, I do the same.

The payoff is healthy children, not just in the classical sense, but in the holistic sense embodied by the World Health Organization's definition of health – "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being." As a doctor and researcher I assess evidence, risk factors, benchmarks, and communication strategies. As a parent looking at my children's schooling, I do the same.

Interpreting master artists is another way.

PHYS. ED.: PHYSICAL & EDUCATIONAL

Gym class can play an important role in improving cognition, attention, and learning.

By Lisa Richler

We often associate physical education with its *physical* benefits: promoting bone and muscle development, enhancing gross motor skills, improving cardiovascular health. But physical education can also play an important role in improving cognition, attention, and learning. Physical education is always a vital component of the overall programme in schools that aim to bring out the best in each student – in mind, body, and spirit.

Howard Gardner's ground-breaking book, *Frames Of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983), popularized the idea among educators that not all students learn the same way. While some students might learn best by seeing, for instance, others might learn best by hearing, while still others might learn best by doing. According to Gardner and his proponents, *kinesthetic learners* learn best when they are permitted to use their tactile senses and fine and gross motor movement. For instance, kinesthetic learners might understand a math concept better by using manipulatives that they can *touch* and *feel*, rather than by *hearing* the concept explained or by *seeing* it on the chalk board.

Research has shown that the most effective way to enhance the learning of a heterogeneous group of learners is to stimulate a variety of different learning styles.[1] In other words, rather than teach some kids in one way and teach others in another way, it is more constructive to teach all kids in a variety of ways. Getting back to the math example, using manipulatives that students can touch and the chalk board that they can see *and* explanations that they can hear will ensure that more students understand a math concept more deeply than simply using one of these teaching methods.

At The Toronto Heschel School, the curriculum is specifically designed to take into account children's various learning styles, so that each student has an opportunity to gain a deep understanding of what is being taught. Moreover, teachers working in different disciplines (e.g., math, art, music, language arts, and phys. ed.) collaborate with each other, in order to reinforce and enhance students' knowledge.

Toronto Heschel's karate and dance programs exemplify a collaborative, multi-faceted approach to teaching.

Toronto Heschel's karate and dance programs exemplify this collaborative, multi-faceted approach to teaching. In Grades 5 through 8, students spend half of their physical education periods learning sports-based skills and the other half learning the disciplined arts of karate and dance. Karate is taught by Jules McCowan, better known to her students as *Sensei Jules*; dance is taught by Daphne Rosenwald, who also teaches math at the school.

Fully-integrated parts of the school's curriculum, the karate and dance programs ensure that students have an opportunity to learn and express themselves kinesthetically, through movement. In Grade 8, for instance, students study Yehuda Halevi's poem "My Heart is in the East," written during the Spanish Inquisition by a man who longed to be part of a Jewish homeland. The Grade 8 students read and analyze this poem with their Hebrew teacher, then work in small groups with their dance teacher, Daphne, to break it down by emotion and then motion. The students choose a song that echoes the sentiments of the poem and then translate their interpretation of it into a choreographed dance which they eventually perform for parents and peers. "The end result really varies from year to year," explains Daphne. One year, the students chose to emphasize Halevi's despair, while another year they emphasized his hopes for the future.

The karate program is similarly integrated with other subject matters. In Grade 5, the students act out the story of the Maccabees at their Hanukkah concert using karate. In Grade 6, students choreograph a karate routine to re-enact the Book of Samuel, *Shmuel Aleph*. Students have even performed the *Shema* prayer using karate, where every word in the prayer is translated into a specific pose or movement.

Daphne and Jules cite many benefits to using movement to enhance learning. For one thing, the students love the programs. "Even the boys love dance!" laughs Daphne. "Many students don't take dance outside of school, so this is a great opportunity for them," she continues.

Jules adds that karate gives students who don't necessarily enjoy team sports a chance to shine in gym class. She points out that "the leaders in karate aren't the captains of the basketball or soccer team. They tend to be the more independent students. Karate is a great confidence boost for those kids."

Daphne and Jules add that their programs enable students to engage in what they are learning on a deep level. "Dance allows students to express their emotions," explains Daphne, "and to put themselves in someone else's shoes – to be empathetic. It also allows them to be creative, cooperative, physical. The list of benefits goes on!"

Another major plus to the programs is that both dance and karate require a tremendous amount of concentration. As Sensei Jules puts it, "If you're in the middle of a horse stance (which is similar to a squat), all you can think about at that moment is your body and what your legs are doing. You're not thinking about what your hair looks like or what you're going to do at recess – you need to focus!" Because of the amount of focus required to hold a pose and follow a sequence, both Jules and Daphne have seen tremendous improvements in their students' capacities to pay attention and self-regulate.

When karate is part of systematic and regular physical education, it amounts to prolonged practise and results are visible. Indeed, researchers have shown that training young children to perform attention-related tasks "increased the efficiency of the executive attention network (of the brain) and also improved other learning domains."[2]

Training young children to perform attention-related tasks also improves other learning domains.

Jules explains, "Fidgety students become less fidgety; they learn to control their bodies and focus on the task at hand... To learn a kata, you have to memorize steps. It is physical but it is also very cerebral... In my karate class, there are no distractions. Students have no choice but to focus on my voice and what their bodies are supposed to be doing."

And because students tend to feel gratified when they have mastered a pose or a kata, they learn that being able to focus their attention pays off. In Jules' words, "Students see that when they focus, they benefit."

The Toronto Heschel School's physical education allows students with a range of skills, abilities, and interests to enjoy being active and fit. By enabling kinesthetic learning, improving focus, providing avenues for self-expression and collaboration, the benefits extend way outside the gym, into the classroom and beyond.

