



The Lola Stein Institute for Leadership in Education

PAM MEDJUCK STEIN CHAIR

The Lola Stein Institute is a publisher and teacher training centre founded by Pam Stein and Gail Baker. Here's why and how.

Toronto Heschel has proven to be an outstanding school receiving accolades internationally and at home. Its success is rooted in the understanding that inspired teachers are key to excellent education. Inspired teachers need energizing opportunities, impassioned colleagues and wonderful materials. The Lola Stein Institute was born to open pathways for teachers to reach new goals, to rethink their habits, to fan the flames of their own inspirations and to grow and grow and grow as educators.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said that to be a good Jew, one must first be a good citizen of the world. The Lola Stein Institute will reach out to teachers close to home and far a field. This coming August, 2008, the Institute is holding professional enhancement seminars open to teachers from Toronto Heschel, other Jewish day schools and the general

community. In the meantime, the Lola Stein Institute is providing workshop training to selected Toronto Heschel staff who will be among the presenters.

There is now a wave of integrated Jewish education spreading through day schools across North America. The Lola Stein Institute will share Toronto Heschel's 12 years' accumulated expertise as increasing numbers of educators seek materials and guidance in this direction. The Institute is preparing educational materials for publication and sale.

The Lola Stein Institute has supported development of curriculum and materials at Toronto Heschel since 2003, including the 3 volume junior high text *The Story of Ancient Civilizations for Young People* by Baruch Rand and Gail Baker; the Hebrew language storybook, *איפה האפיקומן?* by Zippi Zisu and Moshe Elkayam; the annually produced *Chanukah Sharing*; and now "The Leadership in Education Journal." Six wonderful text books and programmes are ready and await funding.



Lola and Mannie Stein, 1995

Lola Stein Z"L was grandmother to 4 Toronto Heschel students and great-grandmother to a 5th as of September '08. (Not Pam and Mike's grandchild!!) She was one of the early female pharmacists in South Africa, probably the first Jewish one, but her very special talent was in hospitality and friendship. She cared for her friends and family, at home and across the globe, individually, uniquely and lovingly. When she passed away, one friend chose to honour her memory in a way that would also reach around the world. This gift was the seed of sharing educational materials for children and teachers developed here in Toronto.

Leadership in Education

ISSUE NO. 1 · MARCH 2008



THE LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE JOURNAL

Editor's Desk

In the early days of The Toronto Heschel School, there was a wonderful, quarterly school-wide publication called "HaMevaser", meaning "The Messenger". It engaged the school community in Jewish and educational topics that illuminated the students' experience and intrigued parents to contemplate the school's mission more closely.

This quarterly journal is picking up that dropped thread to weave a regular thoughtful offering back into the fabric of school life. "Leadership in Education" will present the educational heights towards which Toronto Heschel faculty are reaching thanks to in-house leaders and external specialists. The journal will place the



Toronto Heschel vision and programme under a magnifying glass and use this lens to examine the voyages and to site destinations ahead.

The decision to send children to Toronto Heschel reveals a parent's interest in educating children where academic excellence is leveraged by the most progressive methods for preparing students today. Internet access to data are transforming education and its search for knowledge. Valuable thinking and problem-solving skills can be lost to today's children unless teachers and parents re-configure the challenges and contexts presented to students. This is precisely what Toronto Heschel does.

Today, children and families face overwhelming social and consumer pressures. Family values including interpersonal respect, humanitarian ideas, ethics and the simple love of peace are constantly hammered by mass media, competitive marketing campaigns and all their divergent goals.

This newsletter will share the moral grounding and lofty ideals at work at Toronto Heschel and remind its readers of the core values we preserve and protect.



If there are any aspects of the Toronto Heschel programme that you, our readers, would like to see explored, explained or exhibited in this new periodical, please email me at pam@lolastein.com. We will do our best to provide the insight and understanding you seek. We know you care about the results of The Toronto Heschel programme.

◆ Pam Stein is a founding board member of the Toronto Heschel School. Her eldest three children are Heschel alumni, the fourth is now in grade 4. She has collaborated on the Heschel team since 1996.



