



October 18, 2017

Now that the *chaggim* are behind us, we would like to share just some highlights of the incredible learning that is taking place in our Schechter classrooms.

In less than two months, our students have participated in several activities that offered important educational experiences outside the classroom.

- Guided by our core values of *Klal Yisrael* and *Lev Tov*, our students and their families helped restock the bare shelves of the West Hartford Food Pantry with donations of nonperishable food items.
- Also, in line with our core values, the 8th grade students, under the guidance of Middle School Math Teacher Mona Teitelbaum, led a school-wide fundraising initiative that resulted in our sending a \$500 Amazon gift card and a large box of school supplies to a classroom in Houston, Texas, whose students lost all that they had in Hurricane Harvey.
- Early Childhood students and their families enjoyed a program of singing in the sukkah, under the musical direction of Chrissy Whalen.
- Gesher and Middle School students built and experimented during the daylong Cardboard Challenge and Science Olympiad, guided by Rhiannon Van Bindsbergen and Bobbi Woodbury.
- Middle School students enjoyed activities led by shlichim, Roni and Tomer, movies, snacks and games during the Sukkah Sleepover. Special thanks to Mona Teitelbaum, Bobbi Woodbury, Matt Gionfriddo and Shay Bachar for giving up a night's sleep to make this happen!
- For their Day of Service, the Middle School students sewed drawstring pouches for servicemen and women through Project Gratitude, made fleece beds for the Connecticut Humane Society, printed and collated coloring pages for children at CCMC and painted and decorated rocks with inspirational messages and designs

for a homeless shelter. Thank you to Colleen Simon for researching organizations, planning and coordinating all of the activities.

- The Lower and Middle School students sang and paraded during our Simchat Torah celebration during which the final and beginning sections of the Torah were read.

In the classroom, the learning has been powerful!

As part of their unit on Sukkot, the Dubonim students in **EC2** went for a nature walk and collected pine cones. They then painted those pine cones as decorations for our school sukkah.

In Kochavim, our **EC3** students brought together our rich tradition, art, cooking, Science and an appreciation of nature in their unit on Sukkot. After learning about the 4 species that make up the lulav, the students created lulavim from towel tubes, paint and construction paper and fashioned etrogs from homemade yellow play dough and twigs that they found in nature. They had a wonderful time shaking their lulav and etrog in the Schechter Sukkah while enjoying a delicious snack together!

The Ilanot students in **EC4** sang their way through the fall Jewish holidays, learning about the symbols and customs through song. The children made their voices sound like the different calls of the shofar blasts while singing their favorite shofar song. They loved tasting holiday foods and graphing their favorites on charts. In addition, they enjoyed both honey and apple tastings, counting and comparing numbers and illustrating the concepts of more and less.

In **Parparim**, the students are hard at work in their leveled groups, Ninjas and Samurais. In LA, the Ninjas are using their superpowers to learn strategies to get their minds, bodies and brains ready for reading. For example, they have learned to use pictures to make movies in their brains, especially if they can't read the words, and they are working on using their fingers to point to the words. The Samurais are engaging in partner reading, discussing books from their book bins with a buddy who is reading a different book. They are learning to explain why they chose their books and, based on the text, why they'd recommend them.

In math, the Ninjas are learning to recognize numbers in written form and as groups of manipulatives, and they are using ten frames to read and understand what numbers mean.

The Samurais are using base 10 blocks to visually learn to count by 10's and to represent numbers in different ways in preparation for regrouping in addition and subtraction.

In Hebrew, the Ninjas are learning colors and numbers, and they are getting ready to begin learning the letters of the alefbet. The Samurais are learning to read and write Hebrew words, and they are using colors as the basis for conversations and written work.

**Rimonim** students are also incredibly busy! All of the students are working to expand their spoken Hebrew, and depending on which of the 5 leveled Hebrew groups they are in, they are strengthening cursive letter and vowel recognition or focusing on reading comprehension and improving fluency. In the writing center, they are working independently at their individual levels to improve their writings skills.