1. Galeet BenZion, "Does a Change in Mathematics Instructional Strategies Lead Struggling Third Grade Students to Increase Their Performance on Standardized Tests?" (M.A. thesis, University of Maryland at College Park, 2010).

2. *Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts, and the Brain. Findings and Challenges for Educators from the 2009 Johns Hopkins University Summit* (New York/Washington: Dana Press, 2009), p. 5.

ENGAGING ISRAEL: JEWISH VALUES AND THE DILEMMAS OF NATIONHOOD

The Shalom Hartman Institute of North America Jewish Educators Study Forum was presented in Toronto by The Lola Stein Institute

Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer

Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer, President, Shalom Hartman Institute of North America

The Shalom Hartman Institute of North America (SHI-NA) was honoured to partner this year with The Lola Stein Institute in the Jewish Educators Study Forum, a premiere program for senior educational leaders focused on Israel's role in modern Jewish identity. Meeting monthly in Toronto, participants addressed the growing disenchantment and disinterest in Israel felt by Jews worldwide and worked together to create a new narrative about the significance of Israel for Jewish life.

As Israel's image shifts from beleaguered post-Holocaust nation to military power, Jewish students and their families are deluged by slanted media and questions they cannot always answer. There is an increasing sense that anti-Israeli opinion is moving beyond criticism of some of Israel's actions and policies to the delegitimization of the Zionist project as a whole. Since 1948, the Jewish community has taken as self-evident the need to support Israel, and yet that support is now questioned on many levels. The Jewish community urgently needs new language and argument for assimilating the importance of Israel into the modern Jewish consciousness.

Engaging Israel equips participants with a Jewish values vocabulary in today's idioms and urgencies.

The goal of the Engaging Israel curriculum – which over a dozen groups across North America and Israel are also studying – is to equip participants with a Jewish values vocabulary in today's idioms and urgencies. Hartman scholars situate the conversation in classical texts and ideas drawn from Jewish literature and the Jewish past, rooting their approaches in broadening participants' ability to speak to the challenges they face. Engaging Israel develops a framework in support of Israel that transcends denominations and party lines, and helps position Israel as an essential source of religious and moral significance for Jewish people around the world.

Engaging Israel develops a framework in support of Israel that transcends denominations and party lines.

Leveraging unique SHI models of pluralistic, in-depth, text-based teaching and scholarship, participants of the Jewish Educators Study Forum addressed the compelling topics of peoplehood, sovereignty, power, ethics of war, and dilemmas of democracy through close study of biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, and contemporary Jewish texts. The Forum gave participants new insights into how Jewish tradition supports them in tackling the challenging questions they face today, and activated their conscious collaboration in a new dialogue and narrative based on Jewish values.

As educators, participants in the Jewish Educators Study Forum are uniquely positioned to make a lasting impact on the way future generations define the relationship between North America and Israel.

THE ENGAGING ISRAEL PROJECT

The Hartman Institute invites Jewish lay and professional leaders around the world to think about the meaning that Israel can have in their lives; how they can be enriched and positively influenced by the reality of a Jewish nation. A range of study opportunities are now available. More information on the Engaging Israel project and its related initiatives can be found at http://www.hartman.org.il/iengage

INTERESTED IN LEARNING WITH THE SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE THIS SUMMER?

Rabbis: Join your colleagues for the Rabbinical Torah Study Seminar in Jerusalem, July 4-14, 2011.
For more information and to register, visit
http://www.hartman.org.il/rts2011

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Sun Valley Study Retreat in Sun Valley, ID
July 31-August 3, 2011. For more information and to register,
visit http://www.hartman.org.il/sunvalley

The Lola Stein Institute

CONGRATULATES ALL TORONTO PARTICIPANTS OF "ENGAGING ISRAEL"

THE JEWISH EDUCATORS STUDY FORUM 2010-2011

Greg Beiles, Vice Principal, Curriculum, The Toronto Heschel School, and Director of Curriculum and Training, Lola Stein Institute

Gail Baker, Head of School/ Principal, The Toronto Heschel School, and Director, Lola Stein Institute

Rabbi David Seed, Adath Israel Congregational School

Karen L. Goodis, Principal, Beth Sholom Synagogue Congregational School

Susan Sermer, Director of Religious School, Temple Har Zion

Jennifer Turack, Educational Director, Beth Tzedec Congregational School

Malka Regan, Division Head, Elementary, The Toronto Heschel School

Sarah Margles, Student Life Coordinator, The Toronto Heschel School

Deborah Spiegel, Director of Education, Holy Blossom Temple

Shayla Morrison, Vice Principal, Robbins Hebrew Academy (Bayview Campus)

Naomi Pfeffer, Admissions, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, The Toronto Heschel School

Seth Goldsweig, Vice Principal, Robbins Hebrew Academy (Bathurst Campus)

Ryla Braemer, Canadian Council for Jewish and Israel Advocacy

Dana Cohen, Division Head, Junior High, The Toronto Heschel School

Edna Sharet, Division Head, Elementary, The Toronto Heschel School

Melanie Simons, Manager, Corporate Communications UJA Fed GTA

Ilana Arje Goldenthal, Coordinator and Educator, Israel Engagement, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

NOT PICTURED HERE:
Lainie Filkow, Division Head, Early Years, The Toronto Heschel School; Dr. Ira Schweitzer, Director of Education, Temple Sinai Congregation Religious Schools; Karen Weiss, Hebrew Coordinator, Temple Har Zion Religious School; Michelle Shulman, Vice Chair, Lola Stein Institute; Pam Stein, Chair, Lola Stein Institute

& THANKS TO THIS YEAR'S FACULTY

Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer, President, Shalom Hartman Institute of North America;
Rabbi Dr. Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi, SHI V.P. and director of rabbinic leadership programs;
Rabbi Lauren Berkun, Director of educational initiatives for SHI Southeast;
Dr. Tal Becker, SHI fellow and international associate at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy;
Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, SHI rabbinic fellow

CREATING A CULTURE OF CURIOSITY

We need schools to mindfully foster inquiry in the classroom.