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The Lola Stein Institute

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Mission Control

GAIL BAKER DIRECTOR

As I sit here at my desk, reflecting on the past 12 years, I am struck by the beautiful community that is The Toronto Heschel School.

We have created a learning institution that helps children and families live meaningful lives based on Jewish morals and values. In fact, children do not learn morals and values simply by learning to obey school rules but rather by being expected to behave in a responsible way at all times. This doesn't just happen. School vision and school culture must be intertwined.

Our students are continually engaged in conversations regarding moral issues and dilemmas as they arise in their daily lives. The Chumash is used as a reference point and we all have to walk the talk. As team players our staff are expected to work with each other and with their students in morally responsible ways and to be cognizant of the reasons for doing so. Our classrooms strive to be models of "olam metukan", a correctly balanced world.



get out of the auditorium with my second degree burns. If I stood, there would have been a sea of eyes directed towards me, judging how bad a parent I was by how fast I fled from the golden words of learning. I could feel the coffee pooling on the seat beneath me and I wrapped my raincoat over my lap so my suffering would be invisible.

"They need strong standards, and you are the person to give them," I heard through the pain. "No one grows up without influence and if you fail to give them a strong sense of right and wrong, they will pick up their morals from the culture around them."

Coffee scent rose around me in a jungle humidity and I could sense the people around me edging away from my seat. I consoled myself with the thought that Jordan would never know about this. I looked around, hopefully confirming the lack of familiar faces. If no one told my ex, then Sudoku would also never find out. Much as I wanted my child to speak to me again, I didn't want her comeback words to reference marinating myself in a crowded room.

The second speaker looked like Adele herself, a halo of golden hair around her head. By this time the coffee was cooling and I could listen a bit. I just had to remember that any wriggling around on my part would cause those around me to be deafened by the squelching of raincoat, coffee and tortured flesh.

"We know that the children who make it through adolescence in good shape have strong support..." Goldilocks said. "They all need at least five loving adults in their lives to give them a basis of caring and direction. Can you say your child has five loving adults who guide him lovingly with words of Torah?"



"Five adults?" I thought. Jordan was tantamount to negative four, and then there was me with nobody else for four thousand miles. Sudoku was at school, not speaking to anyone, and I was wet in a crowd of strangers. I was no closer to knowing why my daughter wasn't speaking, but the thought of her pointing to an invisible bird was sizzling my brain.

Why would she need other adults if she had me, anyway? I wanted to be in the hammock again so badly. I could almost feel the weight of her little body on mine, almost taste the pleasure of her first word, when her little mouth was still working hard at communicating, and her finger was pointing up, up, up.

TO BE CONTINUED

◆ Marlee Pinsker is a teacher at Toronto Heschel since 1996. She has been telling stories forever and writing always. Her stories are published in collections and in her own anthology "In the Days of Sand and Stars". Marlee believes strongly that stories are vehicles for reflection as they allow the reader a private space to ponder the larger issues often sitting in unlit corners.



Sudoku Levene... as if

GALLERY FICTION MARLEE PINSKER

◆ This fiction story will be a continuing saga in 3 or 4 parts, a sweet and agonizing soap opera floating through the machinations of family life and all that means...

The only reason I went to the Jewish Parenting Extravaganza in the first place was that Sudoku had stopped talking. Her little face over the kitchen table was closed like a bank vault and I could see that if I ever knew the winning combination it was lost now. Days and weeks of pink lips sealed tight had passed despite my brightest efforts at drawing her out and so I succumbed to failure and went to the Extravaganza. Adele said it was all due to the divorce, but what does she know, she has never been through a divorce and has six children who float around her like an angelic choir, yessing her every utterance.

Sudoku wasn't talking and I had to find out why. In previous days this might have been easier, because if Jordan was still here I could have solved the problem by making him stop whatever he was doing. Instead now I had to shlep myself over to Adele's current objects of adoration and sit sipping my double double latte as they ransacked their Talmudic minds to come up with something relevant to the current century.