In Judaic Studies, the students discovered that *teshuvah* means changing behavior, not merely saying "I'm sorry." Recognizing that *teshuvah* comes from your heart and not your mouth, they wrote self-reflective notes of apology and made up a play that connected *teshuvah* to our core value of *Lev Tov*.

In Language Arts, in their 9 leveled reading groups, the students are all working on a character study unit through reading, discussion, role play and reflection. Armed with an iPad, each student is using SeeSaw to create a digital portfolio as a reflection of their reading, writing or math. In writing, the students are beginning their small moment stories, working on their own individual stories, employing their unique editing, revising, rereading and reflecting skills.

In math, the students are either learning or reviewing place value, which will prepare them for more difficult problems in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. In their 3 leveled groups, they meet challenges involving digits and concepts appropriate to their levels. The students are being introduced to DreamBox, a digital math program that challenges students according to individual math levels and sends reports to the teacher, allowing the teacher to monitor each individual's progress both electronically and during group activities in class.

Rimonim students enjoyed the fruits of their labor on Japan Day, during which they each presented their projects that they independently chose, researched and created.

In **Gesher**, you will find students in various combinations, in various locations throughout the day. You may find a group of Hebrew students working at a table with Limor while another group is sprawled on the rug, playing Hebrew Bananagrams. A third group is sitting at a table studying the Hebrew lyrics of a song while listening to the song on their Chromebooks.

In Judaic Studies, the students are beginning their journey into the Book of *Shemot*, Exodus, in which they will continue to hone their access skills while creating personal connections to the text.

In LA, the some of the students are working on writing their personal narratives, conferencing with Mrs. Spector and developing their individual writing styles. For their author story in their leveled Book Clubs, they are discussing the writing of Roald Dahl. In high tech MakerSpace, the students are applying the theory that they learn in science to building creations such as solar ovens and wind turbines.

### **Middle School**

**Spanish:** As part of their unit on Hispanic Heritage month, **Spanish 1** students identified the location and labeled the 21 Spanish-speaking countries in Spanish.

**Spanish 2** students identified the countries, capital cities and employed the locations and adjectives of nationality in conversation.

**Spanish 3** students created their own Hispanic superheroes, and described their physical appearance, personalities and superpowers.

In preparation for our unit on Puerto Rico, Spanish 1 and 2 completed a webquest and researched information about its climate, geography, history, government, economy, food, and culture. Spanish 3 researched and prepared a presentation on either the indigenous people of Puerto Rico or one of its famous sites.

**Math:** As part of their unit on Numerical Expressions and Factors, **6th grade** math and Pre-Algebra students in Mrs. Teitelbaum's class used their knowledge of the order of operations and exponents to write and solve a variety of increasingly complex problems. In the course of their unit on Algebraic Expressions and Properties, **7th grade** Pre-Algebra students in Mrs. Teitelbaum's class wrote algebraic expressions to model word phrases and real life situations and they wrote word phrases to model algebraic expressions.

As part of the unit on Functions, Equations, and Graphs the student in Mrs. Teitelbaum's **Algebra 2** class analyzed how certain families of functions such as absolute value functions are developed through transformations of the simplest form of the function.

In Mrs. Fleming's **6th grade** math class, students are learning divisibility rules and how to find a G.C.F. (Greatest Common Factor) to help with reducing fractions.

In Mrs. Fleming's **7th grade** Algebra 1 class, students are classifying polynomials, having learned the difference between a cubic binomial and a quadratic trinomial.

In Mrs. Fleming's **8th grade** geometry class, students are doing constructions using a straightedge and a compass. They have constructed perpendicular bisectors and angle bisectors so far.

**MakerSpace:** Students have been working in earnest on MakerSpace projects such as reverse engineering equipment like telephones and clocks, as well as modifying a gumball machine, taking apart/cleaning and repairing/rebuilding a hot chocolate machine, and dismantling/modifying a child size electric car and creating a reverse steering bicycle in addition to learning Raspberry Pi to help modify projects even further. Look forward to seeing their cardboard vending machines soon, too!