By Sarah Margles

"That's stupid!" announced a Grade 8 student, emphatically dismissing the ancient sages of the Talmud. It was my first year of teaching and I remember it well.

My class and I were learning a piece of Talmud about lost objects. The rabbis' perspective was that on finding lost items in public, we should try to locate their rightful owners. I was a young teacher discussing the values underneath the *mitzvah* and looking, with my students, at how that ancient value applies today. My class had no interest in this perspective. It was not "finders keepers."

Since that day in Teaneck, New Jersey, I have been exploring how and why encounters with new or different ideas so often evoke criticism and caution, instead of curiosity. The stance limits learning and truncates thinking.

Curiosity is the drive to know more, to understand reasoning, to figure out the how and the why. Talmudic study is itself an endeavour of curiosity – always searching for the sturdiest logic and unpacking the thinking of minority opinions. Jewish texts devote volumes to exploring ideas, comparing philosophies, and searching for what makes the most sense.

Judaism has a strong tradition of holding curiosity as a core component of learning. We find this in the Passover Seder. Although for many of us it has become formalized, many elements of the Seder are designed specifically so young people will ask about the meaning behind the rituals. Noam Zion, co-author of the now famous *A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah*, adds new and different rituals to his Seder meals expressly to encourage children to ask questions.

On the *Haggadah* cover a quote by Rabbi David Hartman says, "The Haggadah was meant to facilitate a lively dialogue between parent and child, leader and participant. Unfortunately, the Pesach Seder becomes, too often, a rote reading – a service to 'zoom through' – rather than a drama in which people play creative roles. Don't let the printed word paralyze the imagination. Talk. Discuss the Exodus. You are free. This Haggadah invites you to shape your own Seder."

When we set up classrooms where student curiosity helps direct their learning, our students learn they don't have to rely on adults for answers. They learn their thinking matters.

"The Four Questions" was once a format inviting children to ask their own questions. In the section on *Ma Nishtanah* ("The Four Questions") Zion writes, "Traditionally the questions and answers of the Seder must be in the vernacular, a language understood by all whatever their age or literacy. Try asking the questions in as many foreign languages as possible... Before singing the *Ma Nishtanah*, prompt the youngest children to see how different this table is from other family meals (length of table, foods, dishes, guests, books, pillows, etc.)."

Regarding the four sons (children), the *Haggadah* asks us to consider "translating" the term "wicked child" into contemporary language – "the skeptic", "chutzpadik", "rebellious," and to "try to 'get inside' the personality of so called 'wicked' children and their parents." When the *Haggadah* tells how Pharaoh made the work of the slaves "even harsher," it suggests, "Ask someone to name a very harsh task and explain why it is so difficult especially for him. Ask the next one to name an even harsher, more embittering, more humiliating task and explain the choice." We want children to investigate and make the Seder meaningful.

Very young children are full of curiosity and highly inquisitive. They ask, "Why?" over and over again. Yet by middle school, students are often closed to exploring different perspectives. Beginning in the Industrial Age the public education system was geared to prepare compliant factory workers, not thinkers. Schools taught children to do what they were told. The remnants of this culture remain visible in pedagogy and curricula today, even though our society has changed significantly since those early days.

Sir Ken Robinson, the UK thinker on education, talks about how curiosity and passion affect what young people think. His web-based TED talks and his recent Royal Society of Arts Animate video both engage these ideas.[1] Sir Ken highlights divergent thinking, collaboration, and the need for mistakes as essential elements in good education, and understands that all three rely on curiosity and creativity. He explains that the traditional school model, with intractable classroom subjects and standardized tests, kills a child's chance to develop innovation. Schools that foster curiosity open a world of possibility for our children and the workforces they will enter.

I hear adults say to young people, "You'll understand when you're older," and "You don't know, you're not old enough." The mindset behind these statements teaches young people to depend on adults to be told how things are. They close down the childhood inclination to explore, let alone to imagine. To develop curiosity, we need to want students to ask and investigate.

Classroom teachers ask students, "Are there any questions?" Surprisingly, this is an unfortunate query. It invites the "correct" answer to be "No." While the question is supposed to assess the students' understanding, it actually discourages curiosity in two ways. Firstly, students understand their teachers are happiest when they have no questions and the class can move on. Secondly, the stock phrasing of the question closes student thinking. It directs the class focus on the teacher's needs and expectations and not on the material itself.

Teachers who ask, "What questions do you have?" receive a different response. One teacher keeps flip chart papers up around the classroom, ready for student answers to this question. The pages are titled "Questions with Simple Answers," "Questions in Need of Further Exploration," and "Questions with Many or Complex Answers."

Schools that foster curiosity open a world of possibility for our children and the workforces they will enter.

Students pose their questions aloud and write them on the flip chart sheets. As questions are asked, more inquiries are generated. The lessons become tailored to class members' inquiry and this kind of learning captivates students. The flip-chart model is but one example of myriad ways teachers can create cultures of curiosity in their classrooms.