I closed my eyes at the sight of a streaked beard pointing towards me like an accusing finger from the stage and sunk into my coffee scented reverie. The first mouthful is always the richest, with the aftertaste settling happily onto the roof of my mouth to rain dark roast gently across my tongue. "Your children need the Torah held close to them in their lives..." was proclaimed in a baritone from afar.

My mind delivered up a time of Sudoku cuddling next to me on the hammock at the cottage. A songbird sung five notes that hung in the air like crystal and my daughter was a little toddler in a white dress, pointing up into the canopy of piccolo green leaves above us, laughing. "Bbbbb" she was saying, "Bbbbbb" and I supplied "bird" and she laughed.



As the deep voice sliced through my memories of Sudoku's infant laughter, I imagined leaning forward to hug her to me. In the all too real world, a jolt of hot liquid seared into my new capris.

I must have squealed in pain, because he turned around sharply to look at me, "Parenting isn't easy..." he thundered. "God has a hard time with us and we have a hard time with them."

'I know,' I thought, my skin crisping beneath the ruined fabric, 'she won't even talk to me...'

I mopped up the coffee with my raincoat, too packed in between earnest neighbours to even think of trying to y



We prepare our students to participate. To become contributing world citizens, children must learn not only to listen to each other but also to listen with respect even when someone else's ideas may differ from their own.

Children who are raised in a creative thinking environment with strong beliefs about the value of all people do not grow up to be suicide bombers. Children who are taught about "point of view" grow up realizing that issues are complex and that solutions must be arrived at only after careful consideration of all stakeholders. Children who grow up feeling secure about themselves and who they are, are far more able to reach out to help others and not feel that their own identity may be compromised. This is what creative thinkers do. These are Toronto Heschel School values.

We engage our students in a Judaism that is relevant and current without sacrificing tradition and we take aim at the threat of assimilation. By evoking an appreciation and love of Israel, by having our students communicate with Israeli students, we connect our students to our cultural and spiritual homeland. We respect the multiple voices of Judaism and confront this diversity openly, struggling to achieve religious experiences that resonate

in part with all. Indeed this tension and balancing helps formulate the essence of education at The Toronto Heschel School.



For all this to happen, we provide a stimulating intellectual atmosphere where Jewish identity can flourish. We must and we do help our students establish and consolidate their Jewish identity.

A solid education in one's individual identity helps to develop a strong sense of self. This is the invaluable byproduct of a strong Jewish education for our Jewish children. A healthy sense of self makes for adults who are more able and secure to deal with the diverse and evolving world and these are the adults who are both capable and inspired to contribute and to make a difference. That's the reason for this journal!

◆ Gail Baker is the co-Founder and Principal of The Toronto Heschel School. She is currently Chair of the Presidium of Principals of Jewish Day Schools of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. Gail nurtures a career long passion for reaching and teaching to the essential individuality in each child. This has grown to a parallel commitment encouraging and refining the unique talents of each teacher on her team and beyond.



A New Vision for Jewish Education

Awe and Wonder

GREG BEILES FACULTY

When Jewish educators gather to look at educational purposes, we often discuss objectives such as cultural literacy, textual skills, and how to prepare our students for the “real world”. We do not often challenge ourselves to ask why these goals are important. To stay attuned and grounded, teachers must focus on how Jewish learning enriches the lives of our students, and what it is that is unique about Jewish learning.