**Science:** During science class each grade began their individual Citizen Scientist research projects with SciStarter and will be finishing up their first explorations into iQWST. We explored *Where Have All The Creatures Gone* in addition to exploring using the scientific method on many individual and group projects. Moreover, all students have completed writing their first formal scientific research project lab report and incorporated data tables and graphs into their analysis. Look forward to seeing the students work on more research projects and formal inquiry-based lab write ups as they delve deeper into their upcoming iQWST units, all in preparation for their Science Fair participation, too!

**Judaic Studies: Sixth Grade** students have been hard at work exploring the importance and role of the shofar, as well as the concept of *teshuvah*/repentance, and will soon be pondering the age-old question: "Did Darth Vader Do Teshuvah?". They focused their Sukkot study on the names of Sukkot and their significance, as well as a biblical text on the holiday. They studied a mishnaic text on one of the requirements of the sukkah, and compared a section of the book of Kohelet (read, traditionally, on the holiday) to a newer rendering of the text ("Turn, Turn, Turn"). And, as if that wasn't enough, they've already begun studying the Book of Jonah!

**Seventh Grade** students dove headlong into the process of writing a D'var Torah. Their labors will come to fruition by the end of the month. For the High Holy Day unit, they focused their efforts on the topic of *teshuvah* (repentance), and the role/meaning of the Kol Nidrei prayer. They were introduced to the role of piyyutim (liturgical poems). For Sukkot, they concentrated their efforts on the concept of *hiddur mitzvah* (the aesthetic quality of a mitzvah; the "beautification factor").

**Eighth Grade** students delved deeply into the concept of *teshuvah* (repentance) and the role of empathy in hearing the sound of the shofar. For Sukkot, their major focus was on the holiday's goal of simplicity and on the rabbinic debate on whether a stolen lulav may be used to fulfill the mitzvah. This discussion quickly segued into the dilemma of whether or not a *mitzvah* can be fulfilled through the commission of a transgression (e.g., should a synagogue accept a tzedakah donation from a known drug dealer?). Moral dilemmas are always grist for the mill in Rogow Middle School Judaic Studies!

### **Hebrew:**

**Ivrit 3** has been studying about the Negev, discussing in Hebrew the definition of desert, the importance of the Negev, special settlements, Bedouin life and desert life. The students learned how to use the infinitive in sentences.

In **Ivrit 2**, the students have been learning about the city of Haifa, discussing its location in Israel, life in the city, popular places in the city, and the difference between a city and a moshav. The students practiced writing sentences, using both singular and plural nouns and verbs.

**Ivrit 1:** There are two groups in Ivrit 1. After learning new vocabulary, the students in one group are creating conversations based on these new words. In addition, they reinforce their learning through an online program that provides activities and challenges based on accumulated vocabulary.

Based on the format presented in their text, the second group is writing and presenting conversations that apply to their own personal experiences. Using the online component of the program, the students listen to conversations and answer comprehension questions based on them.

### **Humanities:**

The middle school students have embraced the new Humanities configuration. All of the students have embedded in their learning how to read informational texts and how to use evidence from the text to support their answers.

**Sixth graders** spent the first months of school discovering what archaeologists do and how the themes of geography impact lives. This information will be useful as they start studying ancient civilizations.

The **7th graders** have been immersed in the book *The Giver*. This book has created many lively discussions, and learning about how society works will ready them as we begin looking at the formation of the United States of America.

Finally the **8th graders** have been hard at work learning about the different Native American cultures within the United States and what happened when the colonialists and the Native Americans first met.

Since August 28th, our students have been engaged, challenged, guided, supported and have grown academically, emotionally and spiritually. We are enthusiastically looking forward to the coming weeks and months. Stay tuned for our school-wide **Day of Learning about Puerto Rico** on October 30th, which will kick off our week-long fundraising drive to help the residents of Puerto Rico begin to rebuild their lives.

We hope that you have enjoyed this snapshot of our classrooms!