Research shows that when students' work is based on their interests, their retention of information and their curiosity increase. This drives student achievement. When inquiry is encouraged, learning comes from within the student and not only from an outside source.[2]

Asking questions is a habit of mind that builds curiosity. Students are excited by each others' questions and they open themselves to collaboration. When we set up classrooms where student curiosity helps direct their learning, our students also learn the valuable experience that they don't have to rely on adults for answers. They learn that their thinking matters. By rethinking our methods, we can build cultures of curiosity in our schools. It will make all the difference.

1. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY;
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9LelXa3U_I;
http: //comment.rsablogs.org.uk/2010/10/14/rsa-animate-changing-education-paradigms/

2. Donald E. Hovey, Howard E. Gruber, and Glenn Terrell, "Effects of Self-Directed Study on Course Achievement, Retention, and Curiosity, " *The Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 56, No. 7 (Mar., 1963), pp. 346-351.

LEGACY OF AN INSPIRED TEACHER:

RABBI ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL: CROSSOVER ARTIST

A.J. Heschel crossed many boundaries and built many bridges.

By Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl

Dreamgirls tells the story of the Supremes and their crossover from black music to mainstream. Bob Dylan fused blue grass and folk, and Yo Yo Ma brought together European classical and Chinese music. James Rudin has observed that Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel also was a "crossover phenomenon."

THE BACKGROUND TO HIS ARTISTRY

Born into the Hasidic world of pre-World War I Warsaw, Heschel was related to nearly all the great Hasidic teachers of Eastern Europe. He acknowledged, "I was very fortunate in having lived… in an environment where there were many people I could revere, people concerned with problems of inner life, of spirituality and integrity; people who have shown great compassion and understanding for other people." We can see excerpts of this interview on YouTube.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xTAh2txiLc
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sc6H1THCihQ&feature=related

Following a traditional rabbinic education, and encouraged by his mother, Heschel "crossed over" to study secular subjects in a Vilna high school, the progressive German rabbinical school, Hochschule for the Academic Study of Judaism. Heschel went on to study philosophy, art history, and ancient Semitics at the University of Berlin. His doctoral thesis fused biblical studies with philosophical phenomenology in a study of the prophetic consciousness. He published in both academic and popular circles: a book of Yiddish poetry, *The Sacred Name: Mentsch/Human,* several studies in medieval Jewish philosophy, and books on Maimonides and Abravanel.

Heschel also taught at an institute for adult Jewish education, the Lehrhaus, founded by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. He tried to demonstrate that the intellectual achievements of the greatest thinkers were linked to their inner, personal struggles. He hoped to stimulate the spiritual lives of German Jews, offering support in their despair.

CROSSING TO AMERICA

In 1938 Heschel was deported from Berlin to Warsaw. He would likely have disappeared in the Holocaust had not Julian Morgenstern of Hebrew Union College begged the United States Department of State for immigration documents for European Jewish scholars. Morgenstern managed to secure five visas and one was for Rabbi Heschel. Years later, Heschel described himself as a "brand plucked from the fire."

Heschel came to Cincinnati in 1940 as a Hebrew instructor at the Reform seminary. In this radically different environment, Heschel learned English, maintained *kashrut* in a student dormitory, wrote some significant scholarly essays, and unsuccessfully tried to save family members from Hitler's hatred.

Heschel was uncomfortable at Hebrew Union College, an institution which minimized Jewish law and tradition, and in 1945 he crossed again, this time to the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York. While his interest in Jewish ethics and mysticism was often disparaged by the Seminary's powerful Talmudists, Heschel earned international acclaim for his synthesis of traditional Jewish knowledge with the modern world. The current Chancellor of JTS, Arnold Eisen, says that Rabbi Heschel saved Judaism for his generation.

Heschel earned international acclaim for his synthesis of traditional Jewish knowledge with the modern world.

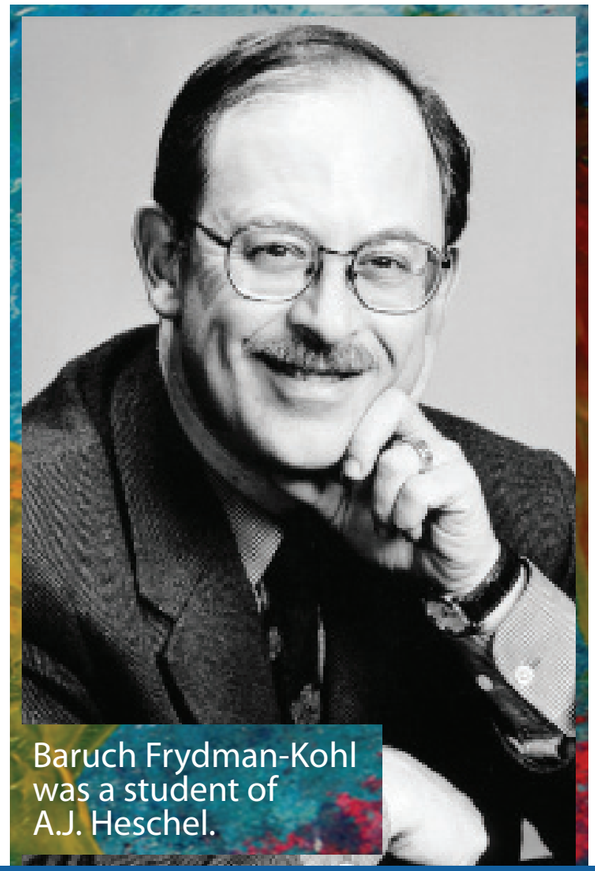
A FEW PERSONAL NOTES

I came to study at JTS because my academic interest in Jewish thought and my engagement in civil rights and anti-war activities found a "fit" with Rabbi Heschel. One of his students, Professor Byron Sherwin of Spertus College in Chicago, encouraged me on this path. I found Heschel to be a man of passionate religiosity. His language was evocative and inspirational, and he had something important to say about Judaism and the world.