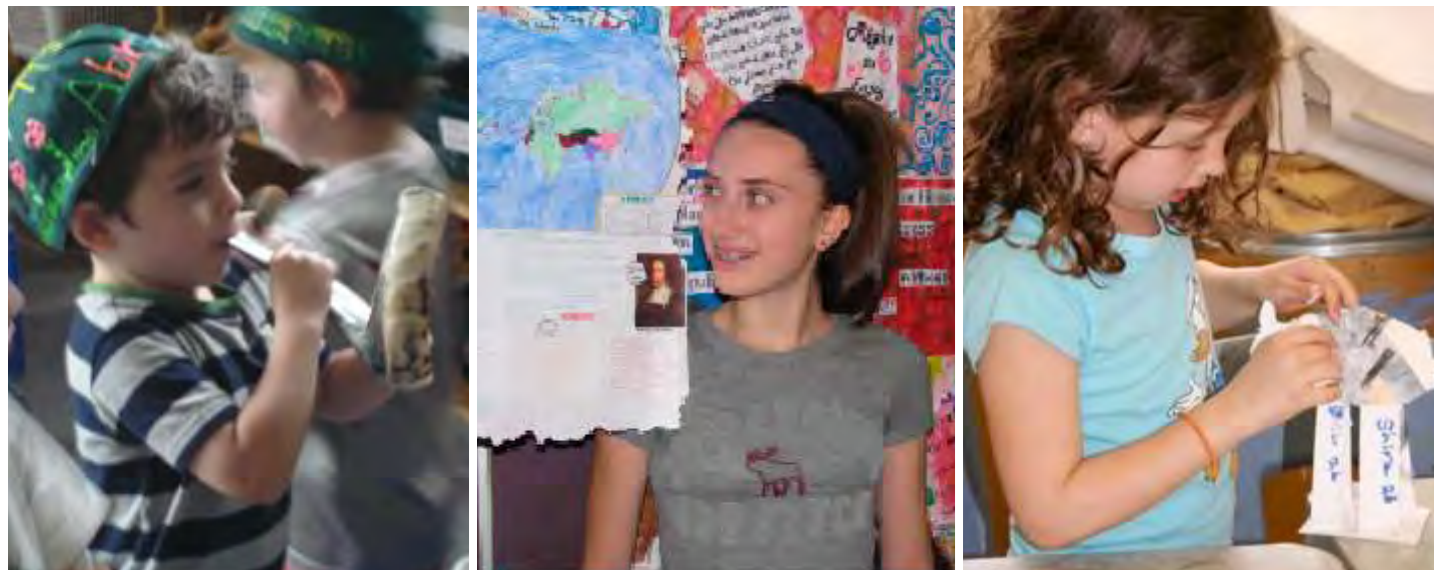
In recent years, there has been a renewed and broad interest in the work of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Heschel was a rabbi and philosopher, not a schoolteacher or instructor per se. Nonetheless, his exploration of Judaism’s unique vision provides valuable tools as we revise our understanding of Jewish education.

Rabbi Heschel offers the essential insight that Judaism is not “just a way of living, but a way of thinking”. At the core of this insight is the concept of “radical amazement” or “awe”. In “God in Search of Man”, Heschel writes:

“Awe enables us to sense in small things the beginning of infinite significance, to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple.”

Heschel’s concept of awe links perception to knowledge, and knowledge to the larger, ethical purpose of our lives.

By articulating Judaism as “a way of thinking”, Heschel uncovers a new lens through which we might look not only at Jewish education, but at education and thinking in general.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

Greg Beiles, Drew Cohen and Shachar Leven participated in an environmental studies programme called “From Here Everything Grows” run under the auspices of The Centre for Enhancement of Jewish Education, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, Mercaz.

The group first met to assess local initiatives and obstacles to environmental programming in Toronto Jewish schools, and environmental education in Israel. The teachers then toured Israel, visiting the Eilat/Eilat region, Kibbutz Lotan and Keturah, Jerusalem and the North to examine projects dedicated to ecological sustainability and hearing from leading Israeli environmental educators. These encounters provided the groundwork to forge relationships between Canadian and Israeli students based on shared concern for the environment.



Mazal Tov!

Sigal Cohen has received her Certificate in Special Education on completion of a two year post graduate programme. The course addressed at an advanced level, the pedagogical skills required to teach children with exceptionalities. Sigal writes, “I am now part of a professional learning community that strives to make significant changes in student achievement. As a result, I have redefined what it means to provide an education for all students in a Jewish Day School.” The programme is offered through UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, Tikun Chaim and York University.



