



From Rabbi Mitchel Malkus, Head of School

Teaching Civics and Civil Discourse at CESJDS

We live in a time of hyper-polarization where we see divisions across so many political and societal issues in the United States. While having distinct political positions gives voters clear and meaningful choices, Americans unfortunately also have much greater feelings of dislike toward their fellow citizens with different views and of the other political party than previously. A study by the non-partisan, non-profit Public Religion Research Institute indicated that while 4% of both Republicans and Democrats in 1960 said they would be displeased if their children married someone of the opposite party, in 2019, 45% of Democrats and 35% of Republicans said they would be unhappy if their child did so.



In an environment of deep division, teaching Civics and Civil Discourse is a vital way that CESJDS prepares students to be Independent, Creative, and Critical Thinkers. The teaching of Civics and Civil Discourse is, as everything at our school, informed by Jewish tradition and our Core Values - in this case by the core value of Pluralism.

CESJDS's commitment to Pluralism emerges from a Talmudic text. Eruvin 13b indicates that while the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel disagreed on Jewish law for three years, both were considered the "words of the living God," since both were arguing for the "sake of Heaven's name" (i.e. in good faith). Interestingly, in another part of the Talmud (Yevamot 14b), we learn that despite their many heated disagreements, the two schools did not refrain from their children marrying between their communities.



In the passage from Eruvin 13b, we learn that disputes between Hillel and Shammai were resolved in Hillel's favor because his disciples would teach both their opinions and those of Shammai, because they acted with respect, and because they would always cite Shammai's opinion first.

As CESJDS teaches students about Civics and Civil Discourse, we are guided by the Portrait of a CESJDS Graduate goals which articulates that a JDS graduate:

- Respects divergent thinking to engage people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs in thoughtful discussion;
- Seeks and uses feedback from others to self-reflect and adapt ideas;
- Exhibits empathy and compassion toward others; [and]
- Advocates for and has the confidence to stand up for their beliefs.



In the following pages, you will learn how CESJDS fosters students who can engage in respectful, thoughtful, and principled discussions around topics where they may disagree. You will read that we have developed a curriculum where different ideas, perspectives, and approaches are valued. You will learn that our culture of pluralism has created an environment informed by the Jewish values above and geared towards teaching students how to think, not what to think.

We are particularly proud of our commitment to teaching Civics and Civil Discourse. The programs and approaches you will learn about in this edition of The Lions' Roar are among what distinguish our school and are more relevant today than ever before.

SCHOOL

- The **High School Boys and Girls Track & Field teams** placed 5th and 6th respectively in the PVAC championship meet.
- The **Middle School Boys and Girls Track & Field teams** both placed 5th in the PVAC championship meet.
- The **Varsity Baseball team** finished first in the PVAC.
- The **Varsity Softball team** competed in the PVAC championship.
- The **Middle School Baseball team** won the PVAC championship.

STUDENT

- Out of 65 CESJDS students who took the **National Spanish Examination**, 27 earned gold medals, 22 earned silver medals, 8 earned bronze medals, and 4 earned honor certificates.
- 15 students were inducted into the **Hispanic Honor Society**.
- 14 students were inducted into the **Arabic Honor Society**.
- **Matan Goldstein** (Grade 12) was one of 15 Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) Ahavat Torah Award winners for 2022.
- **Raizy Moshinsky's** (Grade 8) project "Suitcase of Powerful Stories" was one of the winners in the "My Family Story" International Competition from ANU Museum of the Jewish People.
- 7 photography students were accepted into the 8th District Congressional Art Competition this year. **Tamar Oliel** (Grade 12) received 2nd place in the competition.
- **Obi Schneider** (Grade 8) and **Evie Sharp** (Grade 8) were selected to represent their middle school peers at the Parent Council of Washington's Annual Middle School Student Leader Breakfast.
- **Zoe Weiss** (Grade 12) was invited to a signing ceremony with Governor Larry Hogan for the legislation increasing EpiPen accessibility for children in youth camps (HB 49) in Maryland. Zoe testified and advocated for the legislation in the House Health and Senate Finance Committees.