Out of the depths of the Jewish tradition, Heschel spoke to the issues that America faced in the late 1960s and early '70s.

Out of the depths of the Jewish tradition, Heschel spoke to the issues that America faced in the late 1960s and early '70s. American Judaism was caught up in ethnic and communal concerns and Rabbi Heschel was speaking about God. He influenced me and many other young rabbis and initiated a shift in the language of the pulpit as we gradually began to adjust our focus from Holocaust survival and Israel awareness to more God-talk and textual study.

Heschel taught me that Judaism must look at the details of *halakhah* in the larger picture of God's world. I once approached him with a *halakhic* question about spousal sexual relations and he responded by encouraging me to "celebrate your wife." He took my query from the details of Jewish law and placed it in the context of radical amazement.



Baruch Frydman-Kohl was a student of A.J. Heschel.

I discovered that Rabbi Heschel had a sarcastic and playful sense of humour. He chaired the admission committee, and noting my concern for social justice, tried to trip me up by asking, "Aren't we taught to love our neighbour and not ourselves?" I was taken aback thinking maybe I didn't remember the biblical quote correctly. (I remembered it as "to love our neighbour as ourselves.") Then I realized Heschel was testing me; so I talked about the prophets' passion for justice. He had written about this and seemed to like my response.

THE INTELLECTUAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

Heschel transcended the boundary between intellectual and spiritual leadership. He crossed through time wondering how teachers past faced the same universal and Jewish challenges that vexed his own soul. His articulation of these very human tensions prepared me for the process and content of the dilemmas I face.

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By 1930 Heschel had already described Miamonides' "inner wrestling," and in the '40s, he wrote about Saadia Gaon's search for self-understanding, saying, "We should not regard them as mirrors, reflecting other people's problems, but rather as windows, allowing us to view the author's soul." In his last work, *Passion for Truth,* Heschel describes his own struggle to balance the inclusive compassion of the founder of Hasidism, Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, with the elitist demand for integrity of Menachem Mendel of Kotsk, a later Hasidic master. To this day, I still struggle with how to stand for the normative structure of traditional Judaism while opening up to welcome those on the periphery of Jewish life.

Heschel's approach to spiritual teachings was radically new. He made me see that the great teachers of Judaism were not academicians responding to textual questions disconnected from daily life. They were living men facing real-life situations. This personalization of the great thinkers of Judaism was an entirely original orientation.

Rabbi Heschel had had scholarly imagination and the rare capacity to link his immense erudition to life. Discussing his book *The Prophets*, he observed, "This book changed my life. Early in my life, my great love was for learning, studying, and the place where I preferred to live was my study, and books and writing and thinking. I've learned from the prophets that I have to be involved in the affairs of man, in the affairs of suffering man."

RELIGION AND ACTIVISM

Heschel translated the prophets' passion into decades of activism for social justice. The lessons of Exodus were not for recall at Passover. They were for real life. Speaking about the struggle for civil rights in America, Heschel said, "It was far easier for the children of Israel to cross the Red Sea" than for blacks "to cross certain university campuses."

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In June 1963, Heschel sent a telegram to President Kennedy saying the quest for racial justice called for "moral grandeur and spiritual audacity." After a Friday phone call from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Heschel flew Saturday night to join the march from Selma to Montgomery in Alabama. He said, "I felt my legs were praying."

With Elie Wiesel, one of his closest friends, Heschel was an early supporter of the movement to free Soviet Jewry. As a co-founder of Clergy and Laity Concerned, he was also an early opponent of the Vietnam War, angering many when he said that the war offered Americans the choice between "losing face or losing our souls."

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

Heschel also crossed the schism between Jews and Christians. During the Second Vatican Council in Rome (1962–1965) he flew secretly to meetings at the Vatican, nurturing the historic declaration that forever changed Catholic-Jewish relations; the Church no longer cited the goal to convert Jews to Christianity.

FROM OBSERVANCE AND PHILOSOPHY TO AWE AND WONDER

Heschel expanded the primary models for Jewish theological study. He was not satisfied with historical accounts of what important Jewish thinkers had written about Judaism. Nor did he interpret Judaism to follow existing models of philosophical or social thought. Instead, Rabbi Heschel drew deeply from Jewish sources, explored the human experience, and presented an alternative way of thinking about reality and religion.

In the 1950s Heschel wrote three books: *Man Is Not Alone, Man's Quest for God,* and *God in Search of Man*. He wrote that religious thought was a unique way of thinking and should not be reduced to sociology, psychology, or philosophy. He identified the categories of thought by which religion, in general, and Judaism, in particular, might understand itself "in terms of its own spirit." He said that authentic religion "begins as a breaking off, a going away. It continues in acts of non-conformity to idolatry."

Heschel called his approach "depth theology," a search for wonder and radical self-amazement. He sought to leave "religious behaviorism" behind, and find what preceded theological speculation and dogma. He challenges us to "nurse the song in the recesses of the soul."

HESCHEL HAD TWO CONNECTIONS TO TORONTO

One was personal: He had a family relationship and friendship with Rabbi Wolfe Kelman of the Kelman rabbinic dynasty. The other was historic. In 1954, Rabbi Heschel was the first rabbi to preach at High Holy Day services in the new Beth Tzedec sanctuary. He came to Toronto from the Jewish Theological Seminary to serve as the primary preacher on this special occasion. Regretfully, his voice was soft and his accent European and congregational leaders were disappointed. Nonetheless, Heschel would return many times to speak at Beth Tzedec and other Toronto synagogues. In those latter visits, he provided both religious imagination and inspiration.