READING AND WRITING

Tobie Franklin studied at Columbia University’s Teachers College in the Reading and Writing Project. Her courses included “Designing a Curriculum on Historical Fiction in Middle School” and “Using Drama, Storytelling and Readers’ Theatre to Lure Kids to Care about Literature.”

Tobies writes, “My studies at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project have helped me coach students to write with focus and stamina, and to engage even the most reluctant readers. We now teach students that they are part of a community of readers and writers who learn from each other, and from the authors whose craft they admire. To strengthen the connection between reading and writing and between school and home, we now focus on “book talk” and on discovering that when we write we discover meaning in our own lives and the world around us.”



Teacher Exploration - The Learning gets Deeper

GALLERY

EARLY YEARS

This year “early years” students are going beyond camels and palm trees in their quest to personally connect to Israel and its specialness to them as Jewish children. Five of their teachers Zippi Zisu, Marlee Pinsker, Nicole Boltiansky, Lainie Filkow and Galya Ouanounou attended “Like Clay in the Hands of the Maker”, a seminar in Israel sponsored by UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. Lainie experienced it as “a rigorous exploration of values and how to transmit them.”



Marlee Pinsker said they grappled with the dilemma of whether they would, “tell the children to think in terms of heat or cold, green or tan, love or indifference, prayer or silence, holiness or practicality?” Their explorations led them to uncover new paths to communicate key issues of Jewish identity to young children.

JUNIOR HIGH HISTORY

Junior high scholars are captivated this year by a fascinating “reality take” added to their studies. Their teacher is pursuing an additional interdisciplinary tack and integrating issues of identity, psychology and personal values into the teaching of history. The students now learn the facts or “the story” of what happened in context with the social and psychological forces at play at the time under study.

Junior high teacher, Eli Savage, pursued a two part intensive seminar with the U.S.-based organization, “Facing History and Ourselves”. Eli’s training deals with education on genocide, including the Jewish, Armenian, and Rwandan holocausts with focus on the root causes of racism and human stereotyping. It is a key life skill to understand how oppression grows in many surprising ways. Eli said, “the seminar provided me, a Jewish history teacher, with a framework to question more deeply why bad things happen to good people”.



Nikki Rand, grade 8, 2007



Through the lens of “awe”, all perception, and therefore all learning, becomes a gateway to understanding the interconnectivity, complexity, and ultimately, the infinite wonder of the universe in which we live.

These are big ideas that connect the way we see and understand the world to our sense of ultimate purpose. For educators, this vision is inspirational. Yet we still ask how to apply these brilliant perspectives to the daily task of teaching Ivrit (Hebrew), Chumash, not to mention math, science or spelling.

At The Toronto Heschel School since 1996, we have presented our entire school programme through this lens. As teachers, we ask how students can best appreciate the beauty and wonder of mathematics. We discover with our students that science and social science are methods through which knowledge is constructed, and we appreciate together with them that the frontiers of knowledge always remain open. We explore how interpretation invokes a sense of the plurality of human experience and teaches us about how we regard one another ethically. We explore how the arts work across the curriculum as catalysts for emotional and cognitive experiences generating a sense of complexity, possibility and imagination.

Our results are proving strong and rewarding. One anecdote from a faculty member at C.H.A.T. is that Heschel kids ask more questions.

... Judaism is not
“just a way of living,
but a way of thinking.”

This journal now allows me to speak directly to you, our parent community, about the ideas and directions underlying the programme at Heschel. We also anticipate sharing our progress with educators from other institutions and to learning from our peers in turn. We are constructing our summer teachers’ seminar with this pursuit in focus.

◆ Greg is Curriculum Director of The Toronto Heschel School and has been at the school, first as a teacher, since 1997. Greg believes deeply that children are active builders of knowledge and empathy, and that a child’s perspective is influenced more by the way in which learning is structured than by the specific content of the curriculum.



Nurturing Nature in Our Children

ELLEN KESSLER TEACHER

Our Jewish tradition brings with it an articulated set of legal regulations, theological notions and intellectual values that intuitively respect the natural environment. Indeed, In Bereshit/Genesis 2:15, God led the first human beings around the garden of Eden and commanded them to work it and keep it.