FACULTY

- **Aliza Libman Baronofsky**, Middle School Math Teacher, was ordained at Yeshivat Maharat's 10th Annual Semikha Ceremony.
- **Sara Cox** and **Dan Rosenthal**, Jewish History Faculty, were published in The Lookstein Center's Teaching Jewish History issue of *Jewish Educational Leadership*.
- **Rabbi Mitchel Malkus**, Head of School, was featured on The Future of Jewish podcast and wrote a featured opinion piece on the EJewish Philanthropy website. He discussed the critical role of Hebrew language learning in Jewish identity development.

- **MollyBeth Rushfield**, 3rd-5th Grade Judaic Studies Teacher, performed as part of the cast for *Once Upon a Mattress* with the Rockville Musical Theatre.
- **Rochelle Sobel**, 4th Grade Judaic Studies Teacher, spoke at the United Nations high level meeting to advocate for greater road safety regulation.
- **Rachel Van Gorden**, Graphic Designer & Marketing Operations Coordinator, won *Graphic Design USA Magazine's* 2021 American Inhouse Design Awards and 2021 American Graphic Design Awards for the 2021 Maayan Annual Campaign design.

ALUMNI

- **Jesse Edberg '20** published his first book, *The Complete and Translated Poetic Works of Avraham Stern*.
- **Matthew Foldi '14** ran for Congress in Maryland's 6th District.
- **Alex Landy '21** wrote an opinion piece published by the *World Jewish Congress* calling out Students for Justice in Palestine for their antisemitic approach on the Tufts University campus.
- **Alex Rosenberg '22** was awarded the International OCD Foundation's Youth Hero Award to recognize his work in OCD advocacy.
- **Steve Solomon '94** ran for County Council in Montgomery County District 6.
- **Joe Vogel '15** ran for the House of Delegates in Maryland's 17th Legislative District.
- **Corey '07** and **Sharone Cines** welcomed a son, Benny Eli.
- **Shira Gabry-Kalikow '06** and **Adam Kalikow** welcomed a daughter, Mika Joy.
- **Rebecca (Rosenberg) '07** and **Chad Cutler** welcomed a daughter, Annie Drew.
- **Aviva Braier '15** and **Aaron Burstyn** were married.
- **Briana Felsen '12** and **Jerry Rubin** were married.
- **Adam Hammerman '11** and **Lexi Mossman** were married.
- **Ilana Soumekhian '12** and **Zack Bergman** were married.
- **Alex Zissman '12** and **Jules Ilian** were married.
- **Ben Block '10** and **Dana Sherman** were engaged.
- **Ari Eisen '11** and **Sarah Smith** were engaged.
- **Adam Goldfarb '11** and **Rachel Pollan** were engaged.
- **Alon Krifcher '10** and **Alexandra Saltiel** were engaged.
- **Jacob Weiss '15** and **Kim Shendell** were engaged.



Lower School Log:

Civil Discourse at the Lower School

◆ By Rabbi Matthew Bellas, Lower School Principal



Civil discourse is an approach to communication and relationship-building that is relevant to both academic and social settings in school. Whether it is in the classroom, on the playground, or on the Field of Dreams, differences of opinion are part of our students' everyday experience and it is crucial that they develop the skills to navigate these situations in ways that align with our values of *kavod*/respect, *g'milut hasadim*/acts of loving-kindness, and pluralism. The Lower School offers a rich and varied program in social-emotional learning, including monthly guidance lessons in every classroom, and social skills groups led for small groups of students. In both of these settings, communication, collaboration, and conflict management skills are taught to and practiced with children in all grades Gurim-5th.