UNITY AND PARADOX

In his great work on rabbinic theology, *Heavenly Torah: As Refracted Through the Generations*, translated by Gordon Tucker, Heschel argues against a unitary model of Judaism. He explores the tension in Jewish thought between the poetic, mystical approach of Rabbi Akiva and the rational, contextual method of Rabbi Yishmael. He attributes the vibrancy of Judaism to this polarity, which he finds at the root of many efforts to comprehend reality and which reflects the dynamic difference between the infinite God and the finite human being. He wrote, "Paradox is an essential way of understanding the world, history and nature. Strife, tension, contradiction characterize all of reality… There is a polarity in everything except God. For all tension ends in God. He is beyond all dichotomies."

Heschel identifies three paths to God: the Bible, with its *midrashic* record of revelation; the natural world, whose wonders lead to radical amazement; and sacred deeds, when "by doing the finite we attain the infinite." In the first two, God calls out to the human; in the latter, the human being responds to the call. Heschel contends that our actions "must be carried out as variations on the theme of prayer"; that every *mitzvah* we do is "a prayer in the form of a deed." Prayer helps us see ourselves as witnesses of God; we then understand what it means to be "in the divine image" and we realize our true vocation in good deeds.

Heschel's vivid evocative language opens the inner world of prayer, *Shabbat*, and the world of *mitzvot* for others to see. His enduring legacy includes both the language of personal experience and the revival of God language. He uncovered the link between religious belief and social concern. Of all Rabbi Heschel's teachings, what is most beloved to me is how he connected internal Jewish authenticity to contemporary life.

He uncovered the link between religious belief and social concern. Of all Rabbi Heschel's teachings, what is most beloved to me is how he connected internal Jewish authenticity to contemporary life.

Our ancestor Abraham was called *ivri*, meaning the one who "crossed over," from polytheism and Haran to monotheism and the land of Israel. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was a contemporary crossover artist who came from pre-war Europe to speak to a post-Holocaust world. His vision of Torah bridges the intellectual, social, and theological divides of contemporary society. His mastery of classical philosophy and Kabbalah, Hasidic thought, and contemporary ethics, was linked to an esteem for the biblical prophets, a love for the State of Israel, and a reverence for all people. Rabbi Heschel crossed many boundaries and built many bridges.

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KACHOL LAVAN:
THE CENTRE FOR HEBREW & ISRAEL STUDIES OPENS THIRD CAMPUS

By Ariel Zaltzman, Managing Director

Led by Toronto Israeli volunteers in collaboration with the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto Area, Kachol Lavan flourishes from the Schwartz/Reisman Community Centre in Thornhill.

For information, contact
info@kachol-lavan.com
or 905-482-1818 Ext.207

Kachol Lavan – The Centre for Hebrew and Israel Studies provides supplementary education in Hebrew Language, Bible stories, Jewish holidays, and Israel studies. Children between the ages of four and thirteen years attend classes on Sundays, with teenagers and adults attending during the week. Next year a third school campus will open, which means Kachol Lavan will be able to educate a total number of 500 students.

Our program began six years ago, when two Israeli mothers opened a Hebrew club for twenty students in a basement. This year, 280 students enjoy Hebrew language and Jewish studies in classes held at two school facilities around the GTA. Fifty adults are also enrolled, some to learn conversational Hebrew and others to sing in the choir, Sharim Kachol Lavan.

Research in the Toronto community indicated demand for a new brand of supplemental school education, one that was directed primarily to the study of Hebrew language and the secular study of Israel. As the concept of a community-based identity began to emerge, Kachol Lavan responded by connecting the younger Toronto-Israeli generation to the Hebrew language and the State of Israel. The school is a great success and a variety of Jewish studies have since been added to the program. The Kachol Lavan Centre is committed to a pluralistic Jewish community vision and welcomes every Jewish student regardless of denominational affiliation. The Kachol Lavan Centre is home to *Klal Yaldei Israel*, to everybody who wants to learn Hebrew and connect to the State of Israel.

An integral part of our vision is to continually develop innovative programs that reflect the needs of the Toronto community. Accordingly, we are now open to a new stream of students and offer a course for non-Hebrew speaking students entitled "Hebrew I Can Learn." In our English-language stream we introduce students to the basics of oral and written Hebrew language and to Jewish and Israeli studies.

FEATURE TEACHER KOL HAKAVOD

Toronto Heschel School Teachers with Expertise, Creativity, and Commitment

Jordana Mednick

Jordana brings her passion for Jewish life and education into all aspects of her SK curriculum. She earned a Master of Arts in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and she draws on her expertise to bring Chumash stories to life for her young students. Jordana expands her students' understanding of particular Torah lessons by reinforcing the material across different subjects. When Jordana teaches the story of Noah, for instance, her math lesson becomes a sorting exercise where students have to arrange toy animals into a Venn diagram (made of hula hoops), according to whether they are land animals, sea animals, or both. Jordana understands the developmental needs of her students and is able to create an inviting, warm, and stimulating atmosphere in her kindergarten class. Her young students are taught to be self-aware, to reflect on their work, and to be sensitive to the needs of their classmates. Jordana's wonderful creativity, expertise, and energy, make her a sought after and trusted team member. She is a teacher with a vision and her students thrive under her care and tutelage.