*"We are the keepers
of the Earth."*



We are the keepers of the Earth. We ask "How can we, as stewards, help to maintain God's garden?"

This core environmental ethos is firmly established in our school's daily activities and in each grade's curriculum goals. We recycle. We conserve energy. We nurture our grounds and grow a teaching-learning garden. We look for opportunities to take our students outside to share with them the awe and wonder of God's magnificent works, to appreciate them and to give thanks for them.

We are not doing this because it is in the news to "green" our world. We have always done it. In 1996 when one class went outside and started digging, while another created works of art with recyclables, we realized that this was one of the most important educational goals we could embrace. Our kids were living the values we were talking about.

◆ Ellen Kessler is a Co-Founder of The Toronto Heschel School and leads its award-winning nature and ecological programme. Ellen is a math and science teacher who blends commitment to Jewish observance with her love for the natural world and for children.

And while the politics of "greening" may change or shift in and out of focus, our role as partners with God in the Creation will never change.

The Torah makes ecological inquiry a must for our students. We need to understand our dependence on the healthy functioning of the Earth's ecosystems, those living systems that give us clean air, water, soil, food and all the other resources we depend on. The more we understand and respect the interconnectedness of all species in this complex web of existence, the sooner we can become literate in ways to care for the earth and to ensure its well-being from generation to generation.

Our Jewish traditions demand that we act on these understandings and truly make a difference in our world.



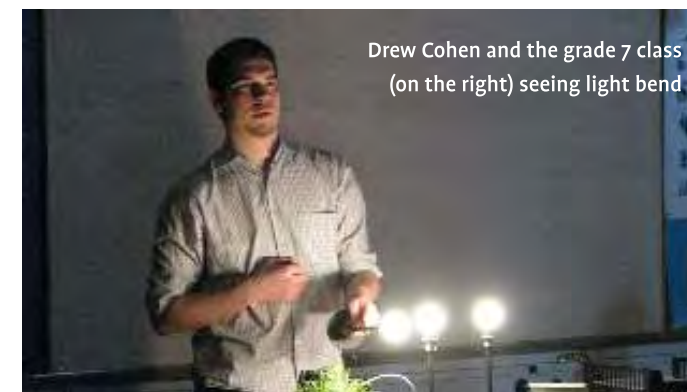
The New Teacher Academy, Bringing Columbia University Programming to Canada

GALLERY TOBIE FRANKLIN

The Toronto Heschel School is the first school in Canada to enter into partnership with Columbia University for its New Teacher Academy. Your child benefits directly from this initiative. The partnership communicates the best thinking and research from Columbia University Teachers College directly to our teachers, enabling them to learn and refine their skills and reflect on their practices.

The students benefit when their teachers have a forum in which to sift through dilemmas and improve upon challenges faced in the classroom. The more conscious any professional maintains his or her delivery of skills, the more precise and valuable become the results.

The New Teacher Academy is a professional development (or enhancement) seminar programme geared to the working teacher. This past summer, I was privileged to train in New York and to certify as a facilitator for the New Teacher Academy. I am now able to relay the programme here at Heschel and soon we may deliver it to other schools as well.



Drew Cohen and the grade 7 class
(on the right) seeing light bend

The programme consists of eighteen two-hour face-to-face sessions throughout the year with a cohort of ten selected teachers. We follow a very specific curriculum set out by Teachers College Innovations including detailed topics such as classroom management, student assessment, and how to write a grant proposal to school administrators to address a classroom challenge.

The four strands woven through the sessions are:

- ◆ teacher leadership in the classroom, in the school community and within the profession;
- ◆ helping teachers and students meet high standards; using differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of students;
- ◆ reaping the value of community through individual and collective wisdom and the resources of peers and students.

It's fantastic to have the Academy at Toronto Heschel!

◆ Tobie Franklin, head of Child Study at The Toronto Heschel, has completed graduate studies in educational psychology and social education at the U of T and trained at Harvard and Columbia. Tobie continues to find new ways to set children up for success.