The following are some highlights from among the learning outcomes from lessons that the members of our incredible Guidance Team bring to our students:

- Identifying friendship behaviors and discussing ways to be a good friend with our actions and our words.
- How to be a good and active listener. Active listening builds trust and understanding and allows us to see another person's point of view.
- How to ask questions, disagree, and discuss in a respectful manner allowing students to be a good friend/classmate. Considering the opinions and perspectives of others even when we don't understand or disagree with them allows us to be a positive member of a community (class, friend group, etc.).
- Using "I messages" to talk about how someone's words or behaviors impacted you diffuses conflict and allows others to understand a situation in a non-confrontational way.
- The awareness that what we say and how we say it has an impact on others and we must consider that impact before speaking.
- When there is a difference of opinion, offering choices instead of holding fast to one's own opinion or position helps us to compromise. Compromise allows everyone to feel valued and as if they had a voice in the eventual conclusion instead of having a "winner" and a "loser."
- Helping others to feel welcome and valued is how we build community and everyone is deserving of this kind of treatment. We are a richer community for our differences and learn more in a diverse community such as ours.
- Learning how to be a "social detective," who looks for clues in the behaviors and reactions of others can help you to have empathy and determine appropriate responses to different situations or interactions.

◆◆ From very early ages, children must learn how to listen, converse, and disagree with respect and kindness. ◆◆

One of the elements that helps to make our community strong is our ability to embrace our differences and learn from each other. From very early ages, children must learn how to listen, converse, and disagree with respect and kindness. Learning how to do so in social and academic contexts in the Lower School prepares our students for the more complex issues and challenges they will be expected and required to navigate as adolescents and young adults.

Middle School Musings: Civic Leadership - For the Sake of Heaven

◆ By **Michael Rubin**, Middle School Jewish Text Teacher



While relating a story surrounding one of the many fierce debates between Hillel and Shammai, the Talmud states that a heavenly voice declared, “These and these are the words of the Living God...” Here, it is clear that Judaism sees tremendous value in multiple,

often wildly different perspectives in a community. When we think about the way our school defines its key value of pluralism, the concept of a diversity of thought is one that the faculty kept in mind when developing this past year’s 8th grade Civic Leadership class curriculum.

Sadly, the spike in polarization within our society has made it increasingly difficult to find people willing to engage in civic discourse over the most politically charged issues of our time. The 8th graders were keenly aware of the problems associated with this phenomenon and remained actively engaged in discussions about how to engage in difficult conversations. As they came to realize, it is incumbent on students like them to lead by example as they seek to understand and develop solutions to complex challenges.

From the universe of obligation, to economic complexities, to reparations and so much in between, students were encouraged to listen and respond to the opinions of one another while maintaining an open mind. Perspectives from leading thinkers across the political spectrum were also shared with students, affording them the opportunity to grapple with ideas they might not have otherwise considered or even known existed. Through this work, many of the students began to recognize that hearing a wide range of thoughts on a given issue was not only a valuable tool in

sharpening their own arguments, but even had the potential to transform the prism through which they see a particular topic entirely.

As teachers, it is our sincere hope that students at CESJDS are equipped with the tools to model effective leadership both in the school and well beyond its walls. Classes like our 8th grade Civic Leadership class provide students with a

foundation upon which to build their confidence and increase their knowledge base as they navigate the divisiveness that pervades our country’s political discourse. For all of us, it remains incredibly challenging to resist the pressures from media, politicians, and even our social circles to descend into tribalism, casting out those with differing opinions as enemies. Staying mindful of the Jewish value that debate should be, as the Talmud says, “for the sake of heaven,” will

hopefully give students the guiding light to be the leaders our school and our country need now and well into the future.

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High School Highlights:

Civil Discourse in Judaics

◆ By **Grace B. McMillan**, Nancy and Paul M. Hamburger Jewish Text High School Department Chair | **Dr. Daniel Rosenthal**, Evonne and Elliot Schnitzer Family Jewish History Department Chair of the Sara and Samuel J. Lessans Jewish History Department



Whether we look to Avraham arguing with God about destroying “the innocent along with the guilty” (Genesis 18:23) or Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai arguing about almost any point of halakhah in the Talmud, our Jewish tradition holds that disagreement, even with God, is a normal and even valued aspect of life. Arguments may be about anything from life-and-death issues (e.g. capital punishment, abortion) to ritual law (e.g. can an oven that’s been cracked be made kosher again). But our tradition is clear that the way people argue and who wins that argument is always grounded in a civility that requires debaters to listen to both sides, respect their opponents, and behave with humility even in victory (cf. Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b:10-14).