Daphne Rosenwald

Daphne brings creativity and a unique combination of talents to her teaching. In the morning, one might find her in the school kitchen with her Grade 6 students, baking cookies as part of a lesson on fractions. Later, she can be found in the gym with her Grade 8 students, helping them to choreograph a dance based on a medieval Hebrew poem. Then, she's back upstairs in the Grade 7 math class, showing images of Kandinsky paintings to her students in order to inspire their own geometric art works. Daphne always maintains the highest standards for herself and her students. After graduating, Daphne's students regularly come back to thank her for giving them the skills they needed to succeed with high school math. Daphne has designed and prepared a variety of curricula modules, and has mentored other teachers in the "Teaching for Understanding" approach to mathematics. In 2009 she presented her Beautiful Triangles workshop at the Bridges Conference on Mathematics, Music, Art, Architecture, and Culture, held in Banff, Alberta.

the ART & SCIENCE of STORYTELLING

Not long ago, storyteller Leslie Robbins-Conway read an issue of *think*, just as you are reading it today. She was so excited by the stories she read that she decided to donate her collection of puppets, masks, and scripts to The Toronto Heschel School. Leslie is a long time Toronto storyteller and a founder of The Jewish Storytelling Arts. The Toronto Heschel School Principal, known near and far as Morah Gail, invited Leslie to come and visit so Leslie could personally introduce her puppets to the children and tell a few of her wonderful stories. And they all lived happily ever after.

by Ricki Wortzman and Pam Medjuck Stein

"Once upon a time..." We, as adults, hear these words and we automatically begin to relax and listen. We utter the same words to our children and we know that they will quiet down and wait for a story to transport them to another world. (What parent out there doesn't know the magic of bedtime stories and the nightly request for "just one more"?) And teachers will tell you that a sure way to connect with students of any age is simply to tell them a story.

We use stories to connect to our past, understand the present, and dream about the future. Humans *need* to hear them and we certainly love to tell them. In fact, storytelling is among the most ancient arts shared by all oral cultures. Prehistoric cave paintings are thought to be illustrations supporting tales at day's end. In his 1991 book *Jewish Literacy,* Rabbi Joseph Telushkin explains that one reason that Judaism's Oral Law was not written down for 3,000 years was that the rabbis understood teachers, not books, to be the best conveyers of Jewish tradition. Stories, parables, and arguments have served us well.

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin explains that one reason that Judaism's Oral Law was not written down for 3,000 years was that the rabbis understood teachers, not books, to be the best conveyers of Jewish tradition.

Neuroscience understands stories as more than art or entertainment. Scientists explain that stories are actually *how* we remember. They credit 'story' with cognitive function – that is, the brain's ability to perceive and understand ideas, to think and to reason. In Daniel Pink's book *A Whole New Mind* (2006), cognitive scientist R.C. Schank is quoted as saying that, "Humans are not ideally set up to understand logic; they are ideally set up to understand stories."

Watch children at play and you will hear their stories, too. Listen as they make sense of the world. You will see them "stepping into stories," mimicking real-life scenarios and creating new worlds. They learn how others' beliefs and desires differ from their own. And they learn to imagine possibilities and solve problems (either on their own or with peers). Their social, emotional, and cognitive skills develop as they organize their understanding of everything around them. Playing house, for instance, requires flexible customization.

A child's love of stories is natural, but, in 2011, can this love flower into a significant educational methodology? Apparently, the answer is yes. Educational psychologists are researching and writing on the advantages of creativity and emotional learning at school. They are talking about "story."

The subjective, the personal, and the emotional are re-emerging in pedagogical technique. In his book *An Imaginative Approach to Teaching* (2005), Professor Kieran Egan, who writes on teaching practises that best foster a child's imagination, describes storytelling as "one of the most powerful cognitive tools that students have available for imaginatively engaging with knowledge." He locates the power of storytelling in how stories communicate information. By orientating children's feelings to the content being delivered, storytelling effectively assists children to remember.

With information literally at our keyboarding fingertips, bestselling author Daniel Pink argues in *A Whole New Mind* that we can now shift attention away from finding facts and towards placing facts in context with the right emotional impact. Pink lists storytelling as one of the six high-concept senses we must carefully develop as we move from the Information Age of the 20th century to the Conceptual Age of the 21st century.

Storytelling is one of the six high-concept senses we must develop as we move from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age.

When we organize information, experience, and thinking into story lines, meaningful connections emerge. These correspondences deepen our understanding and help us remember content. For example, a growing movement in medical training called "narrative medicine" re-emphasizes listening to a patient's story. Medical students learn to listen empathically to patients and to use what they hear to improve diagnosis. Getting the "whole story" is the important lesson at hand.

Just as patients relate stories to their doctors, teachers relate stories to their students. It's the listeners that connect to the narrative on an emotional level who retain it best. Daniel Pink says that stories "provide context enriched by emotion, a deeper understanding of how we fit in and why that matters." In other words, personal connection is fundamental to learning.

How a story is told determines its impact. The first ingredient is the storyteller's sense that the tale is worth telling. As Leslie Robbins-Conway says: "All storytellers must tell stories that are real to them. They must relate things that are, for them, true about life." Storytelling is a commitment.

The second ingredient for success is the synergy between the story's message, its entertainment value and its language (including choice of words, rhythm, and repetition). There has to be chemistry. Robbins-Conway also considers her listeners. Whether relating the Christie Pits riots or the folkloric antics of "Schlemiel," the same storyline can suit all ages, but has to be tailored well.

A skilled storyteller forms an almost hypnotic partnership with her listeners; she culls out the creativity dormant in each one. The audience feels transported to another time and place as figments of the imagination seem to come alive. Good storytelling is a shared experience, one that draws people closer to one another, even as it allows each to personally experience the story in his/her own way.

As award-winning author, activist, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel words it: "People become the stories they hear and the stories they tell." Learning about The Toronto Heschel School story through these pages, Leslie Robbins-Conway has become part of the folklore by donating her cast of characters to its students. It's a happy ending.