In the CESJDS High School, we honor the wisdom of the sages by teaching our students in Jewish Text and Jewish History classes to recognize the importance of learning the facts and the narratives of different sides of complex Jewish, American, and Israeli issues and then to engage in thoughtful, fact-based, respectful discussions in and out of class. In our 9th grade Ethical Dilemmas course, we learn Jewish textual perspectives and American law on capital punishment, abortion, and biotechnology. In this year’s classes, when tensions were running high in American society after the leak of the Supreme Court’s draft ruling on abortion, we did as we always do and emphasized the necessity of putting aside preconceived notions about the topic and learning with an open mind about the complex factors involved in understanding this topic both in Jewish law and in American law and society. Students surprised themselves by finding that their opinions became more nuanced and more deeply grounded in facts and articulated moral philosophies through this mutually respectful process.

This approach to respectful discourse on challenging moral issues lies at the heart of the 11th grade Jewish History course on the Arab-Israeli Conflict where students build on what they learned in their History of Israel course to understand more deeply the roots, complexities, and narratives that underpin the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis. In a way that is often missing in society, particularly on college campuses, students learn how these parallel narratives developed and why someone might hold radically different views than their own. Students are then asked to think through the approaches proposed for resolving this ongoing conflict, challenging them to take into account real views of all sides in order to develop their open-mindedness, pragmatism, and intellectual rigor.

These courses are only two examples of the many ways in which the Jewish Text and Jewish History departments work to develop in our students the CESJDS Portrait of a Graduate’s qualities of being an “Ethical, Responsible, and Compassionate Global Citizen.” In our society and in our pluralistic Jewish day school, it is essential that we invest the time and resources to help young adults learn that a better world is possible if we listen to and engage with the voices of each other, with empathy, critical-thinking skills, and, most of all, respect.

◆◆ Students surprised themselves by finding that their opinions became more nuanced and more deeply grounded in facts and articulated moral philosophies through this mutually respectful process. ◆◆

CESJDS gratefully acknowledges the following alumni who have joined the Lion's Den. With their contribution of \$118 or more per year for five years, these alumni help lead the way in setting the bar for future generations of alumni giving.

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HAPPY together

exploring creating building innovating thriving



Thanks to your generous donations to the 2022 *Ma'ayan* Annual Campaign, CESJDS continues to create extraordinary moments and develop thoughtful and compassionate students. We are proud of our traditions that bring so much joy to our children and families.

Here are some special memories from this past year:

Kabbalat Shabbat

STEM Day

Gottesman Honeystick Ceremony

5th Grade Game Changing American Wax Museum

Zimriyah

7th Grade Climate Summit

Sara & Samuel Lessans 4th Grade Havdalah

Yosef & Sima Nagler *Haggigat HaSiddur*

Weinberg Science Fair

Arts Chai-Lights

CESJDS Mega Reunion Schmooze-a-Palooza

CESJDS Alumni Business Networking Series

We appreciate your help in making these events possible for our community. We are **Happy Together!**



בית מדרש צוריאל

Administrative Offices & Lower School Campus
1901 East Jefferson Street
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Annette M. & Theodore N. Lerner Upper School Campus
11710 Hunters Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20852

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **August 30:** First Day of School
- **September 5:** SCHOOL CLOSED Labor Day
- **September 26-27:** SCHOOL CLOSED Rosh Hashanah
- **October 4:** EARLY DISMISSAL Erev Yom Kippur
- **October 5:** SCHOOL CLOSED Yom Kippur
- **October 6:** 2-HOUR DELAY
- **October 10-11:** SCHOOL CLOSED Sukkot
- **October 17:** SCHOOL CLOSED Sh'mini Atzeret
- **October 18:** SCHOOL CLOSED Simhat Torah
- **October 23:** Ignite the Night Parent Event



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