THE CHILDHOOD ROOTS OF ADULT HAPPINESS:

Five steps to help kids create and sustain lifelong joy.

By Edward M. Hallowell, M.D.

a think magazine book report
by Karen Chisvin

Raising well-rounded children is easier than most people think. According to Edward Hallowell, author of *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*, it only takes a few basic strategies and many individualized tactics – regularly reading bedtime stories and getting kids to clear the table for example – to help children grow into happy adults.

As I write this, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* by Amy Chua is generating animated discussion about tough-minded parenting that focuses on children's achievements. Without thinking much of it, sometimes we describe our goals for our children in terms of their achievements. Hallowell invites us to stop and reflect about what it is we really want for our children, and what we really want for ourselves. Often, it turns out, we want "happiness." However, Hallowell claims, we need not choose between happiness and high achievement – we can have both.

Hallowell says, "You may not be able to define happiness, but you know it when you see it." To help us see it, the author shares his own personal moments of happiness, such as the exhilarating day he spent tobogganing to exhaustion on a school snow day. For Hallowell, happiness is "a feeling that your life is going well." We get this feeling when we are involved in activities about which we are curious and passionate, and Hallowell encourages us to think back on our own special moments.

It takes a few basic strategies and many individualized tactics to help children grow into happy adults.

If we are to feel that our lives our going well, Hallowell argues, we have to develop the skill of creating and sustaining joy. His approach is deceptively simple, though it's not a quick fix, even though many of his suggestions do seem ordinary and unremarkable. As in all skill-building, the competency requires persistence by parents and teachers. As we build the capacity to be happy, we develop our inner qualities of playfulness, optimism, a can-do attitude, connectedness, and resilience (i.e., the ability to bounce back from disappointment) – the very qualities we hope our children acquire and that form the basis for their future happiness. Hallowell contends that if we take care of the attitudes and processes, the desired outcomes – including recognizable accomplishments in a child's "domains of curiosity and desires" – usually follow.

Hallowell's thesis is based on a wealth of experience and research. He synthesizes a considerable body of material from his child psychiatry practise, from academic studies, and from his own childhood, which included parental separation and coping with learning disabilities. His book offers guidance and support to parents and teachers, provides practical suggestions, and remains jargon-free.

In Hallowell's view, children's mistakes and failures can be positive experiences, and adults can demonstrate how this is so. We should provide our children with secure attachment, model healthy responses to disappointment and teach optimism using humour, philosophy, and storytelling. When we demonstrate our own persistence and encourage our children to persevere, we raise, what he calls, "people who prevail in life, who become happy in themselves as adults... who can fail or suffer loss or defeat but never lose heart."

Hallowell admits that his view of happiness is more an impression than a definition, and that often we recognize happiness only in retrospect. So, he directs our attention to the subtitle of the book, "five steps to help kids create and sustain lifelong joy." These steps apply to all children regardless of parental background or resources: the steps flow around and around in a cycle.

CONNECTION

This first step combines unconditional love with one or more other factors from a list of twelve, such as caring for a pet, being responsible for household chores, or having a commitment to a sport or music lessons. Hallowell claims that connection always starts the process because "a happy life rests mostly on having... a 'connected childhood,'" where "*the first* [Hallowell's emphasis] priority at home or at school ought to be to create a[n]... atmosphere in which the child feels cared for, welcomed, and treated fairly." With the twelve listed factors relating to connection, multiply the possibilities and you will see how many unique and successful combinations there can be.

PLAY

Connection creates trust, safety, and security for children and that allows them to move to the next step. At play, children try new things through open exploration of a place, sport, instrument, game, or art. Play, especially solitary play, offers a child the chance to experiment, the chance to learn to fail and handle it, and the opportunity to generate his/her own joy.

PRACTISE

Familiarity with joy and the prospect of continued joy and future success makes a child more willing to tackle step three. In the practise stage, a child accepts the discipline of effort and begins to tolerate moments of frustration. Whether learning to ride a bike, play the piano, fish, paint, or play soccer, the habit of practise develops the child's internal resources such as persistence, patience, and attention. The child also reinforces his/her connections with those parents, helpers, teachers, and coaches who provide ongoing support, encouragement, and reminders of how to handle setbacks.

MASTERY

After some period of practise and support we might hear the resounding cry, "I can do it, now!" At this moment we recognize the child's joy in his/her own achievement and welcome the fourth step, mastery. A child's personal sense of mastery is pivotal. Hallowell says that this internal recognition leads to self-esteem, confidence, initiative, and a commitment to work hard – that is, to continue to practise. For example, a child who feels mastery of violin fingering might set out to learn a more difficult piece, or a child who masters throwing a ball might take on the new role of team pitcher.

RECOGNITION

Mastery often means that others recognize achievement, too. So the last step, recognition, is also an external one. Parents, coaches, teammates, or classmates value a child's accomplishments for what they are. The acknowledgement reinforces the child's motivation to continue. It also strengthens the child's connection to the larger group, the family, class, or team.

The five-step cycle repeats continuously, driven by the qualities that develop within the child. The cycle creates an increasing number of sustainable moments of joy – and this anchors and nourishes the roots of adult happiness.

Follow Hallowell's method and you will be planting seeds of adult happiness in the children in your life.

Read this book and reap the benefit. Follow Hallowell's method and you will be planting seeds of adult happiness in the children in your life. Let Hallowell lead you to recall and celebrate even the smallest moments of connection in your own childhood and you may find yourself unearthing seeds of joy and discovering new roots of happiness for yourself.

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